Precarious Journeys: Exploring the Stories of Young People Seeking Asylum

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Abstract

This thesis examines the stories that young people tell about becoming refugees and seeking asylum. It is a qualitative study based on 42 single narrative interviews, conducted in schools, public libraries and advocacy settings. The participants originated from 19 countries and ranged in age from 12-23 years, with four participants over 18 years.

Stories represent a significant resource for asylum seekers, since the process of seeking asylum relies heavily on providing narrative testimony. Whilst there is an established field of literature focusing on the experiences of young refugees, little attention has been paid to the storied aspects of their lives. Beyond this, there are also significant gaps regarding young refugees' journey experiences and the role of time in shaping their lives. This research seeks to fill these gaps by providing an in-depth study of the stories that young refugees tell and the ways in which themes of journeys and time feature in their accounts.

The findings of this thesis are divided across three substantive themes, journeys, stories and time. Firstly, by examining participants' accounts of being uprooted and in transit, the analysis demonstrates how migration journeys can be highly significant experiences for young refugees, shaping their lives long after their physical journey has ended. Secondly, this thesis highlights the significance of stories within the asylum system and the ways in which young people's narrative and embodied accounts can come under scrutiny. Finally, this thesis points to the ways in which young refugees can experience a sense of being governed through time as they seek asylum.

This thesis has sought to provide insights for both academic and policy audiences about the multiple aspects of insecurity that young refugees negotiate. Beyond this, the findings of this thesis demonstrate the creative and adaptive ways in which young people seek to forge more secure futures within contexts of displacement.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I will map out some of the stories that are embedded in the journey of this thesis, discussing my own personal journey into this research and the gaps in the literature this thesis has sought to address. This chapter also situates this thesis within the global context of forced displacement and describes the contribution that this research seeks to make. The chapter closes with an overview of the thesis that follows.

1.1. The Focus of this Thesis

This is a thesis about journeys and stories. It broadly focuses on the different kinds of journeys taken by young people seeking asylum, by examining the stories that they tell about their lives. On one level, the thesis explores the stories that young people tell about their journeys, exploring accounts of migration journeys across land, air and sea, alongside those describing more subjective journeys from child to adult or asylum seeker to refugee. On another level, the thesis is also concerned with the journeys of young people's stories as they travel through the asylum system, examining the ways in which their narrative accounts have been treated as evidence and queried for their validity.

In addition to the focus of this thesis on stories and journeys, the analysis of these different aspects is threaded through with a sensitivity to the temporal aspects of participants' experiences. It is these three aspects, stories, journeys and time, which form the focus of this thesis and make up the core components of the research questions stated below. As I will discuss briefly here and in more detail in Chapter Two, these research questions address key gaps in the substantive literature that focuses on the experiences of young asylum seekers. After presenting the research questions and briefly expanding on each, I will move to discuss the rationale behind each of these three themes, journeys, stories and time.

1.1.1. Research Questions

What subjective accounts do young people narrate about their experiences of seeking asylum?

By subjective accounts, this research question seeks to explore and examine the stories that young refugees tell about their lives, understanding these stories as being representative of the subjective truth of their experiences. Through this question, I understand participants' stories as accounts of what has been 'real' for them in particular contexts, and therefore do not seek to ascertain how participants' stories relate to the 'objective truth' of their lives. As a researcher, the value of participants' accounts lies in their subjective truth, since I am interested in the ways in which their experiences are constructed and reconstructed through the stories that they tell.

a) *How do migration journeys feature in the stories that young people tell?*

This sub-research question is directed at exploring journeys taken by young refugees. In terms of migration journeys, the question focuses on the period of time between the young person's departure from their home country until they experienced a sense of 'arrival' or a sense that their journey had ended. This focus on journeys is purposefully broad and creates room to consider physical migration journeys in addition to the more subjective experience of journeying that young people may experience once their physical journey has come to an end.

b) *How does time feature in the stories that young people tell?*

This sub-research question focuses on the temporal aspects of the stories that young refugees tell about their lives, understanding that migration is a process involving negotiations with time as well as space. This focus on time is broad and covers how young people relate to chronological time, social time and the past, present and future within their journeys and their lives more broadly.

c) *What are the functions of stories for young people as they seek asylum?*

As I will discuss in later chapters, stories matter in the lives of all refugees who seek asylum, since narrative testimony often forms the basis on which asylum decisions are made. Refugees are often called upon to provide accounts of their past experiences of trauma and the reasons that caused them to flee, with these stories having a particular

function in supporting their asylum claim. This sub-research question seeks to explore the functionality of stories for young refugees by examining their experiences of providing narrative testimony and negotiating the storied politics of asylum.

1.1.2. Why Stories?

As I will discuss in Chapter Two, an asylum seeker is someone who has made a claim for refugee protection and is waiting to hear the outcome of their claim. Seeking asylum is a process of seeking official recognition for the dangers that one has faced and will continue to face if they are returned to their country of origin. To be granted refugee protection, an asylum seeker must therefore be able to make a strong case for their need for sanctuary, providing accounts of past trauma and present risk. The asylum process can therefore be thought of as one that places a burden of testimony on refugees, calling on them to provide accounts of their experiences. As refugee scholar Nando Sigona has written, "Decisions on asylum claims, in the paucity of objective evidential proof, rely heavily on a claimant's personal account and the way she or he recollects and pieces together the events that led to their forced departure" (Sigona 2014; 4).

Whilst the process of providing testimony of past experiences and present dangers is central to the process of being a refugee, very few academics have focused specifically on the storied politics of the asylum process, particularly in relation to being a young refugee. As I will discuss in Chapter Two, researchers interested in the experiences of young refugees have largely focused on young people's experiences of constructing identities and a sense of belonging in the UK or on particular aspects of the asylum system such as age assessment. Whilst some researchers, such as Ravi Kohli, have written about the centrality of refugee stories within asylum processes (see Kohli 2009), there has been little considered examination of how young people negotiate the storied politics of this context.

With this thesis, I have sought to fill this gap by providing a focused study of the stories that young refugees tell about their lives and by examining the ways in which they negotiate the storied politics of the asylum process. Whilst not all of the participants in this research were directly called on to provide an account of their experiences in the asylum process, being instead represented by parents or siblings, all of the young people interviewed had experienced something of the storied politics of

asylum and the ways in which the system passes judgment on their own or their families' stories.

Beyond an overarching focus on 'storied lives', I have structured the analysis of the participants' subjective accounts around the two further themes of journeys and time and I will now turn to discuss the rationale behind focusing on these themes.

1.1.3. Why Journeys?

Journeys can be a central feature of the experience of becoming a refugee, since the process of being displaced most often involves leaving one's home and travelling to seek protection elsewhere. However, despite being a common feature of refugees' experiences, there is a significant gap regarding refugee journeys within refugee and forced migration research. This gap stems from the fact that refugee researchers have commonly focused on either side of the migration process, choosing to study the reasons that lead to exile or refugees' experiences of integration and settlement in a host country.

In recent years, refugee scholars such as BenEzer and Zetter (2015) have called for this gap to be addressed with refugee research that adopts a greater sensitivity to the importance of journeys in refugees' lives. BenEzer and Zetter contend that refugee journeys can be highly significant experiences for those involved and that they therefore deserve greater attention within the field. In response to this call, I decided to direct one of the research questions towards exploring the significance of journeys in the lives of young refugees.

1.1.4. Why Time?

In addition to a focus on journeys, I also incorporated a focus on time into the research questions, responding to a further significant gap within refugee research. As migration scholars Cwerner (2001) and Griffiths (2013; 2014) have noted, research surrounding refugee journeys and broader experiences of migration has most often been concerned with the spatial aspects of these experiences, failing to pay attention to the ways in which migration is also experienced and made sense of through time. To respond to this, scholars such as Griffiths (2013; 2014) and Allsopp et al. (2014) have begun to pay

attention to the temporal aspects of migration, tracing the rhythms of asylum processes and seeking to understand the impact of these within refugees' lives.

This thesis has responded to the call for more temporally sensitive refugee research by examining the ways in which time features in the stories that young refugees tell about their journeys and experiences of seeking asylum. It has sought to develop and extend the findings of studies by Griffiths (2013; 2014), who has traced the impact of temporal rhythms within the asylum process, by using a similar approach to explore how such rhythms affect young people in particular. More broadly, this thesis has sought to address the gap concerning refugee research, which has a sensitivity to time as well as space by establishing a sensitivity to the temporal aspects of young refugees' lives.

1.2. Why Me?

To provide an introduction to my own personal journey into this research, I am going to spend some time briefly describing why I embarked on this thesis and directed it towards understanding the experiences of young refugees. In doing so, I have been influenced by Jane Miller's concept of the 'autobiography of the question' (1995), through which she considers the role that a researcher's personal identity plays in the development and process of research.

As a mixed-race child of a Pakistani immigrant father and an English mother, I grew up with an interest in migration and identity. As a child, I would sit and listen to stories of my father's journey to the UK, learning about his experience of migration and the complex ways in which it had reshaped his relationships to 'home'. Whilst my family background did not directly lead me into the study of this thesis, my heritage did provide me with a framework for understanding something of migration journeys and the significance that they can carry.

When I went to university and began to settle in Cardiff, I started volunteering every Wednesday at a drop in centre for refugees and asylum seekers. As I would sit each week and meet people who had travelled to Cardiff from around the world, I began to learn about the UK asylum process and the uncertainty that could be experienced by those who navigate it. On one of my long university summers, I travelled to visit extended family in Malaysia, and as part of my trip, spent a month volunteering in a school for young refugees from Myanmar. It was here that I saw something of the

particular insecurity that young refugees can experience as they face their transition to adulthood with little assurance about what the future might hold.

After returning from my trip to Kuala Lumpur, I embarked on my third year dissertation as part of my BSc Psychology degree. Through this short thesis, I began to explore the academic literature surrounding refugees and forced migration, focusing particularly on clinical literature exploring the relationships between forced migration, childhood and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Whilst I found the opportunity to explore forced migration from an academic perspective interesting, I felt I wanted to develop my understanding of refugees' experiences beyond a clinical approach. It was at this point that I found out about the opportunity to apply for an Economic and Social Science (ESRC) 1+3 research studentship in Social Sciences. I put in an application based on a broad proposal about studying the wellbeing of young people seeking asylum in the UK. I later found out it was approved and several months later, I began the process of working on the MSc that preceded this thesis.

In this section I have briefly set out my journey into this thesis. I will revisit my own personal journey again in Chapter Eight, where I close the thesis by reflecting on three pivotal moments in the research journey. Before moving to set out the contribution of this thesis, I will now turn to discuss the relevance and importance of this research in relation to the current context of global displacement and what has been termed the 'Refugee Crisis'[1].

1.3. Why Now?

Throughout the duration of the journey of this thesis, the global picture of forced displacement has shifted dramatically, with greater numbers of people becoming displaced each year. When I began my MSc and doctoral study in 2011, there were 42.5 million displaced people globally, with this number including refugees and also those who had been internally displaced within their own countries (UNHCR 2015). The following year, this figure increased to 45.2 million people, which at that time was the highest level in over 20 years (UNHCR 2014). In 2014, the most recent year for which there is comprehensive data, this figure grew to 59.5 million, the highest number of displaced people ever recorded. As the Syrian Civil War and unrest in many other

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[1] A webinar providing a critical discussion of this terminology can be found Oxford University Human Rights Hub https://oxforduniversity.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=f5c28cd3-bca2-4f67-9b2c-419025f15170

countries continues, it is estimated that in 2015, the number of displaced people recorded globally will be even higher (UNHCR 2015). Over the four year period of this doctoral study, issues of displacement, immigration and asylum policy have moved to the forefront of political, policy and humanitarian debates as different stakeholders have tried to respond to the growing numbers of people on the move worldwide.

Whilst this thesis has not sought to provide a specific response to the current refugee situation worldwide, this context has worked to shape this thesis in several ways. Most significantly, it has provided a sense of the relevance of the stories that are contained within these pages. As I have listened to and analysed the accounts of the young people who have participated in this research, I have been struck by the ways in which their stories of fleeing war, travelling on precarious journeys and seeking asylum stand not only as personal and specific individual accounts but also represent part of a global narrative, which speaks of the experiences of millions of displaced people worldwide.

In 2015, there was one particular moment that stood out as a key event in the evolving context of global displacement. On the 2nd September 2015, a photograph of a Syrian child, Alan Kurdi, lying drowned on a Turkish beach, spread through the global media, becoming viral and prompting immediate responses from politicians, community groups and news organisations worldwide. This tragic photograph seemed to capture something of the human cost of the 'refugee crisis' and in doing so, shifted the focus towards the humanitarian aspects of the situation and temporarily at least, away from more politically focused debates on asylum and immigration policy (see Hodder et al. 2015 for a discussion). As I witnessed these events and the resulting political and policy debates, I was, like many others, struck by the tragedy and human fragility depicted in the photograph of this child and the powerful way in which it worked to shape responses to the 'refugee crisis'.

As I reflected on the emotive power of the photograph, I was struck by the way in which Alan Kurdi, like the young people in this research, had had little control over the circumstances of war that he was born into and the precarious journeys that these circumstances would one day force him to embark upon. As I reflected on his death and the journey of the photograph across the world, I thought about how Alan Kurdi also had had little control over the way in which his life ended and the impact and journey of his story as it travelled across the world. These reflections have been particular pertinent to my concerns as a researcher as I have worked on this thesis, feeding into the ways in

which I have thought about the precarious lives of the participants and the lack of control that they have too experienced over their journeys and the journeys of their stories. I have also been particularly challenged to ethically consider the journeys of the participants' stories and my responsibility over how they might be taken forward through this thesis and beyond.

It is almost unnecessary to state how the evolving context of the 'refugee crisis' discussed in this section has provided this thesis with a particular relevance and timeliness. Whilst this thesis stands itself as a detailed and substantive study of the experiences of a group of young refugees in the UK, it is also closely embedded in the wider context of global displacement discussed here. In light of this, the stories contained in these pages provide an indication of the sort of experiences that are likely characteristic of the millions of young people currently displaced worldwide.

It is my hope that this thesis might offer a different perspective on the current context of global displacement than that which is often heard in news reports and political discussions. I have sought to achieve this by providing a considered examination of the stories told by young refugees and the complex terrains through which their journeys of migrating and seeking asylum can take them. I will now move to discuss the contribution that this thesis seeks to make.

1.4. The Aims of This Thesis

This thesis aims to contribute in several important ways to research, policy and practice. Firstly, it aims to respond to the substantial gap within refugee studies, concerning the process of refugee journeys and their significance within refugees' lives. Secondly, this thesis seeks to explore the temporal aspects of forced migration for young refugees, an area that has also been largely overlooked in the field. By considering the ways in which time features in the stories that young refugees tell about their migration journeys and experiences of seeking asylum, this thesis seeks to examine the ways in which migration experiences can be understood through the prism of time.

Thirdly, this thesis seeks to explore the 'storied lives' of young refugees and the function and significance of stories in their lives. In doing so, it seeks to build on studies that have suggested that stories are of high significance to young refugees (see Kohli 2009) and that narratives carry importance for all those who seek asylum (see Sigona 2014).

Beyond the substantive contributions outlined above, this thesis also seeks to make a methodological contribution to the field. By employing narrative methods to explore the functions of narrative for young people as they seek asylum, this thesis seeks to examine how narrative methods can be used to explore the function and significance of stories in young people's lives. Through this, the research seeks to contribute to the broad field of narrative research, by providing a further study that engages with the functions of stories within the social world. More specifically, the research seeks to contribute to the field of refugee studies, building on existing research that has used narrative methods to explore refugees' experiences, by employing narrative methods to examine young refugees' 'storied lives'.

1.5. The Structure of This Thesis

To close this chapter, I am now going to set out the structure of this thesis and comment on the rationale behind it.

The first two chapters are designed to contextualise this research and provide an account of the literature that has shaped my approach. Chapter Two situates this thesis within the broader field of research on forced migration, asylum and childhood. It begins by exploring the global context of forced migration and then moves to detail key aspects of the asylum system within the UK. The remainder of the chapter asks how the lives of young refugees have been approached within social research and maps out the gaps that exist. The chapter closes by presenting the research questions that structured this thesis.

Chapter Three provides a discussion of the conceptual toolkit that I used to frame my analytical engagement with participants' narratives. It describes how I have worked with an eclectic collection of concepts to illuminate different themes within the participants' narratives. The first section of the chapter focuses on the concept of precarity, which was the key orienting concept of this thesis and was embedded within all of the analysis. From this, I move to discuss the further concepts that I have worked with, exploring scholarship around mobility, materiality, space and time.

Chapter Four provides a detailed account of the methodological journey of this research, beginning by tracing the development of the research questions and setting out the ontological and epistemological moorings of this thesis. The focus then moves to describe the research design and the ways in which narrative and the status of talk were

approached in this research. The journey of the data analysis comprises a substantial focus of the chapter, and the surrounding discussion explores the analytical strategy employed and how the key themes emerged. Chapter Four closes with a discussion of the ethical considerations that shaped this research and the personal and political challenges that I encountered.

In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I set out the findings of the thesis. These analytical chapters are organised to mirror my own engagement with the data and the way in which I journeyed through the analysis. In light of this, whilst each of these chapters addresses one of the research questions, they follow a slightly different order to that of the research questions. Chapter Five is the longest of the three chapters and focuses on the migration journeys of the participants as they travelled to the UK and the different aspects of being uprooted, in transit, anchored and ruptured. This chapter is expansive and by working across the whole dataset, seeks to provide an indication of the breadth of narrative data and the ways in which journeys featured in the participants' accounts. The length and breadth of Chapter Five reflects my early engagement with the data, where I worked in a detailed way across all of the participants' accounts.

Chapter Six adopts a more focused case-study approach by working closely with two of the participants' narrative accounts to examine what role stories play for young people seeking asylum. By analysing two rich case studies, the chapter seeks to explore how participants' discursive and embodied stories were read, dissected and spoken for within the context of the asylum process. The first half of Chapter Five focuses on the experience of Ananjan, who fled Sri Lanka and is now seeking asylum alone in the UK. The second half of the chapter focuses on the experiences of another participant, Rehema, and her reflections of giving an account of herself within the asylum system. Chapter Five closes with a discussion of the politics of recognition at play within the asylum process and reflects on the functions of narrative accounts within this context.

The final analysis chapter in this thesis, Chapter Seven, explores how time featured in the stories that the participants told about their experiences of seeking asylum. By turning the analytical prism onto a specific aspect of the participants' experiences, Chapter Seven considers how the governance of time can be related to young people's experiences of insecurity. The structure of Chapter Seven mirrors that of Chapter Five and reflects the way in which, after the deep and focused case-study analysis of Chapter Six, I began to work more broadly again across the whole of the

participants' data. Through the analysis of interview extracts from multiple participants, the discussion of Chapter Seven explores the relationships between temporality, asylum, age and power, relating these discussions back to the work of Judith Butler and Isabell Lorey on precarity.

The thesis closes with Chapter Eight, which charts the research journey of this thesis. In this chapter, I map out aspects of my own research journey, describing key points from the beginning, middle and end of the research process. The chapter then moves to critically reflect on the conceptual and methodological approaches used and comments on the ways in which these have extended the field and the ways in which they might be taken forward. Following this, I discuss how this thesis has answered the research questions and the contributions it has made. The thesis closes with Warsan Shire's poem 'Home'.

Chapter Two: Forced Migration, Asylum and Childhood

As Chapter One discussed, during the latter stages of writing this thesis in the summer of 2015, there was a marked shift in the level of attention being directed towards the global migration of refugees worldwide. Within this context, one of the most striking elements to me as an academic researcher was the inconsistent terminology that was being used to describe those who were migrating. Across political and media discussions, terms such as 'migrant', 'illegal immigrant', 'asylum seeker', 'refugee' were used interchangeably to describe the thousands of people on the move. Beyond this, the terms 'migrant smugglers' and 'migrant traffickers' were also both being employed to describe the individuals who facilitate or cause migration journeys, despite these terms having quite different definitions.

For the individuals who navigate the complex terrain of immigration and asylum regimes, the distinctions between the terms 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' and 'migrant' are significant, carrying legal implications about the level of protection that they receive. In light of this, one of the chief aims of this chapter is to set out and discuss the terminology and policies that are used to categorise the varying statuses of forced migrants. I have constructed this chapter so that the first half focuses solely on the policy context of forced migration and asylum, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of young refugees and the policies that shape their lives. In doing so, I seek to provide an introduction to the policies, numbers and terminology that will contextualise the findings of this thesis.

The second half of the chapter is where I move to develop the rationale for the thesis. Here, I consider the ways in which the lives of child refugees and asylum seekers have been approached in research, beginning by discussing the main disciplinary approaches in the field. Through examining mental health, social work and legal approaches, I set out the key discourses and perspectives that have shaped the ways in which young refugees' lives are and have been studied. The chapter then moves to examine research with young refugees, which is broadly located within the sociology of childhood. Within this section, I explore how the experiences of young refugees have been studied by childhood sociologists and human geographers, focusing on themes such as home and belonging, identity and navigating the asylum system. I close the chapter with a discussion of the research questions and explain the ways in which they emerged to respond to current gaps in the research literature.

2.1. Forced Migration and Asylum

2.1.1. The Global Context of Forced Migration

In recent years the experience of forced migration has become a reality for significant numbers of people across the world, with the numbers of refugees in 2013 exceeding 50 million for the first time since the Second World War (UNHCR 2015). To open this chapter, I will now discuss some of the key aspects of the contemporary context of forced migration, engaging with the work of key scholars who have informed my general understanding.

Forced migration, according to Roger Zetter, a Professor of Refugee Studies, is a last resort response that is only undertaken by those who lack any other viable options (2015). Zetter argues that when faced with conflict, the threat of violence, human rights abuses and other dangers, a person has the choice to fight, attempt escape or to give up and likely suffer terrible consequences. Since in most situations of crisis and violence, the person being threatened usually comes under one or more categories of particular risk or vulnerability (such as being female, elderly or a child), attempting escape is a common response (Zetter 2015).

In a recent report for the US-based Migration Policy Institute, Zetter (2015) has discussed the contemporary context of forced migration and some of the tensions that characterise policy and practice within the field. As Zetter comments, the drivers of displacement are diverse and normally more complex than a single cause-effect relationship with one main factor, often being numerous and intersecting. Whilst some refugees may flee because of specific exposure to ethnic, political and religious persecution or individual experiences of abuse, many will flee because of a combination of conflict, environmental change, poor governance and poverty. The intersection of such factors can leave individuals at risk of danger and facing an uncertain future, with these vulnerabilities often compelling people to leave their homes in the search of greater security.

When people leave their homes and seek legal protection as refugees elsewhere, their claims for protection are judged against the criteria set out in the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The 1951 Convention states that in order to be legally recognised as a refugee, an individual must be fleeing persecution based on their "race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political

opinion" and must be outside of their country of nationality (UN 1951). This convention and the specific criteria that it describes is the means by which people can become legally recognised as refugees and receive the protection of another state. The criteria detailing the different aspects of persecution therefore acts as the legal benchmark through which asylum decisions are made across the world, being the standard by which all refugees must be assessed.

Since the contemporary drivers of forced migration are generally multi-causal and complex, the process of rendering protection on the basis of persecution as set out within the Refugee Convention is becoming increasingly challenging to implement. As forced migration scholars Volker Turk and Rebecca Dowd (2014) have argued, the central obstacle to obtaining protection under the Convention stems from the requirement that an individual's claim pertains to one of the five areas of persecution, therefore precluding claims based on more generalised suffering or threats such as environmental disasters.

In support of Turk and Dowd's claims, Zetter argues that the fundamental challenge of refugee protection stems from a disjuncture between contemporary patterns and processes of forced migration and the established legal frameworks that have been designed to protect refugees. This disjuncture has led to what Zetter terms, "an increasing range of protection gaps" (Zetter 2015; 1), where many of today's forced migrants who fall outside of legal definitions of persecution, and even those who do qualify, can face increased risks of protracted insecurity. This context can mean that the millions of people who do manage to reach countries where they can seek asylum can face a complex struggle as they seek to prove their validity as authentic refugees.

2.1.2. The Securitisation of Borders

Beyond examining the complexity that refugees can face as they seek to prove their validity as refugees, forced migration researchers have focused on the complex global politics of border control and the ways in which these regimes shape the lives of refugees. From the boundaries of what is considered persecution to the checkpoints that refugees may cross during their journey to safety, the lives of refugees are governed by multiple borders, which work to determine the level of freedom that they experience. The borders of immigration control are commonly imagined as physical borders,

marked by fences or coastlines and policed by border guards. Migration researcher Bridget Anderson has argued that in addition to the physicality of borders, they can also exist immaterially as the subjective borders that demarcate the citizen from the migrant (2013; 2). As Anderson argues, borders reach into the heart of political space, not only existing as markers of physical territory, but also as the boundaries that signify the characteristics and privileges of citizenship as they shift over time and space.

The notion that borders reach into the heart of political space is particularly relevant to recent research that has sought to map out the increasing securitisation of forced migration. Within this field, migration and security researchers such as Anne Hammerstad and Phillipe Bourbeau have explored the changing relationship between national security and migration, examining the ways in which international migration has become increasingly conflated with risks of international terrorism and violence (Hammerstad 2014; Bourbeau 2011). In her research, Hammerstad has examined how in the aftermath of the 11th September 2001 attacks in New York, the securitisation of migration intensified with direct links being made between inadequate immigration control and the threat of international terrorism.

Since 2008, the economic downturn has hit migrant-receiving countries such as the UK severely and as such, has worked to shift some of the anxiety towards migrants away from risks of terrorism and towards the notion that they represent an economic threat. However, despite this, Hammerstad argues that the image of refugees and asylum seekers as dangerous others still exists in the public consciousness. Other scholars, such as Christina Boswell, have taken issue with the notion that the dynamic of securitisation has shaped immigration policy in the EU post-9/11, commenting in 2007, that there was little evidence for this phenomenon. However, despite this view, Boswell concedes that it cannot be denied that dynamics of securitisation have been present in some instances, the most obvious of which, relates to policies and attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees in Europe (Boswell 2007; 590).

To understand the hostility that refugees can often experience in the countries where they seek protection, Matthew Gibney has focused on examining the ethics and politics of asylum and the ways in which the immigration regimes of liberal democracies position and respond to those who seek protection within their borders. Gibney argues that whilst categories of membership are constantly shifting in relation to changing social, political and economic relations, refugees continue to occupy an ambivalent space within the Western countries where they seek asylum. He describes

the Western response to asylum seekers as being characterised *"by a kind of schizophrenia"* (Gibney 2004; 2) with the historical significance afforded to the principle of asylum, at odds with the enormous efforts currently made to ensure that refugees never reach the states where they could receive such protection.

The ambivalent response within Western states towards refugees can stem from tensions between discourses of humanitarianism and securitisation, which work to position refugees in contradictory ways. As Anne Hammerstad has discussed, whilst discourses of humanitarianism focus on refugees as vulnerable people in need of protection, discourses of securitisation mark them out as unwelcome foreigners who represent a threat to the security of citizens (Hammerstad 2014). In her analysis of Mediterranean boat migration, Hammerstad describes how the irregular migrants who travel to Europe from North Africa on overloaded and inadequate boats are commonly treated like 'a hostile invasion force' as they seek to enter Europe (Hammerstad 2014; 269). She argues that the refugees who travel on these routes from countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea and Syria are judged firstly by the manner by which they travel, which since being clandestine and illegal, serves to position their journey as a criminal act. This overall positioning can work to dehumanise the migrants, making it easier to ignore any signals of distress from their boats and if they reach the shore, to justify policies of detention and deportation.

When refugees do reach Western states and seek asylum, they can present governments with a range of practical difficulties, since as asylum seekers, they are merely individuals who have a claim to be refugees. As Gibney has discussed, the uncertainty and ambiguity over the actual dangers that asylum seekers face can open up space within Western states for a wariness of bogus asylum seekers. This can create a fear of those who are seen to be exploiting the hospitality of the host country by creating a false claim for protection. In these contexts, the fear of people abusing asylum systems can lead to the term asylum seeker becoming extended beyond a simple description of legal status and instead becoming a value laden term that is associated with hostility and danger (Gibney 2004; 10). This point is echoed by Anderson, who writes that terms such as asylum seeker can be "value laden and negative" since immigration and citizenship are not simply about legal status but fundamentally about worth and membership in a community of value (Anderson 2014; 4). In her recent work, Anderson and her colleague Vanessa Hughes, describe how such communities of

value are defined both from the outside by exclusion, and from the inside by failure to be seen as a 'good citizen' (Anderson and Hughes 2015; 4)

Over the past thirty years, and in particular, during 2015, the growth in numbers of refugees seeking protection within Western states has made refugee and asylum policy a prominent political issue. Whilst Western states could once ignore the refugees located far from their borders, large-scale conflicts such as the Syrian Civil War, alongside increased technology and travel capabilities have increased the numbers of refugees travelling to the West to seek protection. Liberal democratic states have generally responded to the rise of asylum seekers as a political and security issue by employing a range of preventative and deterrent measures designed to reduce the flow of asylum seekers reaching their borders. However, once refugees reach Western states, the latter have a duty under the Refugee Convention to provide an impartial process by which the claims of those seeking protection as refugees can be fairly assessed.

To explain how the asylum system works in the UK, an overview of the process is provided in the next section, paying particular attention to policies relating to the claims of asylum seeking children.

2.1.3. Seeking Asylum in the UK

Asylum seekers are defined as individuals who have sought international refugee protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined (UNHCR 2015). They are therefore individuals with pending asylum claims who are either waiting for the initial outcome of their claim or are hoping for a new decision as a result of a successful appeal.

Within the UK, the numbers of people seeking asylum peaked at 84,130 in 2002 and reduced to 25,507 in 2013 (Migration Observatory 2015). However, in 2014, asylum claims across industrialised countries increased by 45 percent compared to the 2013 figures, with this increase largely due to the Syrian Civil War. The UK was the eighth largest recipient of new asylum seekers amongst industrialised countries, receiving 31,000 claims, which represented a 5% increase on 2013. This was a relatively small increase compared to other countries such as Germany, who saw a 58% increase (UNHCR 2015).

Within the UK, applications for asylum are decided on by case-owners in the UK Home Office's Visa and Immigration Directorate. In 2007, the UK government introduced the 'New Asylum Model', in which each asylum application is assigned a single case owner. Asylum case owners are responsible for the whole of an asylum case and the decisions made, starting from the moment that an individual's initial claim is registered to the outcome of their application. The first stage of an asylum claim comes in the form of an initial screening interview, at which the personal details and fingerprints of the claimant are taken and a reference number is given. Following this, the applicant attends the 'first reporting event', which is held prior to the asylum interview and involves the applicant meeting the case owner who has been assigned to their case (UK Home Office 2015).

The next step in the asylum process is what is known as the asylum interview or substantive interview, during which an applicant must explain how they experienced persecution in their country of nationality and why they are afraid to go back. In these interviews and all other meetings, interpreters are available for those individuals who require one. After the substantive interview, asylum seekers must attend regular meetings with their case owner as they wait for the outcome of their case to be decided. The Home Office states that decisions are usually made in six months, unless further interviews and evidence are required (UK Home Office 2015). However, government-run formal inquiries have shown that many asylum seekers wait longer than six months, with some applicants being forced to wait as a long as 16 years (Home Affairs Committee 2013).

2.1.4. Seeking Asylum as a Child

The process of seeking asylum as a child varies depending on the circumstances surrounding the child's arrival in the UK. Since there are several different terms used to describe young people seeking asylum in the UK, I have presented the key terminology and definitions in Figure 1.

Term	Definition
Displaced or Forced Migrant Child	These terms to relate to all children and young people who have experienced forced migration. Within surrounding policy and academic literature, the terms forced migration and displacement are used interchangeably to refer to the experience of being forced to leave one's home because it is unsafe to remain there. Within this thesis, I will use both terms.
Child Asylum Seeker (seeking asylum with family)	Children and young people who are seeking asylum as part of their families are known generally as young people seeking asylum. However, because they are seeking asylum as part of their family, the asylum claim and all related interviews will be conducted with their parents or guardian.
Separated or Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child	Young people seeking asylum alone used to be referred to as 'unaccompanied asylum seeking children' or UASC. However in recent years, there has been a shift towards using the term 'separated child' to denote young people who travel and seek asylum alone.
Trafficked Child	This term relates to young people who have been moved for the purposes of exploitation, using deception, power or abuse. Many trafficked children come under wider discussions of 'separated children' since they also seek asylum in the UK separately from their parents or guardian.

Figure 1. Table of Definitions

The policies relating to young people who seek asylum with their parents or guardian are the same as those experienced by adult claimants and since these processes were described in the previous section 2.1.3. I will not discuss them further here. Throughout the body of this thesis, when I refer to 'young people seeking asylum', I will be making reference to the majority of young people who seek asylum with their families. If I am specifically referring to the circumstances surrounding young people who have either being trafficked or who are seeking asylum alone as a separated child, I will make this apparent and will follow the definitions outlined above.

I will now briefly turn to discuss the specific policies relating to two categories of child forced migrants, separated children and trafficked children, as the latter discussions of this thesis may draw on the specific circumstances that these young people can face.

2.1.4.1. Trafficked Children

This thesis does not concentrate specifically on the experiences of trafficked children, however since many children who have been trafficked also come under the remit of the asylum system, it is important to briefly consider their specific experiences. Trafficking is defined as the "movement of a person from one place to another into conditions of exploitation, using deception, coercion, the abuse of power or the abuse of someone's vulnerability" (UK National Crime Agency 2015). Whilst there is no concrete data on the precise numbers of children trafficked to the UK, it is known that trafficked children are likely to come from countries such as Vietnam, Nigeria and Romania (UK National Crime Agency 2015). These children may be trafficked to the UK for a variety of reasons, including sexual and labour exploitation.

Whilst trafficked children may have similar experiences to other children in terms of seeking asylum, there is also additional provision in place to ensure their protection while seeking refuge. In the UK, after ratifying the European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in 2005, the UK government set up the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to formalise the process of identifying trafficking victims in the UK and referring them on for support (see Ishola 2014). However, despite the implementation of systems such as NRM to ensure the short-term protection of children who have been trafficked, many young people find themselves navigating the same asylum structures that shape the lives of other separated children.

2.1.4.2. Separated Children

The term separated children is used to refer to children and young people who are under 18 years of age, outside of their country of origin and have been separated from both parents or their caregiver (Separated Children in Europe Programme (SCEP) 2010). In 2014, 34,300 separated children, mainly from countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea, Syria and Somalia claimed asylum in 82 countries worldwide. In 2013, the numbers of separated children seeking asylum in Europe on an individual basis were on the rise with European countries receiving over half of new claims (UNHCR 2014). Since the use of definitions varies across research, with the term 'unaccompanied children' still used in some key studies (see, for example, Bhabha 2014), for the purpose of consistency, this thesis will use the term 'separated children' for all children and young people who migrate and seek asylum separately from their primary caregivers.

As previously mentioned, a child who seeks asylum as part of their family will not have an individual asylum claim but will instead be incorporated into their family's claim. This means that the child will not be interviewed as part of the asylum process and that their parents or guardian will be responsible for discussing the family's experiences as a whole. In contrast, for separated young people who seek asylum alone, an asylum claim will depend on them being interviewed and providing an own account of the threats that they face. The asylum process for separated young people is detailed in Figure 2.

Table 1: The Asylum Process
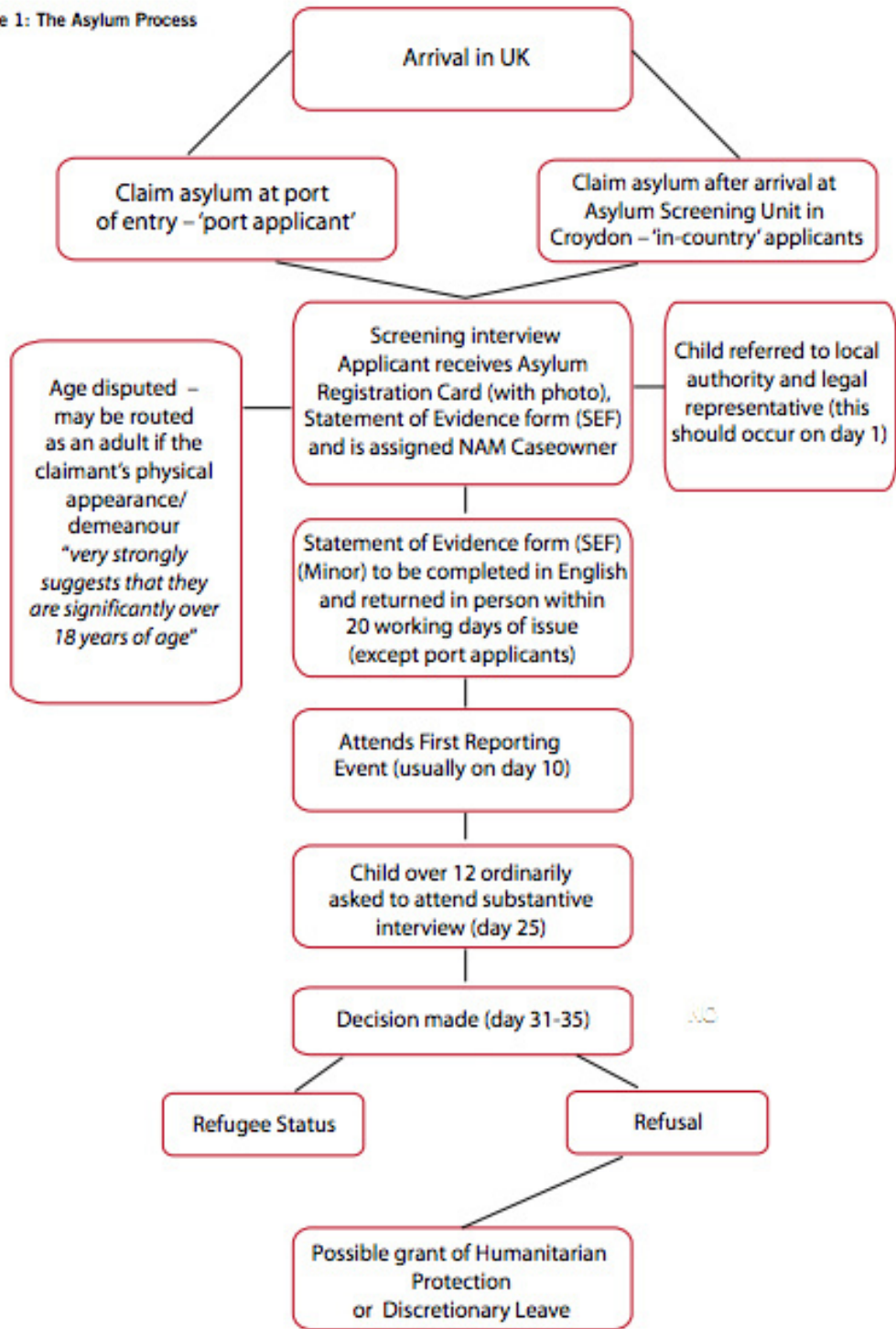
Figure 2. The Asylum Process for Separated Children (Migrant Children's Project 2012)

2.1.4.2.1. Age and Separated Children

As Figure 2 demonstrates, whilst many of the stages of seeking asylum as a child are similar to the asylum process for adults, there are a few key differences, which centre on a young person's age and their entitlement to extra provision. I will briefly discuss these key differences now.

If a young person seeks asylum alone and is understood to be a child they will be referred to a local authority and then legal representatives and care arrangements will be set up. They will then go through a similar process to adults, being interviewed about their experiences and detailing their fear of persecution. If the young person's asylum claim is approved, they will then be entitled to remain in the UK as a refugee. However, if it is denied and they are over 17 ½ years old, they will be sent back to their country of origin.

If a young person is under 17 ½ years old, they will receive discretionary leave to remain in the UK until that age. Under international law, states must protect young people who are younger than 18 years old and therefore cannot send them back to their country of origin if there is no one to care for them there. As such, discretionary leave is provided to children less than 17 ½ years old for whom there are no adequate reception arrangements available if they were to be returned to their country of origin.

Beyond discretionary leave, the other key difference in relation to young people's asylum claims is the possibility of age disputes. Establishing the age of a young person is central to determining provision within the asylum process, with an age of less than 18 years meaning that a young person is entitled to protection under international law. Furthermore, within the asylum system, the age of a young person determines a range of factors such as their access to education, whether they will be supported by children's social services and whether they can be detained as adults. The emphasis on age can be problematic since the majority of the young people who migrate to the UK lack any official documentation detailing their date of birth, which means that establishing their age is an area characterised by a great deal of ambiguity.

Within the ambiguous space around age, child advocates have argued that the suspicion that can be directed at asylum seekers more broadly can be seen to filter down to the way that young people are viewed, leading many young people's statements about their age being met with suspicion. The London-based Migrant Children's Project has argued that age disputes are often seen as a way to 'catch out' those who are seeking

to play the system by pretending to be children (Migrant Children's Project (MCP) 2013).

Another factor that can play a role in this context is given the recognised statutory duty to safeguard children seeking asylum, NGOs have expressed concerns that local authorities may seek to free themselves from their obligations by not accepting certain individuals as children and thus lessening the burden on the local authority (MCP 2013). This context means that age is a highly political and contested factor within the asylum process, with disputes not only occurring around whether an individual is an adult or a child but also over their exact ages, such as whether they are 14 or 17 and therefore whether they are entitled to protection under children's services. Whilst there is evidence of a small amount of abuse of the system, with some separated children being briefed by smugglers about what age they should say they are when they reach the UK, the MCP argue that such cases are thought to be the exception (MCP 2013).

Beyond debates around service provision, the centrality of the issue of age disputes for young people seeking asylum points to some of the ways in which cultural constructions of childhood can differ across time and space and the ways in which these diverse constructions can impact on children and young people's lives. To examine how academics have approached this relationship between childhood and forced migration, the chapter will now turn to explore the ways in which the lives of young refugees and asylum seekers have been researched.

2.2. Researching Childhood and Forced Migration

Whilst at any point it is impossible to precisely calculate the numbers of children who have been forced to migrate globally, it is clear that the experience of childhood displacement is a phenomenon of considerable proportions. In 2014, children made up 51 percent of the displaced population worldwide, which was the highest number of young forced migrants for more than a decade (UNHCR 2015). For the children and young people who experience displacement, the process of forced migration and seeking asylum can exert a range of direct and diffuse impacts on their lives. In response to this, academics have used a variety of different perspectives to research these young people's experiences. I will now map out the central disciplinary

approaches that have been used to research the lives of young forced migrants. Following this, I will set out the key areas of concern within sociology of childhood and children's geographies research relating to young refugees and I will discuss how such research has informed the development of the research questions.

2.2.1. Key Disciplinary Approaches

As a means of introducing the academic research that has been conducted with children who have experienced forced migration, it is helpful to consult social anthropologist Jason Hart's recent review of the field (2014). I am unaware of any other recent synthesis of research focusing on childhood and forced migration and so I have therefore used the framework of Hart's review to provide a useful introduction to the field. Within his review, Hart sets out the principle lines of inquiry that have been used to research the lives of child refugees, focusing on mental health, social work, legal and sociological approaches. I will now briefly discuss the main coordinates of mental health, social work and legal approaches before turning to examine sociological research with young refugees in more detail.

2.2.1.1. Mental Health and Social Work Approaches

According to Hart, mental health and social work approaches to researching childhood and forced migration have been the most influential in terms of establishing a distinct field of inquiry focused on the figure of the 'refugee child' (Hart 2014). These approaches, which generally focus on the mental and emotional impacts of displacement, aim to better understand which interventions promote coping in these contexts.

In the 1990s, the vast majority of mental health research with young refugees concentrated on trauma and on understanding the ways in which displacement and exposure to conflict could negatively impact on children and young people. Such work emphasised diagnosis and intervention by developing diagnostic tools such as the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (1991), alongside evaluating the efficacy of programmes that were designed to resolve or lessen experiences of trauma.

The trauma-focused model is underpinned by an understanding that children and young people are inherently vulnerable by virtue of their age and developmental status, and as such, traumatic events can be particularly damaging. Within this perspective, outside intervention is understood to be necessary to alleviate young people's suffering. In recent years, mental health scholars and organisations such as the American Psychological Association have begun to move away from this model and the cause-effect relationships it assumes towards a more holistic model that focuses on the complex interactions between children and their environments. This new model replaces the emphasis on 'trauma' with a focus on 'resilience' and whilst research still largely focuses on risk factors, scholars such as Jason Hart have argued that there is more space for acknowledging the agentic capacity of children within these contexts. Hart states that "a once dominant view of the young as inevitably traumatised objects of concern requiring expert assistance now contends with the assertion that even in the midst of dire and dangerous conditions children are potentially resilient social actors who may act in meaningful ways upon their situation" (Hart 2014; 3).

The shift to resilience can be seen in numerous reports such as the American Psychological Association's 2010 research on the resilience of young refugees after war, alongside psychiatric studies of mental illness in refugee children (see Reed et al. 2012). However whilst within these studies the authors do acknowledge the role of resilience alongside risk, they also often overlook the agentic capacity of children themselves in shaping their own experiences. This can be seen within some studies such as Reed et al's (2012) review, where there is little mention of the agentic capacity of children in developing their own resilience, with the protective factors that foster resilience, such as membership of peer or family networks being positioned simply as the contexts that young people passively absorb and respond to.

Social work approaches to research with young refugees share a common focus on intervention, seeking to understand different ways of ameliorating some of the difficulties that asylum-seeking children can face. Unlike mental health research that has often been conducted in situations of conflict or settings such as refugee camps, social work research has generally been conducted within Western countries and as such has focused broadly on resettlement and integration. Within the UK, social work scholars such as Ravi Kohli (2009) have explored the role that social workers can play in supporting asylum seeking young people navigate asylum procedures and have

provided a focused examination of young people's experience of foster care in this context.

Beyond mental health and social work approaches, legal research with young refugees forms another significant strand of research in the field, particularly in relation to policy perspectives. For this reason, it is important to engage with how this aspect of the lives of young refugees has been researched and the gaps that exist regarding the everyday experiences of young people who navigate the complex legal terrain of seeking asylum.

2.2.1.2. Legal Approaches: Rights and Representation

The legal landscape that shapes the lives of the forcibly displaced is complex and multiscalar, traversing international human rights law, children's rights law and domestic policies. As such there has been a significant amount of research attention directed at understanding the legal complexities of this context and the ways in which the tensions between different legal instruments can shape the lives of young forced migrants. Whilst some research in the field is conducted by legal academics, a large proportion of it is commissioned by aid agencies such as UNICEF, who often seek to examine the impact of a particular aspect of displacement such as sexual violence or detention.

A body of legal research in the field focuses on the ways in which immigration laws apply to children and the particular consequences for specific groups of children such as those who have been separated or trafficked (see Bhabha 2014 for an overview). Beyond this, legal research is often undertaken with the purpose of influencing domestic asylum policy and as such, focuses on specific areas of concern such as child detention or age disputes (see Crawley 2009; ILPA 2006).

Whilst studies of the legal and human rights aspects of forcibly displaced children's lives can cover a wide range of issues, they can be brought together under their collective focus on children's rights and their frequent reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989). The UNCRC, which was adopted in 1989, later received near universal ratification making it the most successful piece of UN legislation to date. As the basis of countless policies, reports and programmes, the UNCRC has become the centre of the hegemonic discourse around

childhood, with near universal ratification suggesting that its principles are globally shared.

The global reception of the UNCRC has not been as uncontested as its global reach can make it seem. Instead, academics and policymakers, particularly those from the global South, have provided multiple critiques of the ways in which primarily Western or Minority world notions of childhood have been exported to become the normative image of childhood worldwide (see Imoh and Ame 2012 for a discussion). Such critiques argue that by spreading a particular discourse of childhood as that which is a protected state from birth to age 18 years, legislation such as the UNCRC has led to childhood being viewed as a natural state that is characterised by innocence and experienced in a similar way the world over. As childhood scholars Imoh and Ame (2012) argue, this tendency to universalise Western concepts of childhood has propagated the view that there is a state of 'childhood' which is assumed to apply to all contexts, whether they are in the Minority world or not. As later sections of this chapter will discuss, the global spread of a certain representation of 'childhood' has been argued to exert a significant impact on young people's experiences of seeking asylum, particularly in contexts where their age is in dispute and immigration officials are seeking to discern if they are children.

Legal academics such as Jacqueline Bhabha have written about how tensions between globalised Minority world understandings of childhood and other representations of childhood link to the ambivalent ways in which forcibly displaced children are treated and represented as they move into Western contexts. In her recent work reviewing the global protection landscape for child migrants, Bhabha argues that by falling outside of recognisable representations of childhood, young refugees can meet a hostile reception that places them between discourses of protection and more punitive discourses of exclusion (Bhabha 2014). She comments that across industrialised countries such as the UK and United States, the institutional approach to asylum seeking children is ambivalent, as it straddles both a duty to protect and more exclusionary suspicions and hostilities towards 'bogus' asylum claimants.

Legal research is vital in highlighting the complex legal landscape that young refugees must navigate when they seek asylum. However, whilst Bhabha's work and other legal studies within the field have a strong focus on policy implications, they rarely offer insight into the everyday experiences of young people who navigate this complex legal terrain. Whilst discussions about the legal policies relating to the

experience of being a young refugee or asylum seeker are of significant importance, it is also necessary to understand how young people themselves perceive these policies and how they negotiate their daily lives within the asylum context. Since this thesis is directed towards understanding the subjective experiences of young refugees, in the following final section of this literature review, I turn my attention towards research that places the experiences of young people at the centre of analysis.

2.3. Research with Young Refugees: Home, Borders and Space

As this chapter has discussed, mental health, social work and legal approaches to researching childhood and displacement generally seek to understand how young people negotiate the negative impacts of displacement, seeing forced migration as a cause for their experiences. By contrast, research conducted within the sociology of childhood and more specifically, children's geographies, does not automatically assume that forced migration will exert negative consequences on young people's lives, understanding experiences of displacement as the context instead of the causes that shape young people's daily experiences.

Sociological research with young refugees is informed by the broader sociology of childhood, a field that emerged in the 1990s and developed rapidly within the 2000s to become a critical discipline within the broader field of childhood studies. Rooted in key works by childhood sociologists such as Allison James, Alan Prout and Chris Jenks, the sociology of childhood is characterised by its understanding of childhood as a social construction that is lived and experienced differently across diverse social, cultural, spatial and geographic contexts. According to James and James, a social construction can be understood as "a theoretical perspective that explores the ways in which 'reality' is negotiated in everyday life through people's interactions and through sets of discourses" (James and James 2004; 122). This means that instead of understanding childhood as a single universal phenomenon, childhood and related ideas such as 'adolescent' or 'generation', are understood to vary in meaning and relevance across different times and places.

Beyond a focus on childhood as socially constructed, the sociology of childhood is also characterised by a focus on the agentic nature of children and young people and the active role that they play in shaping their social worlds. Within the field, researchers

(see James and James 2004 and Boyden 1997 for examples) understand that whilst on the one hand, children's lives are constrained by broader social factors such as social policies, the structures of institutions and economic or environmental aspects, on the other, children do not passively inhabit these social contexts and instead can play an active role in shaping their own social worlds. Within contexts of displacement, this can mean that although their lives may be shaped by broader factors such as war, economic or political instability and precarious transit, young refugees are assumed to be actively involved in negotiating their daily existence.

The focus of this thesis on migration, childhood and borders means that it is closely related to the field of children's geographies. Whilst this thesis is not a piece of geographical research, it has been significantly informed by research that approaches the study of childhood by engaging with the central role of space and place in shaping children's lives. According to children's geographers Kraftl, Horton and Tucker (2012), the field is underpinned by the assumption that it is impossible to understand children's experiences of agency without interrogating their experiences of place.

Children's geographers have been in many ways at the forefront of research investigating the relationships between childhood, space and the different spatial borders that shape children's experiences. In terms of research with young refugees, children's geographers have examined aspects such how young people negotiate their identity or sense of home and belonging as they move across different spatial contexts. Whilst not all sociological research with young refugees is undertaken under the umbrella of children's geographies, the disciplinary sensitivities of the field carry a clear relevance for understanding the experiences of children and youth who have been forcibly displaced. I do not intend to provide a full review of children's geographies literature here, but within the following sections of this literature review, I will discuss the work of prominent children's geographers such as Deborah Sporton and Gill Valentine and discuss how they have influenced my approach. Furthermore, in Chapter Three, I will move to discuss how I employed broad concepts of space, time and mobility to enable me to engage with the role of space and time in shaping young refugees' experiences.

My interest in understanding how young people negotiate experiences of displacement has led me to locate this thesis within the broad field of the sociology of childhood and the related field of children's geographies. I will now move to map out this broad and interdisciplinary field of inquiry by setting out some of the key studies

that have shaped this thesis. The following review will be structured around key themes, existing gaps and emerging areas of concern within the field of sociological and geographical research with young people seeking asylum, examining themes such as journeys, identities, home and seeking asylum. From this discussion, I will then move to set out how the research questions of this thesis emerged in response to the gaps discussed here.

2.3.1. Research Theme One: Pre-Migration Experiences and Journeys

Much sociological and geographical research with young refugees has been conducted within Western countries and as such, generally focuses on young people's experiences of negotiating their life within the country where they are seeking asylum. Whilst such a focus is important, directing research in this way has resulted in a significant gap in terms of research that provides a sustained and detailed engagement with young refugees' journey experiences. Before addressing this gap, I will discuss the handful of studies that have sought to engage with this aspect of young refugees' lives.

Research on the pre-migration and journey experiences of young refugees has most commonly been conducted by psychiatrists interested in the mental wellbeing of young people who have been displaced (see Fazel and Stein 2002). Beyond this, there are a couple of instances within the field of children's geographies where researchers have sought to understand more about pre-flight and journey experiences, as a means to develop a broader understanding of young people's experiences of transnational migration. One such study by geographers Hopkins and Hill (2008) set out to extend clinically focused pre-migration research conducted by psychiatrists by examining how separated young people seeking asylum in the UK make sense of their pre-migration experiences and journeys to the UK.

Within their paper, Hopkins and Hill discuss the common pre-migration experiences of young separated asylum seekers in the UK, describing experiences such as the death or persecution of family members, war and forced military recruitment. Through focus groups with 30 separated young people, they found that the majority reported being subjected to daily acts of violence and oppression within their local communities, acts that were often committed by government or other political groups. For many of the young people interviewed (no numbers are provided), the decision to

leave the country and travel somewhere else was made by a family member or family friend, with the young people often being passive in this process.

Hopkins and Hill's study focuses briefly on the young people's journey experiences and finds them to be generally complex, protracted, traumatic and filled with uncertainty. Several participants described travelling with a migration agent or smuggler who facilitated their journey by setting out destinations and routes. For all of the participants in Hopkins and Hill's study, their migration journeys, like the experiences that led to their displacement, remained powerful experiences in their lives. This finding supports the recent assertion by migration scholars, BenEzer and Zetter, that refugee journeys are highly significant events for all those who experience them and often remain so throughout a refugee's life (BenEzer & Zetter 2015).

Further insight into the journey experiences of young refugees can be gleaned from a recent study by geographers Buil and Siegel (2014), who examined the journey experiences of separated Afghan refugees as they encountered specific borders en route to the Netherlands. This study, and the specific attention that it pays to the migration routes and border procedures young people encounter is helpful in pointing to the complexity and uncertainty that separated young people must negotiate as they cross the borders of different countries on their journeys towards seeking asylum. However, because Buil and Siegel only make generalised references to the participants in their research and the routes that they travelled, it is not possible to glean anything about how the young people experienced and made sense of the complex journeys that they were involved in.

Over recent years, the numbers of refugees travelling to Europe has increased awareness about the protracted and precarious nature of refugee journeys. However, as BenEzer and Zetter (2015) have argued, beyond this public awareness there exists a very significant gap in terms of research on refugee journeys within the broader field of refugee and migration studies. This critique relates both to refugee research with adults and with children, where there is an absence of research that focuses specifically on the journey experiences of young refugees and the ways in which young people negotiate these events in their lives.

Studies with young refugees such as Hopkins and Hill's (2008) paper and Buil and Siegel's (2014) paper demonstrate how the journey experiences of young refugees can be complex and risky. However, both papers are restricted by the ways in which they provide no in-depth examination of understanding the significance of young

people's refugee journeys in their lives. Whilst placing the migration journeys of separated asylum seekers at the centre of the analysis, Buil and Siegel's paper is limited by the generalised and abstracted approach that it adopts, where it does not include any narrative data from the young people themselves and instead draws broad conclusions about their migration routes and strategies. In contrast, Hopkins and Hill's paper does include extracts of interview data from young people, however, their discussion of migration journeys is subsumed within a more focused discussion of young people's pre-migration experiences and thus the conclusions that can be drawn are considerably limited.

To return to BenEzer and Zetter's assertion that refugee journeys should merit a greater level of research attention within refugee and forced migration studies, it is clear that since sociological research with young refugees broadly seeks to create a deeper understanding of how young people negotiate their lives within contexts of displacement, a more focused engagement with the complex and protracted journey experiences that young people experience is an important future avenue for the field. The point here is that not only does the study of young people's refugee journeys matter because there is a considerable gap around this area of the refugee experience. Beyond this, the study of these experiences is also important because, as shown in studies by BenEzer (2009) and Hopkins and Hill (2008), the significance of journeys in the lives of refugees is not only limited to the temporality of the physical journey. Instead, these experiences seem to stay with refugees, remaining powerful experiences throughout their lives.

To continue this review of the key themes within sociological and children's geographies research with young refugees, I will now move to examine one of the central areas of study within the field by discussing research that focuses on how young people negotiate their identities within contexts of displacement.

2.3.2. Research Theme Two: Identities

Since the majority of sociological and geographical research with young refugees focuses on how they negotiate their lives within the Western countries that they have migrated to, a significant strand of literature has focused on how young people negotiate their identities within these new contexts. Within this field, several seminal papers have

been written by children's geographers Sporton, Valentine and Bang Nielson (2006; 2009), which focus on examining how young Somali refugees and asylum seekers living in the UK negotiate their identity in the context of complex histories of mobility. This research uses a narrative frame to examine how young refugees and asylum seekers negotiate their own narratives of self, within broader public narratives around asylum seekers and refugees.

Valentine and Sporton's (2009) paper examines how processes of disidentification impact on the subjectivities of young people, through narrative interviews with asylum seeking young people aged 11-18 years. By exploring the spatial contexts that the young people negotiate across different scales, touching on their experiences at home, school, in their local community and the nation more broadly, Valentine and Sporton point to spatial norms which work to regulate whether the young people feel 'in place' or 'out of place' as they move across different contexts.

One of the key points that Valentine and Sporton make is that it is not enough for the young people to invest in or to claim a particular identity, since for that identity to feel secure, it must also be recognised by the wider community. This means that even though many of the participants identify with being British or English, they often feel as though other identities such as being 'Black' or being an asylum seeker overshadow or undo their right to claim Britishness as their identity. To negotiate this, many of the young people expressed how, whilst they did not feel comfortable claiming certain identities across all of the contexts that they navigated, their identity as a Muslim offered them a sense of continuity and security.

Within this thesis, the work of scholars such as Valentine et al. has had a significant influence on my understanding of how young asylum seekers negotiate multiple categories of identity and cultural expectations around childhood in their daily lives. However, whilst there is scope to develop this field further, I have been more drawn to direct the focus of this thesis towards addressing other gaps within the literature. Before setting these out, I will move to examine another established area of literature within children's geographies research with young refugees by focusing on research that has explored how young asylum seekers negotiate experiences of home and belonging.

2.3.3. Research Theme Three: Home and Belonging

Within sociological research on migration, there is a wealth of literature discussing the relationships between home, migration and belonging and the ways in which migrants negotiate their changing relationships to home within contexts of mobility (see Ahmed et al. 2003 for an example). As part of the broader focus on home within the field of cultural geography (see Blunt 2005), childhood researchers have examined the active role that young people play in home-making practices and the different ways in which they relate to constructions of home over time.

Home has also been the focus of childhood researchers who have examined experiences of violence in global contexts. Within such work (see Montgomery 2014; Kovats-Bernat 2014; Ali 2014), childhood researchers have focused on how violence can be part of street children's experiences at home and within the intimate and everyday spaces of the family. Whilst such research does not focus on the experiences of displaced young people, it carries a clear relevance to the experiences of refugee children, who have often experienced violence and upheaval in the intimate and everyday contexts of home. As Heather Montgomery writes, such research has shown how "homes and families are physically as well as emotionally unstable and intrinsically volatile places to be, and both families and individual children can be forced out of them for many different reasons" (Montgomery 2014; 19). These observations carry a clear relevance to the everyday cultures of violence that displaced children can find themselves within, both within their homes and as they are forced to flee their homes and begin their migration journeys.

In terms of research focusing directly on young refugees experiences of home, there have been numerous studies that focus on how young people relate to notions of home and belonging within contexts of migration. Whilst this thesis is not directly focused towards understanding these relationships, research focusing on how young people seeking asylum negotiate home and belonging has been important in shaping my broader understanding of their experiences. Furthermore, several studies in this section of the field have been helpful in demonstrating how to work with narrative interviews with young people seeking asylum to study a broad theme such as home.

Ala Sirriyeh's research on home, as recorded in her book, *"Inhabiting Borders, Routes Home: Youth, Gender and Asylum"* (2013) has influenced me methodologically by providing a helpful example of how to draw upon narrative interviews to explore the

experiences of young women seeking asylum. Throughout her study, Sirriyeh uses the overarching theme of home as a means to explore the everyday experiences of young women seeking asylum and the way in which they come to negotiate transitions to adulthood, hopes for the future, education and friendships.

In Sirriyeh's discussion of the distinction between public and private space in how the young women experienced home, Sirriyeh is able to demonstrate how the young women's feelings about home reflected some of their broader experiences of the asylum system more generally. Whilst for the participants, home in the past had been a largely private space, representing something that existed behind closed doors, as the young women moved to the UK and entered the asylum system, many of them found that they were often required to act out their lives in unfamiliar and public contexts. For some, this meant a lack of private space within shared accommodation, whilst for others, this meant living in places where they did not feel secure or protected, such as hostels where they was little security or sense of safety. This lack of control that the young women experienced over their physical environments was found to mirror the lack of control they feel over other domains of their life, such as their asylum claim and their futures more generally.

Whilst this thesis does not use 'home' as a frame, I have been influenced by research like Sirriyeh's which employs the particular frame of home as a means to explore and understand young asylum-seekers broader experiences. As I will explain in later sections of this chapter, in this research, I seek to follow a similar model, by focusing on broad and under-researched themes of stories, journeys and time, as a means through which to understand more about young refugees' present experiences and how they relate to and imagine their futures.

To move to examine how young people's experiences of time and constructing their futures has been studied, I will now turn my focus onto an emerging area of inquiry in the field that focuses on the temporal aspects of young refugees' experiences.

2.3.4. Research Theme Four: Time

Within sociological research, young people's experiences of forced migration are most commonly approached in terms of identity and in relation to home and belonging. If the process or passage of migration itself does figure in research approaches, it is

understood as a spatial process, where time is only implicit. This means that notion of migration as a passage of time has been largely absent. In a similar way, sociological approaches to time have generally overlooked the study of migration, rarely capturing the ways in which migration experiences can point to the political aspects of time. Whilst the temporal aspects of migration have largely occupied a secondary space in both sociological research on migration and that of time, scholars are increasingly recognising the utility of employing a temporal lens to understand aspects of refugees' experiences.

With a few recent exceptions (see Allsopp et al. 2014; Vitus 2010), research on the temporal aspects of forced migration and asylum has focused on the experiences of adults. Within this field, researchers have focused on examining the different rhythms and tempos that characterise the experiences of seeking asylum in contexts such as detention centres (see Griffiths et al. 2013). Such research has pointed to the relationship between time and power, examining the ways in which refugees may feel as though their lives are being governed through time. This governance can relate to temporal aspects such as the prolonged waiting that the asylum system generally demands or tempos of acceleration, as seen through swift deportations.

Irrespective of their migration status, time can be central to the experiences of all young people as they negotiate transitions, aspirations and look to the future. In relation to this, within the sociology of childhood, childhood is understood as a process that is embedded within time and temporality. As such, one of the founding ideas within the field focuses on children as 'beings' or 'becomings' and proposes that the discourse around children should emphasize their 'being' rather than the idea that they are 'adults in the making' (Holloway and Valentine 2004). More recently, childhood scholars have taken issue with this binary positioning of 'being' and 'becoming', proposing a more integrative approach where children are seen to be social agents in their current social worlds, whilst at the same time being understood as persons undergoing a constant transformation (see Uprichard 2008 who advocates this approach).

Since childhood can be understood as a process that is embedded within time and temporality, in recent years, sociological researchers interested in the experiences of young refugees have begun to make links between the temporal aspects of Western asylum systems and the temporal transitions that young people negotiate in their daily lives. One such study conducted in Denmark focused on how young people negotiate the 'waiting time' within asylum centres, in parallel to the transitions that they negotiate

as they move towards adulthood (Vitus 2010). Through interviews with young asylum seekers, Vitus found that the temporal experiences of the young people were characterised by a sense of boredom, restlessness and despair as they felt a sense of powerlessness over the progress of their claim and their futures more generally. Vitus' research suggests a sense of time being suspended or stalled for young people whose lives are caught up in asylum systems.

Vitus' findings link to a recent study conducted with young asylum seekers in the UK, which also used a temporal lens to examine how young people construct their futures whilst being subject to immigration control (Allsopp et al. 2014). The findings of this paper demonstrated the multiple ways in which the young people felt constrained by the temporal tactics of the asylum system, being forced to wait for extended periods and feeling a lack of control over their futures. Beyond this, Allsopp et al. also highlight the variety of ways that young people worked creatively to try to secure their futures by choosing to focus on the present or keep busy and equip themselves with skills for the future.

The work of scholars such as Vitus and Allsopp et al. demonstrates the utility of adopting a temporal lens to explore young people's experiences of seeking asylum, making it clear that research examining the relationships between asylum, childhood and the governance of time can yield important insights into the lives of young refugees. Moving forwards, it is clear that applying the approach of Griffiths (2013), who has mapped out the different temporal rhythms that can be experienced by adult refugees, to the study of young people's experiences would be a productive way of identifying the particular temporal rhythms that characterise the process of seeking asylum as a young person. In light of this, Chapter Seven of this thesis consists of an in-depth examination of how young refugees negotiate the temporal aspects of seeking asylum. Beyond this, linking back to the earlier discussion of journeys, it is clear that migration is not only a spatial process, but must be understood temporally. In light of this, Chapter Five of this thesis engages with the relationship between time and migration journeys, exploring the temporal aspects of being uprooted and being in transit, along with the question of when it is that journeys begin and end.

2.3.5. Research Theme Five: Navigating the Asylum Process

The final theme of research that I will consider here focuses on exploring how young people navigate different aspects of the UK asylum process. Much of this research is conducted with separated children and therefore focuses on the complexities that they face as they seek asylum alone. The legal processes, policies and best practice regarding the experience of separated children within the asylum system has been well documented within policy reports, such as Bhabha and Finch's 2007 report, '*Seeking Asylum Alone'*. In terms of other research, scholars such as Heaven Crawley and Ravi Kohli have used their respective backgrounds in geography and social work to examine how young people seeking asylum navigate the asylum process and the ways in which their experiences relate to the sociology of childhood.

In her work as both an academic and policy researcher for organisations such as the Immigration Legal Practitioners Association (ILPA), migration scholar Heaven Crawley has sought to understand the ways in which a particular way of constructing childhood shapes the ways in which young people are treated within the asylum system. To explore this, Crawley has focused in particular on the processes of age assessment for separated young people, examining the ways in which certain understandings of childhood shape who and who is not accepted as a child.

In her work, Crawley has discussed the narrative accounts of separated children who have sought asylum in the UK and have had their ages disbelieved. As previous sections of this chapter have discussed, the process of assessing a young person's age has important implications within the asylum system since it determines the level of protection and service provision that they will receive. However, since many young people travel without any identity documentation and have often grown up using different calendar systems to those used in the UK, the process of assessing age can be complex. Crawley's research has demonstrated how cultural constructions of childhood can influence who is and who is not accepted as a child, with young people who demonstrate 'unchildlike' behaviours or appearance often experiencing disbelief about their age (2011).

Crawley's research has found that young asylum seekers who describe sexual experiences or describe being politically active are often disbelieved as children, leading Crawley to propose that a particular construction of childhood as that which is asexual and apolitical pervades the UK asylum system. What is interesting about

Crawley's work in the context of the field as a whole is the ways in which it provides a convincing case that constructions of childhood can be significant in shaping the lives of young asylum seekers, even working to contribute towards determining the protection that they receive. Linking back to earlier discussions of the UNCRC and the tensions between its global reach and cultural relevance, Crawley's work provides an important example of a context where these tensions can have significant implications for children's lives, with the power of a particular construction of childhood meaning that some children might not be recognised within the frame of 'the child'.

Beyond providing an analysis of how constructions of childhood might be related to the experiences of young people as they seek asylum, Crawley's research points to the nature of the asylum system as that which makes judgements on the narrated accounts and bodies of young asylum seekers. Since the asylum system depends on assessing the claims that asylum seekers make about their need for sanctuary, as young people navigate the system, their ages, bodies and narrative stories are often assessed. Whilst young people who seek asylum as part of families will not have to provide an account of their experiences directly, those who seek asylum alone will be called upon to account for the reasons why they are seeking protection.

The experiences of separated young people as they make claims for protection has also been studied by Ravi Kohli. In his 2009 study of social work practice with separated asylum seeking children, Kohli examined how the silences and secrets of separated asylum seeking were understood by social workers. Kohli comments that in making claims for protection, all asylum seekers tell stories of their persecution and the threats they face in the hope that these accounts will be the gateway for them to live a more secure life as a legal refugee. By exploring the accounts of social workers that work with separated young people, Kohli has sought to understand more about the ways in which the young people may use secrets and silences to edit and gain control over particular aspects of their stories.

In his interviews with social workers, Kohli found that young people seeking asylum would give varying accounts of their past experiences and reasons for flight, depending on factors such as the level of shock and trauma that they were experiencing, whether they had been told to keep quiet by those who had smuggled them to the UK and whether they in fact had little knowledge of what had happened to them, having simply followed the instructions of a sibling or a smuggler who had facilitated their journey. He found that social workers often reported that young people provided

'selective stories', which the social workers perceived to be marked by particular secrets and silences.

Kohli also found that social workers made a range of responses to the stories that separated young people gave about their lives. Some social workers were puzzled about asylum accounts that they had heard repeated by different young people in different guises, being sceptical about stories that all sounded the same. Others were concerned about what they perceived to be inconsistencies within individual accounts and sometimes raised questions about whether the young people were lying. Despite these different concerns, the majority of the social workers focused on working with the asylum story provided by the young person and leading them through the various practical and legal processes that surrounded their claim.

Kohli's study sheds a further light on the experiences of separated young people as they navigate asylum systems. Linking back to Crawley's research on age, Kohli's research points again to the burden that is placed on young people to provide an account of their experiences or age in a context where their claims will be judged as a means to decide whether they receive protection. Whilst Crawley's research points to the ways in which particular constructions of childhood may shape how young people's accounts are received, Kohli's research points to the agency of young people in deciding how to present their narrative accounts and which bits they decide to edit out and keep silent about.

In a similar way to the way in which Crawley's research suggested that within the asylum system, there exists a particular politics of age and childhood, Kohli's research points to a politics of story and silence within the asylum context. His paper suggests that this politics of story can work to determine what a young person decides to share within the context of their claim and how their testimony may be received. Through summarising the accounts of social workers (which are never directly quoted in the article), Kohli's research is able to touch upon how young people negotiate these storied politics. However, without conducting research with the young people themselves, it is not possible to ascertain how young people actually negotiate the process of providing narrative accounts of their lives.

This thesis shares a focus with both Crawley and Kohli's research, engaging with how young people negotiate the processes of seeking asylum and in particular the ways in which judgements are made about their stories and bodies. As I will discuss in the next section of this chapter, this thesis seeks to extend and develop their focus on the

storied politics within the asylum system and the ways in which young people negotiate the process of providing accounts of their age and experiences.

Beyond the similar substantive focus between this thesis and Crawley and Kohli's work, there is also a point of departure regarding engagement with and application of theoretical concepts. Whilst both Crawley and Kohli's studies make reference to theory, particularly in relation to cultural constructions of childhood, their studies are largely empirically focused and lack any significant engagement with the conceptual ideas that underpin their approach. It is my view that the process of aligning their substantive focus on how young people negotiate the asylum system with an engagement with the concept of *precarity* might lead to a more interesting analysis that explores the broader insecurity of young asylum seekers' lives. In light of this, whilst this thesis is empirical in focus and does not seek to extend a particular area of theoretical debate, I have chosen to frame it conceptually by engaging with the concept of precarity and a toolbox of further conceptual ideas, which are explored in Chapter Three. Before moving to examine these concepts, I will now turn to discuss the research questions that shaped this thesis.

2.4. Research Questions

As this chapter has discussed, the lives of young refugees and asylum seekers have been studied through a variety of different perspectives, with research focusing on their mental health, legal rights and how young people negotiate aspects such as their identity and conceptions of home and belonging. This thesis is broadly located within the sociology of childhood and children's geographies research, and as such, seeks to contribute towards a greater understanding of how young refugees negotiate their daily lives within the context of seeking asylum.

Much of the research discussed in the latter sections of this chapter has adopted a narrative approach to examine how young people seeking asylum experience aspects of their lives such as their identity, experiences of integration and specific parts of the asylum process such as age assessment (see Valentine et al. 2009; Sirriyeh 2013; Crawley 2009). By utilising narrative interviews as a method, these researchers have been able to shed light on the perspectives of young people as they negotiate particular aspects of migration, asylum and settlement in a new host country. However, with the

exception of Kohli's research, little substantive attention has been paid to the centrality of narrative accounts within the lives of young asylum seekers and the ways in which they can be called on to provide a testimony of their experiences. Since the narrated testimony of young people seeking asylum can have significant implications for how their age or asylum claim is assessed, it is clear that there is scope to extend the current methodological focus on narrative to a more substantive examination of the role that young people's stories play within the asylum system and how young people negotiate this storied politics.

Within Kohli's study of social work practitioners' perceptions of the stories that young people seeking asylum tell about their lives, he writes,

"In making claims for sanctuary, asylum seekers tell stories of their persecution and flight, which they hope will get them through whatever border stands between them and an ordinary life outside their homeland. Sometimes, when they have to, they embellish their experiences, rewrite their scripts, polish up the presentation and talk of persecution in compelling ways. They sometimes pluck out a series of linear events even when their lives and trajectories are wayward and untidy, because the ways in which asylum receptors accept stories are often in linear form, with a sequence or suffering making the links in a chain of events " (Kohli 2009; 107).

Kohli's words point to the centrality of stories within the asylum system, and demonstrate the impetus that is placed on young people to tell stories of their persecution and their journeys to those who will pass a judgement over the validity of their narratives. However, whilst Kohli makes reference to the ways in which young people navigate this complex terrain, his paper concentrates on examining how social workers perceive and deal with young people's stories within the social work context. Since Kohli's data focuses solely on the perspectives of practitioners he is unable to offer any specific insights into how the young people negotiate the storied politics of asylum themselves.

This thesis has sought to respond to the gap that exists around the storied politics of young refugees' lives by engaging with the stories that young people seeking asylum tell about their lives and by exploring their reflections on the storied politics that they have encountered. This thesis does not aim to provide a direct analysis of the stories that young people tell within the asylum context or to pass any judgement on the validity of

their claims. Instead, I am interested more broadly in the stories that young refugees tell about their lives and their reflections on under-researched aspects such as their journeys and their experiences of providing asylum testimony.

As I will discuss in Chapter Four, this thesis is based on a set of narrative interviews from young people seeking asylum, which were conducted in schools, libraries and advocacy-based settings. Within these interviews, the participants told stories about their lives and reflected on different aspects of the experience of becoming a refugee and seeking asylum. Since the process of providing an account of one's experiences is a central part of seeking asylum, some of the stories considered in the research related to the process of providing asylum testimony. I did not have or seek to gain access to the young people's asylum testimonies themselves, wanting only to engage with the young people's reflections on the process of providing these testimonies.

By recognising the significance of stories within the lives of young people seeking asylum, one of the ways in which this thesis seeks to make a contribution is by exploring how the young people themselves relate to the storied politics of the asylum process and the impetus that is placed on them to provide narrative accounts of their lives. This engagement is tentative in nature because I only work with their reflections on the experience of being called on to provide narrative testimony and not their testimonies themselves. In this way, I am less interested in their actual asylum testimonies and more interested in the young people's experiences of providing such accounts.

Unlike other research mapped out in this chapter, this thesis does not aim to compartmentalise or analyse young people's narrative accounts by common themes such as identity, integration or age assessment. Whilst the analysis of this thesis may relate back to these themes and in doing so, develop or confirm previous research in the field, this thesis is not directed towards exploring these themes specifically. Instead as demonstrated by the research questions below, the thesis adopts a broad approach to the narrative accounts of young people seeking asylum, seeking to extend the current focus on narrative in the field by not only using narrative as a research method but by also positioning it as the substantive focus of the research.

Beyond a focus on story, the research has also sought to contribute to two emerging areas of concern within the field by using emerging themes of journeys and time as two frames through which to explore the stories that young people tell about

migration and seeking asylum. This focus on journeys and time is brought together under a broader focus on story, with this being the common thread that brings each of the research questions together.

The research questions that formed the focus of this thesis were as follows:

What subjective accounts do young people narrate about their experiences of seeking asylum?

    a) *How do migration journeys feature in the stories that young people tell?*

    b) *How does time feature in the stories that young people tell?*

    c) *What are the functions of stories for young people as they seek asylum?*

The research questions above centre on the subjective accounts of the participants, by placing their narrative accounts at the centre of the analysis. In Chapter One, I discussed the multiple ways in which the lives of young refugees are discussed on media and political platforms and the ways in which they can almost become like devices that shift the focus of debate. Through this thesis, I wanted to achieve something that the short-termist approach of media reports, political speeches and NGO campaigns often fail to do, by providing a considered and substantial analysis of the personal stories of young refugees.

By placing the narrative accounts of the young people right at the centre of the analysis, I also hope to create space to consider key areas of experience that have previously been overlooked in research relating to young refugees. In each of my areas of consideration, journeys, stories and time, I am focusing on the personal, examining the ways in which the young people relay their experiences of migration and asylum through the subjective accounts that they tell about their lives. Furthermore, as the third research question describes, through this thesis, I seek to understand the function that narrative plays for young refugees by engaging with how young people navigate the storied politics within asylum systems.

I will now move into Chapter Three to discuss the theoretical concepts that I employed to help me answer these research questions.

Chapter Three: My Conceptual Toolkit

As stated in the research questions at the end of Chapter Two, this thesis has focused on the stories that young refugees tell about their lives by examining how particular aspects such as journeys and time feature in these narratives. As I have set out to understand and analyse these broad aspects, I have recognised that such an engagement is only made possible through working with an eclectic collection of concepts that can illuminate these themes. This chapter provides an account of my attempt to bring to bear a set of multiple concepts, which I have termed my conceptual toolkit, on the participants' accounts. In doing so, I have been influenced by qualitative researchers who have employed diverse conceptual frameworks in their research, creating conceptual montages, or theoretical bricoleurs (see Denzin and Lincoln 1999).

There are five sections in this chapter. The first section focuses on the concept of precarity, which was the key orienting concept of this thesis and was embedded within all of the analysis. I begin by discussing the foundations of this concept and the ways in which it provides a particular way of thinking about some of the inequalities present in social and political life. From this, I move to discuss the further concepts that I have worked with. I think of these concepts collectively as comprising a conceptual toolkit, each allowing me to home in on and understand a particular element of the participants' accounts and the precarity that they have experienced. To maintain a coherent thread throughout, I have only worked with concepts that enable me to understand particular aspects of precarity in the lives of young refugees. As such, the discussions of this chapter can be brought together by the way in which they can shed light on a particular aspect of the insecurity that young refugees face on their journeys and as they seek asylum.

Mobility is the second concept discussed in this chapter, with this discussion focusing on the relationship between mobilities and forced migration literature and scholarship around mobility and power. From this, I move to explore literature around materiality and embodiment, paying particular attention to the materiality of asylum regimes and the ways in which bodies can come to be treated as pieces of evidence within this context. The third section of this chapter explores scholarship around the politics of space and time, exploring the politics of space and scholarship that examines how time can be linked to techniques of government and power. The final section of

this chapter evaluates the eclectic conceptual approach taken here, providing a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of this approach.

3.1. Precarity

Social and political philosopher Judith Butler is perhaps best known for her theoretical work around gender, performativity and discourse, contained in seminal works such as *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993). Over the last decade, Butler's theoretical focus has been extended towards considering issues such as the politics of nationhood, dispossession, belonging and war. As part of her thinking on these themes, Butler has written *Frames of War* (2010) and *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), which both focus on post 9/11 American politics regarding the Iraq War and indefinite detention. These two works and their common themes of precarity, violence and grievability have significantly influenced the conceptual framework of this thesis and I will now turn to discuss their key ideas. The following discussion brings together points from both works, in light of their common focus on precarity and violence.

The overarching idea across much of Butler's discussions within *Frames of War* (2010) and *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004) is that all lives are by definition precarious, being vulnerable to injury, neglect or being expunged at will or by accident. Precariousness is seen to be a shared condition of humanity, since all lives require that certain social and economic conditions be met if they are to be sustained. This collective vulnerability points to the characteristically social nature of human life, where all human beings are exposed and dependant on other people, with our lives always being in some sense in the hands of others. This relationship between others and ourselves is reciprocal since we are all also exposed to the dependency of others on us, whether through close relationship or more indirectly as part of a broader community.

Moving on from the precarious nature of life as that which is universal and socially shared, Butler sets out the concept of precarity as that which denotes a politically mediated condition of experience, which is characterised by an uneven distribution across humankind. She writes, "Precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death" (Butler

2010; 25). The notion of the differential allocation of precarity, where some populations experience heightened risks of poverty, violence and displacement has a clear relevance to this thesis and its considerations of the experiences of young refugees. In fact, Butler has written about how communities such as refugees can experience extreme and maximised precarity, through being exposed to the systematic dispossession of populations through violence, occupation and conquest (Butler and Athanasiou 2013; xi).

It is interesting to view Butler's concept of extreme and maximised precarity in light of childhood research that has demonstrated how experiences of everyday violence can characterise the experiences of certain groups of children worldwide (see Wells et al. 2014). Within such research, Karen Wells and Heather Montgomery have written about how many children globally live in "extremely difficult situations of terror and insecurity where violence is a routine part of everyday life at different scales from the individual to the nation" (2014; 1). In these contexts, the violence that such children experience is so routine, that Wells and Montgomery propose it can be understood as "everyday violence", being "inescapable and mundane". Such observations add an interesting angle on Butler's concept of extreme and maximised precarity, suggesting that when such insecurity is so prolonged and forms a regular part of everyday life, it may no longer be seen as exceptional. I will revisit these ideas in relation to the participants' narratives discussed in later chapters.

Moving back to consider Butler's work, beyond the clear relevance of the concept of extreme precarity to the lives of refugees, I have been also influenced by her engagement with the ways in which the precarious nature of life for certain populations is created and sustained. Much of Butler's discussion of precariousness is concerned with how certain social and political conditions make it possible for bodies to survive in different ways, since their survival would not be possible without being embedded in social, political, economic and legal contexts. On the other hand, these same social, political and legal conditions are precisely those that can endanger the lives of others, leading Butler to focus on the ways in which, political decisions and social practices can work to protect some whilst endangering others.

To understand the processes through which certain lives become protected whilst others are exposed to greater danger, Butler makes links between precariousness and domination. She argues that since all human beings are precarious, they find themselves to be potentially frightened of others who share the same vulnerabilities. She

writes, "precisely because each body finds itself potentially threatened by others who are, by definition, precarious as well, forms of domination follow" (Butler 2010; 31). These forms of domination can work to turn the general precariousness that is characteristic of all human life into specific anxieties, which are then directed towards others who are perceived to be threats. Through these processes, Butler argues that the collective existential precariousness that all humans face becomes segmented, producing a "differential distribution" of insecurity (Butler 2010; 25). By shifting precarity from something that is shared to something that instead exists in a hierarchy, uneven experiences of insecurity are created.

In her work, Butler has considered how human lives are framed in different ways and the power of certain frames to render certain lives unrecognisable as human beings. Butler has termed the lack of value that is attributed to certain humans as their 'ungrievability', arguing that if a life is not considered within the frame of human life in the first place, it cannot be grieved if it is violated or lost. To develop this, Butler describes the concept of recognition, proposing that existing norms can work to allocate value to human beings differentially, making some lives more recognisable than others (Butler 2010; 5). Since politically saturated frames of recognition can determine who is recognised as a human, they can also determine whether the precarious nature of certain lives warrants recognition or whether they are overlooked.

The power of frames of recognition and the consequent lack of value attributed to certain populations can mean that such groups can become both 'lose-able' and 'ungrievable', existing beyond the bounds of the recognisable human. In these cases, the general shared condition of precariousness that characterises all human life fails to lead to a reciprocal recognition of vulnerability. Instead, it can cause what Butler terms, "a specific exploitation of targeted populations, of lives that are not quite lives" (Butler 2010; 31). In these cases, the precarious nature of life in general can become projected onto certain populations, who themselves become positioned as threats to human life rather than as populations in need of protection. When precarious lives such as these are lost, they are not grieved, since their deaths are often rationalised as necessary to protect the lives of those who are recognised as 'living'. This point has a clear relevance to the experiences of refugees and the ways in which their deaths at sea, in borderzones or detention centres, can often be rationalised as necessary to protect the security and integrity of borders (see Hammerstad 2014).

3.1.2. Governing Precarity

The concept of precarity is premised on notions of power and dominance and relates to those conditions in which certain populations find themselves more exposed to the threatening or violent acts of powerful agents than others. In extending Butler's work, political theorist Isabell Lorey (2015) has explored some of the ways in which precarity relates to theories of governmentality by examining how the precarious lives of certain populations might be governed by others. Lorey's discussion of governmentality is informed by Foucault's work on power and governmentality and whilst this thesis does not seek itself to provide a Foucauldian analysis of power, I will briefly discuss the key ideas that Lorey has been informed by.

According to Foucault, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action that "does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions; an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions" (Foucault 1982; 340). Foucault proposes that power can be understood as a process of government, in which the actions of others are directed in particular ways. He argues that the art of governing involves conducting the conducts of others, understanding that power is not something executed only in a repressive way from above but instead involves structuring the possible field of actions that are available to subjects with agency. As Lorey writes, as subjects who act, people participate in the way that they are governed, making it less something that is 'done' to them and more a process of self government (Lorey 2011).

Adopting these ideas about governmentality, Lorey has extended Butler's ideas around precarity and dominance by setting out a threefold approach towards understanding the governance of precarious lives. The first two parts of Lorey's framework align closely with Judith Butler's work. The first aspect concerns the *general precariousness* that faces all human beings as they deal with the mortal nature of their bodies and the unpredictable nature of social life. This aspect is universal and whilst various attempts are made to lessen its impact, it cannot be fully secured against.

The second aspect of Lorey's framework concerns *precarity as a category of order*, denoting the distribution of precariousness in relations of inequality. This involves the social positioning of insecurity, which through processes of othering works to create hierarchies of precarity, making some more insecure than others. The final aspect of Lorey's framework concerns dynamics of *governmental precarisation,* where

the growing power of neoliberal governments creates and sustains the precarious nature of certain lives. Governmental precarisation primarily concerns how states respond to the insecure and incalculable factors that lie beyond their control. In her analysis, Lorey argues that governments often attempt to control the existential precariousness that is shared by all by creating hierarchies of security and risk, a process which works to position "dangerous others as the precarious ones on the margins" (Lorey 2015; 39). Through these processes, the general precariousness experienced by all can be turned into the construction of dangerous others, who are positioned either within the political community as 'abnormal' or if outside of it, as 'aliens' (Lorey 2011).

Whilst all humans experience general precariousness, governmental precarisation works to create differentiated experiences of precarity. To explain this, Lorey argues that processes of fostering inequality underpin the work of most liberal governments, since neoliberal logic relies on hierarchised differences as a basis to govern. Following this logic, strategies of governmental precarisation lie in the creation and implementation of systems underpinned by inequality, as states attempt to safeguard certain people from existential precariousness. This privilege of protection is based on the differential distribution of precarity, since "legitimising the protection of some generally requires striating the precarity of those marked as other" (Lorey 2015; 14). By creating systems of protection that privilege certain humans, hierarchies of precarity are sustained, positioning certain humans beyond the realm of protection.

Both Judith Butler's and Isabell Lorey's contributions around the precarious nature of life and the ways in which precarious lives are governed have been instrumental in shaping this thesis. I have used the concept of precarity as a key orienting concept that has informed and underpinned this thesis as a whole, shaping my understanding of the multiple ways in which the lives of young refugees can be precarious and the processes through which this precarity might be governed. More specifically, Lorey's examination of the processes through which some bodies are exposed to greater precarity than others has provided me with a way of conceptualising some of the insecurity that young refugees can face and the factors that can lead to or extend this state of precarity.

As I will discuss in later chapters of this thesis, Butler's understanding of how precarity can be maximised for certain populations and minimised for others, has been particularly influential in shaping my understanding of the circumstances that young refugees can flee from and experience throughout their migration journeys. Furthermore

her concept of extreme and 'maximised precariousness' in relation to certain populations who experience state violence or face other forms of violence without the promise of state protection relates closely to the experiences of many refugees worldwide and the everyday violence that they can experience.

I will now move to set out how I have extended my engagement with the concept of precarity, by weaving it through a further range of concepts that have helped me understand particular areas of the participants' narratives. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, this thesis has been based on over 40 narrative interviews with young refugees. Staying true to the particularity of these accounts has led me to resist adopting a 'once and for all' theoretical explanation but to instead adopt a more eclectic conceptual approach, dipping into and engaging with specific areas of scholarship around materiality, embodiment, space and place as required.

3.2. Mobilities

Mobilities scholarship has comprised an important part of my conceptual toolkit, enabling me to better understand the politics and practices of mobilities and how these relate to refugee journeys. Over recent years, a specific mobilities paradigm has emerged within the social sciences, being described as 'the mobility turn' (Urry 2007; 6). This shift has been marked by a reconsideration of spatial mobility and related cultural and social practices. The mobility paradigm was established in the late 2000s through the development of theoretical work that sought to explore the varied facets of spatial mobility. This development was reflected in the publication of a new journal, 'Mobilities' in 2006, which focused on multiple aspects of mobility and related conceptual and methodological concerns (see Blunt 2007 for a review).

Mobility theorist Tim Cresswell has defined mobility as the means through which movement is made meaningful, with practices of mobility developed in relation to broader ideologies of what it means to move through space (Cresswell 2006; 21). Mobilities research focuses broadly on the combined movement of people, objects and information and examines the ways in which these different aspects interact. The field has always been transdisciplinary in nature, with research encompassing work on transport, international travel, embodiment and the circulation of information, images and capital. It therefore brings together some of the traditionally 'social' concerns of

sociology regarding inequality and power, with some of the more traditionally 'spatial' aspects of geography such as scale and borders.

Whilst the mobilities paradigm has often been concerned with elite types of travel such as tourism, in recent years, mobility theorists have become more engaged with the relationships between power and mobility (see Cresswell 2010 for a review). Cresswell has argued that power shapes mobility in two key ways. Firstly, power relations can work to position mobility as a resource that is differentially accessed. Sociologists such as Bryan Turner (2010) have discussed this uneven access to mobility, pointing to the ways in which modern societies can facilitate the free mobility of some, whilst at the same time, creating enclaves of immobility for others, particularly those deemed as threats.

Beyond controlling differential access to mobility, power relations also shape the politics of mobile practice. This can be seen in the ways in which mobility can signal freedom and power for some, whilst for others, such as those who have been evicted from their homes or displaced from their land, movement can instead point to a lack of control and autonomy. As Cresswell points out, whilst three people may travel from the same points, A to B, their differential statuses as a tourist, businessperson or a refugee can mean that they all experience their journeys completely differently (Cresswell 2010; 21). To illuminate these differential mobile practices, mobility scholars ask questions around the embodiment of mobility and how it is experienced materially, alongside substantive questions around the mode of travel used and whether it comes as a result of force or choice.

There are clear overlaps between the field of mobility and that of forced migration studies; however, as scholars such as Nick Gill (2011) have recognised, there has been little work addressing the links between these two fields. Whilst migration and more specifically forced migration does form an aspect of mobilities research, the field extends far beyond this focus, examining other aspects of mobility such as tourism, transport and telecommunication. In the same way, the field of forced migration is well established in its own right, distinguishing itself from mobilities research by adopting a sharper focus on the moorings and fixity that can characterise migration processes alongside flows of movement. Despite these distinctions, scholars have suggested that human displacement would be able to be more fully theorised and understood if greater attention was paid to the ways in which bodily and material mobilities and immobilities

interact to produce population movement and shape the journeys of refugees (see Gill et al. 2011).

This thesis recognises the importance of engaging with the mobilities paradigm in its theorizing of forced migration and understands the need for sensitivity towards the dynamic and systemic politics of mobility and the ways in which they shape the methods, journeys and experiences of displacement. In particular, this thesis been shaped by mobilities scholarship that has highlighted how, in different contexts, both the freedom to be mobile and the freedom to remain 'in place' can each signify different forms of privilege. Such scholarship has also demonstrated how the politics of mobility can shape the divergent forms and conditions of movement, meaning that some can move freely through space, whilst others have to adopt more precarious and clandestine strategies. This can mean that whilst for some individuals a journey across a border may signify a choice to travel, return 'home' or make a new life somewhere, for groups like refugees, these options may never be available.

Beyond being shaped by the sensitivity within mobilities research towards the politics of mobility, this thesis is also informed by theoretical literature that explores the relationship between mobility and security. Refugees can experience a difficult relationship between mobility and security; whilst mobility is perceived as being required to live a full and secure life, the very act of being mobile can actually undermine personal security. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Two, the security sought by the states to which refugees travel to seek protection is often instrumentalised through strategies that can serve to create further insecurity for refugee communities. This thesis seeks to contribute to debates exploring the links between security and mobility by engaging with the ways in which young refugees' migration journeys can shape the levels of security that they experience. In doing so, I have sought to understand the different ways in which young people themselves might be criminalised and perceived as threats to security because of the circumstances through which they have moved, arrived and sought to settle somewhere else.

A further contribution of the mobility turn to this research has been the ways in which mobilities research has not only worked at understanding how familiar objects of work, class and capital have become increasingly mobile but by proposing that mobility itself might present itself as a new object of study in its own right. This way of thinking about mobility lines up closely with the way in which I have approach the study of journeys in this thesis, where I have sought to not only understand them in terms of

their relationship to migration, securitisation or identity formation, but also as objects of study in themselves.

I will now move to examine another aspect of the conceptual toolkit that I employed in this thesis, turning to discuss literature around materiality and embodiment.

3.3. Materiality and Embodiment

The experience of being forced to migrate is one that is both shaped by and experienced through aspects of materiality. Whether in relation to the power of certain objects, or the experiences of the body as it travels, each stage of migrating and seeking asylum can be understood to have a characteristic materiality. The power of objects in migration can be seen through the authority that is carried in objects such as identity cards, passports and visas, which all point to the regulatory techniques of immigration regimes (see Cabot 2012 discussed below). Beyond this, the corporeal aspects of forced migration are made clear through the ways in which bodies are positioned within contexts of asylum, being seen as political and security threats, pieces of evidence to be scrutinised or as human waste to be shut away in detention centres. To explore these multiple aspects of materiality I will now discuss literature surrounding these two areas of scholarship.

3.3.1. Materiality

Over the past few decades, there has been a shift within the social sciences towards engaging with objects and their meanings. As social theorist Ian Woodward has discussed, the advancing of this new material ontology has led traditional sociological concepts of identities, values, structures and networks to be seen afresh, illuminating their material characteristics and value (Woodward 2007; 1). Whilst the study of material objects and the meanings that they carry is not new, it has experienced a resurgence of interest within the social sciences, where there has been a growing focus on the relationship between people, social life and objects (Woodward 2007).

One of the significant influences in this context has been the field of Science and Technology Studies and in particular, Actor-Network Theory (ANT), where objects are

understood to be actants that can express agency (see Law 2007). According to Bruno Latour, an actant is anything that can be understood to modify the actions of other entities (Latour 1993; 75). Within ANT, actants within social networks can be both human and non-human and it is through the interactions between these different types of actants that networks emerge.

The influences of material ontology can be seen within fields such as new feminist materialism, where scholars such as Alaimo and Hekman have heralded a new wave of feminist theory that takes matter "seriously" (2008; 6). Within feminist discussions of materiality and those taking place within the social sciences more broadly, lies the fundamental tenet that objects matter within the social world and as such, analysis should therefore take into account how they connect to and create meaning in social life (see Woodward 2007; Miller 2005; Alaimo and Hekman 2008). Within this field, objects are understood to hold both practical utility and the power to shape and maintain social hierarchies of honour, status and belonging.

Whilst I am aware of the significant role that literature such as that focusing on ANT or feminist materialism has played in developing this field, within this thesis I have not worked closely with these areas of literature and have instead focused particularly on scholarship focusing on materiality and power. Discussions of materiality and power have traced the ways in which material objects and material perspectives of social life have been used to create and maintain power across the world in different ways. One such example within this field can be found in Rowlands (2005) study of the materiality of colonialism, where the idea that people, space and property could be 'owned' was central to the mentality of colonial powers. As Rowlands discusses, colonial powers adopted a material view of the rest of the world, taking ownership of countries and people groups as their property. Through these processes, the ruling powers worked to reconfigure persons and objects so that they existed primarily as the property of others.

Beyond the taking of countries and populations as property, the way in which power was created and maintained in colonial contexts also depended on materiality. Within contexts of empire, substance was only accorded to those that the colonial world recognised as having form and matter, with much of this substance coming from literal forms that had to be filled in for someone to become recognised as a material being (Rowlands 2005; Miller 2005). Rowlands argues that bureaucratic processes such as these, worked to create hierarchies of materiality, where some bodies were recognised

as material whilst others were rendered insubstantial, becoming estranged from their own materiality and subsumed in a broader category of 'the colonised' (Rowlands 2005; 80). This notion of relative materiality, where some are seen to be material beings in their own right whilst others are not recognised, can be related back to my discussion of Judith Butler's work on the politics of recognition, where only certain bodies are recognised within the frames of humanity (Butler 2010).

The interactions between the status of bodies and objects such as registration forms, points to the interrelationship between bodies and objects and the ways in which bodies can become legitimised by other aspects of materiality. This point is particularly relevant in contexts of immigration and asylum, where different tiers of citizenship are signified by the ownership of different passports, visas and birth certificates. In immigration contexts, these objects can be used to help certain humans become more recognisable as those who can legitimately travel across borders, migrate or receive certain protections from the state.

Research on the materiality of immigration processes has focused on how objects are used to signify the differential value and rights of different bodies. An example of one study by Heath Cabot (2012), which I take forward and discuss in the context of Chapter Seven, focused on the power of the 'pink card', an identity document that is given to asylum seekers in Greece. Cabot argues that through the pink card, the Greek state aims to regulate the lives of asylum seekers at the level of their identity, by marking them out as 'other'. Relating this back to the earlier discussion of Butler and her concept of frames of recognition, the notion that the differential value of human bodies can be signified through identity documents suggests that the ownership of certain documents work to make bodies more recognisable as humans that matter.

Contemporary asylum and immigration regimes are characterised by a particular materiality, which serves to render immigration statuses and identity categories tactile in the form of forms, cards, passports or visas. Such items carry authority in their materiality, detailing expiry dates and other restrictions, which can lead to individuals being deported or denied access to certain spaces. As Cabot writes, identity cards and passports can have a 'brutal materiality', carrying an indissoluble reminder of the limited status that asylum seekers hold (2012; 69). Zachary Whyte has described what he terms as the 'fetishisation' of identity documents, arguing that they can become unmoored from the bureaucratic immigration processes that produce them, becoming a uniquely authoritative force (Whyte 2015; 159). Other scholars, such as geographer

Jonathan Darling have expressed similar ideas by proposing that documents such as passports or asylum decision letters can govern the lives of asylum seekers both in their presence and absence (Darling 2014). I will explore the material power of documents such as passports and asylum letters further in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

3.3.2. Embodiment

Beyond engaging with the material aspects of immigration and asylum regimes, this thesis has also been shaped by research that has focused on the role of bodies within the social world. Such scholarship is rooted within the turn to affect and embodiment, where scholars such as Blackman and Wetherell have focused on the ways in which the psychological, social, ideological and biological aspects of being a human continually link to each other (Blackman 2012; Wetherell 2012). According to Wetherell, this theoretical shift can be understood as the process of infusing psychological and corporeal texture into social analysis by deepening engagement with emotion and embodiment (2012; 2).

As Lisa Blackman has written, the sociology of the body is now an established stream of sociological research, bringing corporeality into debates around identity, culture, representation, race, class and sexuality (Blackman 2012; 4). It has also connected with feminist and postcolonial scholarship, by examining the processes through which certain bodies become normative, whilst others are deemed problematic. One example of such research that is relevant to this thesis can be found in Sara Ahmed work around 'strangeness' and embodiment, where she has examined the ways in which certain bodies are recognised as being stranger than other bodies (Ahmed 2000).

Concepts of embodiment are crucial to considerations around the precarious nature of life, since existential precariousness comes from the precarious nature of all human bodies and their fragility to harm. As Judith Butler writes, "Bodies come into being and cease to be: as physically persistent organisms, they are subject to incursions and to illnesses that jeopardize the possibility of persisting at all. These are necessary features of bodies – they cannot "be" without their finitude, and they depend on what is "outside themselves" to be sustained" (Butler 2010; 30).

Butler's words point to the precarious nature of life for all human beings, where corporeality is characterised by both vulnerability and finitude. The notion that bodies

depend on external factors to be sustained is particularly pertinent to the lives of refugees, since their status as refugees generally opens them up to an increased dependence on external factors and actors for their bodies to be sustained. In fact, the very nature of being a refugee depends upon the recognition that one's body may not be sustained in its present context and that migration is therefore required to sustain the possibility of life persisting at all.

Beyond the general bodily precarity of all human bodies, literature around embodiment has shaped my understanding of the role of bodies within asylum systems. Within Western asylum systems, scholars such as anthropologist Didier Fassin, have focused on the ways in which bodies can be positioned as pieces of evidence, being scrutinised alongside a refugee's verbal testimony (see Fassin and Rechtman 2009; Shuman 2014). Studies such as Fassin and d'Halluin's (2005) examination of the role of medical certificates within asylum decisions have pointed to the ways in which refugees can come under pressure to align the testimony of their bodies with the testimony of their words, by pointing to past violence through physical scars, or as Shuman (2014) has found, their sexual identity through a stereotypical appearance.

It is apparent that through the use of bodies as evidence, the bodies of refugees within asylum systems can become particularly precarious, becoming detached from refugees' control and being judged and assessed as material evidence. As later chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, this pressure for refugees' bodies to mirror the testimony of their words can be especially pronounced for young refugees, whose bodies are often called on to be scrutinised for the 'truth' of their ages.

As demonstrated through the various examples discussed here, theoretical work around materiality and embodiment has shaped this thesis in a variety of ways. In particular, scholarship in these areas has informed how I have come to understand the materiality of asylum processes and the role that bodies can play as pieces of evidence. I will now turn to consider the final part of the conceptual mosaic that I employed in this thesis, moving to examine literature around the politics of space and time.

3.4. The Politics of Space and Time

Scholarship around the politics of space and time has been integral to this thesis, shaping my understanding of some of the ways through which refugees can experience a sense of maximised precarity. In the following discussion, I will set out the work of key scholars who have influenced this thesis, beginning by discussing work around the politics of space, before moving to examine literature focused on the politics of time. Within each of these sections exists an appreciation of the ways in which the politics of space and time can interact, following Doreen Massey's suggestion that space and time must be conceptualised together if we are to understand their dual role in shaping social and political life (Massey 2004).

3.4.1. The Politics of Space

Within the last two decades, thinking spatially about social life has become a widespread perspective across the social sciences and humanities. Through this shift, known as the spatial turn (Soja 1989), scholars have adopted spatial perspectives to shed a different light on disciplines as diverse as religious studies, literary criticism and legal theory (see Soja 2010; 14-30 for a review). By fostering greater engagement with the spatial aspects of human life, the spatial turn has also seen conceptualisations around space change considerably over recent years, shifting the focus away from the notion that space is simply a container for human activity, towards the view that it is an active force in shaping human social life. As Sarah Sharma has written, within this perspective, space is seen to be a co-producer of social relations rather than simply a backdrop for life (Sharma 2014; 10).

Critical approaches towards the production of space have been particularly influential in this thesis, shaping my understanding of space as that which is socially and politically produced, being open to change and reorganisation by a variety of factors such as expansion, extension, colonisation, inclusion and exclusion. Within this field, Doreen Massey's work has been particularly influential in developing my understanding of the politics of space and the relationship between space and time. In her work, Massey has proposed the concept of *power geometry*, which she describes as an instrument of critique through which to highlight inequalities and legacies of power over space. A central tenet of the concept of *power geometry* is that space is understood

as being both spatial and temporal in character, since it is constantly being made and refined in relation to changing dynamics of power. By engaging with the temporal nature of space, Massey has employed the concept of power geometry as a means to engage with 'time-space compression'. This concept, originally proposed by geographer David Harvey refers to changes in the quality and nature of the relationship between space and time. Globalisation, Harvey argues, has exerted new impacts on the processes and experiences of space and time, resulting in compression that works to condense spatial or temporal distance, making the far away appear proximal (Harvey 1990).

Whilst theoretical approaches to time-space compression often argue that it is a universal and inevitable experience of globalisation, Doreen Massey's concept of power geometry stresses a more differentiated subjectivity in the relationship between space, time and power. In doing so, Massey's work is related to the scholarship of others such as Edward Soja and Cindi Katz, who have recognised that whilst globalisation creates connections between different spatialities and temporalities, these processes are wildly uneven (Soja 1989; Katz 2001). Such research has shown how, through the spread of global capitalism, some places are more tightly bound to one another whilst others can be isolated and marooned (Katz 2001). Furthermore, through the spread of global communication, those who are isolated can be made more aware of what they lack compared to the rest of the world.

Debates around the uneven effects of globalisation are highly relevant to the experiences of refugees, who find their negotiations of space to be highly governed by other actors. As discussed, the mobility of refugees is generally forced upon them, as they are compelled by war or violence to leave their homes and livelihoods. Beyond this compulsion, the modes and routes of their movement through space can be highly governed, with many of the privileges of globalisation, such as open borders or comfortable transit, never being made available to them. These discussions have closely shaped the analysis of Chapter Five, where I focus on the participants' refugee journeys and the ways in which their mobility was both precarious and was governed by other actors.

To close this section of the chapter, I will now turn to discuss the influence that literature focusing on the politics of time has had within this thesis.

3.4.2. The Politics of Time

Following the spatial turn within the social sciences, the relationship between space and power became widely recognised as playing an important role in shaping social life. As previously mentioned, this recognition led academics to play close attention to the spatial workings of power in actions of colonisation, expansion, inclusion and exclusion, developing cultural theory so it could engage with spatialised politics. Cultural theorist Sarah Sharma has argued that within each of these aspects of spatialised power, a temporal counterpart is also implied. However, whilst time is implicit in these actions, Sharma comments that temporal power relations at play have generally gone unnoticed. Sharma argues "ultimately, the spatial turn did not acknowledge time as a form of power, a site of material struggle and social difference" (Sharma 2014; 10).

In response to the lack of temporal engagement within the spatial turn and discussions of migration, Sharma and other scholars such as Melanie Griffiths have aimed to highlight the ways in which time can be used as a form of governance. Within their work, the workings of temporal power can be seen to be often subtler and more quietly asserted than the more recognisable aspects of spatialised power relations. Demonstrating this in their different studies, Sharma and Griffiths have pointed to the ways in which time can exist as a site of social and material struggle, being manipulated by those in power as a tool of governance (Sharma 2014; Griffiths 2013).

Studies of temporality focus on lived time, referring not to broad periods of history but instead to the daily experiences of time, as they are experienced in political and economic contexts (Sharma 2014). The socially rooted nature of temporality means that it exists in a network of power relations, where individuals' experiences of time are shaped differentially, leaving some 'in time' whilst positioning others effectively outside of it. Scholarship within queer theory has been key in suggesting how certain bodies can be positioned '*outside of time*', pointing to the socially and politically produced nature of time and the way in which temporal representations can work to position certain bodies outside of normative experiences (see Halberstam 2005).

The notion of tempo is central to considerations of being '*out of time*', since the rhythms and tempos of social life can work to position people differentially in relation to the amount of control they are able to exert over time. Within theoretical work around globalisation, scholars have focused on cultures of speed, in which, linking to

theories of time-space compression, networks of travel and communication have compressed temporal distances, speeding up capacity for connection. Within such research, scholars have often failed to pay adequate attention to the ways in which political, institutional and economic arrangements produce different tempos for different populations. To respond to this, cultural theorist Sarah Sharma has studied populations such as asylum-seeking taxi drivers in America, frequent flyer business travellers and migrant cleaners, to explore how the uneven temporal politics shape their experience in a world that is, in many ways, speeding up (Sharma 2014).

Through Sharma's case studies of the temporal experiences of different groups, she has developed a framework of temporal politics. By engaging with the politics of neoliberalism and global capitalism, Sharma has been able to illuminate how different social groups and individuals are placed unevenly in relation to time. As part of this, her research has demonstrated how certain groups of people are placed precariously in time, being perceived as having little temporal worth. For these individuals, it is often expected that their time will be used to uphold and support the time of others, whilst they themselves exist outside of normative time. Examples of this can be found in the experiences of migrant workers from the Global South who rise in the early hours to pick organic fruit for those in the Global North or queue holders who are paid to stand waiting in line in lieu of others. For individuals such as these, their experiences of time can become increasingly marginalised and controlled so that, "every moment can be made rich, meaningful and productive for another" (Sharma 2014; 140).

Beyond working to support the productive temporalities of more powerful others, the temporality of those who live precariously, such as migrant workers, can often be characterised by a past, which has been left behind, alongside uncertain prospects as they move into the future (Sharma 2014). This way of experiencing time has clear relevance to the lives of refugees, who by definition, have migrated away from their past lives into what is generally, an uncertain future.

In addition to uncertainty about the future, the lives of refugees can be characterised by a lack of control over their experience of time, since they are subject to the decisions, rhythms and tempos of bureaucratic immigration regimes. To understand how temporal aspects shape the experiences of refugees, scholars like Melanie Griffiths have explored the ways in which time shapes experiences of migration and asylum. Across various empirical and theoretical studies, Griffiths has demonstrated the concurrent tempos of migration and asylum procedures, which can be characterised

both by rhythms of deceleration and of speeding up. Her work has also focused on the particular temporal rhythms of specific contexts such as detention centres (see Griffiths et al. 2012; Griffiths 2013).

Griffiths' research has been particularly influential in shaping the way I have approached the participants' experiences of forced migration and asylum in this thesis, highlighting how experiences of displacement are not only shaped by uneven spatial relations, but also by the politics of time. Specifically in relation to understanding the experiences of young refugees, scholarship around time has also enabled me to understand the ways in which the temporal aspects of young refugees' lives can be governed, and the creative strategies young people can adopt to counteract this control (see also Allsopp et al. 2014). These themes form the focus of Chapter Seven of this thesis, which focuses on the ways in which time featured in the stories that the participants' told about their experiences of seeking asylum.

3.5. Evaluating My Conceptual Approach

The research questions of this thesis and their focus on the areas of journeys, stories and time has required me to employ an eclectic collection of concepts as I have worked with the participants' narratives. Throughout this chapter, I have set out my conceptual approach, discussing my use of the key orienting concept of precarity and the further concepts of mobility, materiality, space and time. In this section of the chapter, I evaluate this approach by discussing the strengths and challenges of working with a range of concepts in this way.

From the outset of this research, it was never my intention to use this thesis to extend a particular area of theory or to engage rigorously with an existing area of conceptual thought. Indeed, my natural orientation towards policy has meant that this thesis has always been empirically focused. Despite this, my analysis of participants' narratives has been closely shaped by my engagement with the collection of concepts that I have discussed here, with these concepts underpinning both the direction and the substance of the analysis.

As I have set out to understand broad areas of participants' experiences such as their journeys, I have realised that such an engagement is only made possible through bringing to bear a range of concepts that shed light on different aspects of their experiences. As Chapter Five demonstrates, the participants' journey experiences could

have been analysed in multiple ways, in relation to space, time, mobility or materiality. It was therefore only through working with this eclectic collection of concepts that I was able to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the different aspects of the participants' journey accounts.

The compromise that I have made by bringing to bear an eclectic toolkit of concepts on the participants' narrative accounts is that in trying to ensure breadth, I have sometimes lost specificity. However despite this compromise, my eclectic approach has enabled me to work across the large set of participants' narratives and to explore elements of their precarity by homing in on relevant concepts such as materiality or temporality where relevant. As the later analysis chapters demonstrated, the breadth of this conceptual approach has been key in allowing me to engage with wide-ranging areas of the participants' accounts. Further evaluative reflections on my conceptual approach can be found in Chapter Eight. I will now close this chapter by reviewing the concepts discussed.

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the key concepts that I employed to help me work with participants' narratives of their migration journeys and experiences of seeking asylum. I began by introducing the concepts of precarity and precarious life, discussing the work of key theorists Judith Butler and Isabell Lorey. Working with Butler, I discussed how she has used the broad concept of precarious life to conceptualise the fragility of all human life and the ways through which the insecurity that all human beings face is differentially distributed through humankind. I also discussed the relevance of her notion of extreme or maximised precarity to the lives and experiences of young refugees. By exploring Butler's notion of 'grievability', I discussed how some human lives can be seen to matter more than others, with some human beings becoming positioned as having lives worth protecting, whilst the precarious nature of other human lives is not seen to be important.

Lorey extends Butler's work by developing a threefold framework of precarity and the ways in which precarious lives might be governed. Grounding her work in Foucault's approach to governmentality, Lorey's approach provides a way of understanding how certain lives might become more precarious than others, through discussing how the privilege of protection that certain lives enjoy is built by marking

out of the precarity of those marked as 'other'. Engaging with Butler and Lorey's work has provided me with a conceptual basis for understanding the insecurity that the young people in the research face and the ways in which their extreme precarity might be governed and maintained.

After discussing concepts of precarity and precarious life, I moved to set out the more eclectic range of concepts that I also employed in this thesis. The first of these discussed regarded the concept of mobilities and the ways in which this relates to a politics of movement. Engaging with scholarship around the differential access and control that people have over their ability to move or to remain in place has been helpful in enabling me to engage, in particular, with the migration journeys of the participants in this research. A substantial analysis of this topic and the related politics of mobility can be found in Chapter Five.

The third area that I have considered in this chapter concerned scholarship around materiality and embodiment. Here, I have discussed how work around the materiality of asylum regimes, where immigration statuses become tactile in the form of identity cards, visas and passports. A further consideration of these ideas can be found in Chapter Seven, where I examine the participants' experience of waiting to receive asylum letters. Within the discussion of materiality in this chapter, I have also discussed scholarship that focuses on the role of the body within asylum systems and different ways in which bodies of asylum seekers can be treated as evidence. This discussion relates closely to the focus of Chapter Six, where I examine two participant case studies of seeking asylum and their experiences of having their bodies called on to 'testify' alongside their verbal accounts.

The final themes that I considered in this chapter were the politics of space and time. Here, I briefly discussed broad ideas around the uneven effects of globalisation and the ways in which these can impact on how different groups relate to space. Ideas around the politics of space and mobility form a crucial aspect of Chapter Five of this thesis, which focuses on the participants' journey experiences. The politics of time, which I discussed in this chapter in relation to the concurrent tempos of immigration and asylum regimes, forms the focus of the final analysis chapter, Chapter Seven, where I examine the temporal aspects of participants' experiences of seeking asylum.

This chapter has discussed the conceptual underpinnings of this thesis and the core concepts and ideas that have shaped my overall approach to engaging with participants' narratives. I have found that working with a broad range of concepts has

enabled me to engage with the large set of participants' narratives and to identify and work with key themes of analysis.

The next chapter will explore how I approached researching the lives of young refugees methodologically, tracing the epistemological and ethical groundings of this work and discussing how the methodological approach, research design and analytic approach evolved.

Chapter Four: Methodological Journeys

In this chapter, I chart the methodological journeys of this thesis, discussing the evolution of the research questions, research design, method and analysis. The chapter begins by considering the journey of the research questions before moving to discuss the ontological and theoretical concepts that were employed to answer them. The focus then turns to the research design, considering the approach taken towards stories and the status of talk. Here, I set out the threefold approach to narrative that was embedded within this thesis, discussing the materiality of asylum stories, the use of story as a methodology and this thesis as a storied account of the research. Following this, the latter sections of the chapter reflect on the process of data analysis and the personal and political ethical issues that I encountered throughout the different stages of the research process.

4.1. The Journey of the Research Questions

As I discussed in Chapter Two, the research questions that formed the focus of this thesis were as follows:

What subjective accounts do young people narrate about their experiences of seeking asylum?

a) *How do migration journeys feature in the stories that young people tell?*
b) *How does time feature in the stories that young people tell?*
c) *What are the functions of stories for young people as they seek asylum?*

Since this chapter examines the evolution of my methodological focus on story, I would like to open the chapter by charting the evolution of the research questions and explaining how a focus on stories became central to this thesis. In doing so, I hope to contextualise the research focus both within my personal research journey and the lives of the young people that this research has sought to explore.

When I first began this thesis, I expected to use it as a way to extend the focus of my Master's research, which examined how young refugees negotiate identity and belonging. In hoping to extend this work, I planned to conduct a series of participatory

workshop sessions with a small group of young people seeking asylum to explore these themes. To begin, I set about negotiating access at a local advocacy project working with young asylum seekers and refugees. Through my discussions with the support workers at this project, it became clear that a series of single interviews would be more feasible due to the unpredictable nature of the young people's daily lives. Therefore, once I had negotiated access, I met with the first few participants and conducted initial interviews, using a broad narrative approach.

Through the process of conducting these initial interviews, I realised two key things. Firstly, the young people who were receiving advocacy support were often in the middle of their asylum claim and unlike those participants that I had worked with during my Master's thesis, they had not yet received refugee status. This meant that their concerns were largely focused on the outcome of their asylum claim and the insecurity that they were facing.

Secondly, I began to realise that the narrative approach that I was using as a method could actually be extended to form the substantive focus of the research. As outlined in Chapter Two, within the asylum system, decisions on an applicant's claim rely heavily on personal accounts of the reasons that they were forced to flee and the threats that they face. Within this context, the subjective voices of asylum seekers can be scrutinised and interrogated in the search for objective legal truths that point to the plausibility and legitimacy of an applicant's case (see Sigona 2014 or Chapter Six of this thesis for a discussion of this). Beyond this, within heavily politicised asylum contexts, there can often be the presumption that asylum seekers' claims are bogus and that they are lying to receive the benefits of refugee status. This environment means that the voices and stories of asylum seekers can often be met with disbelief.

During the early interviews for this thesis, I began to see how stories hold a particular significance for young people seeking asylum, since the asylum system depends on applicants providing a narrative account of their experiences. These subjective accounts are given within the context of the asylum interview and are then used as part of evidence on which an asylum decision is made. For young people seeking asylum alone, this means providing a personal account of their experiences within the context of the asylum interview. Those seeking asylum as part of their families are not required to give an account of their experiences, since their parents or guardian are called on to do so on their behalf. Despite these differing levels of exposure to the narrative process experienced by young people, it is clear that stories

hold a particular power within the asylum context and have implications for all of the young people whose lives are affected by the decisions made.

As I began to recognise the particular significance of narrative accounts within the asylum context, the idea of centring the research questions on stories began to seem appropriate. After I had conducted the initial two participant interviews at the advocacy project, I created the research questions presented above, with their overarching focus on story. This focus not only provided a way to explore the experiences of the participants, but also, by linking with narrative research on the functions that stories play in political and social contexts, provided a basis from which to explore the power and purpose of testimony within the asylum context.

In later sections of the chapter, I will turn to discuss the research design and methods that I employed to help me to work with this storied approach. Before doing so, the chapter will now turn to discuss the ontological and epistemological perspectives that underpinned this research.

4.2. Ontological and Epistemological Moorings

A mooring is that which secures and anchors something in particular location. Throughout the methodological journey of this thesis there have been several key ontological and epistemological areas of thought that I have employed to help me to answer the research questions. These areas of thought have provided a set of moorings to this thesis, locating it within particular fields of inquiry and shaping my overall approach.

Social inquiry is generally understood as being underpinned by the two principles of epistemology and ontology, with approaches to these key dimensions, each exerting a fundamental influence on the research process. Epistemology relates to the idea of knowledge and the process through which knowledge about the social world is generated and constituted (see Stanley and Wise 2002). Epistemology is therefore concerned with how people come to understand the nature of reality, and the ways in which this reality is produced. Following this, epistemological frameworks focus not only on what knowledge is and how it can be characterised, but also, as Stanley and Wise write, "who the knowers are" and by what means someone becomes a knower and how their knowledge is adjudicated and assessed (Stanley and Wise 2002; 186).

Whilst epistemology focuses on the idea of knowledge, ontology is concerned with the essential nature of reality. Different ontological perspectives are therefore distinguished by the ways in which they view reality and make sense of the world. Whilst epistemology and ontology are separate principles that exert their own influences on social inquiry, they are often brought together as the fundamental principles that underpin all social research. In this section of the chapter, I will discuss the key ontological and epistemological moorings that anchored and shaped this thesis.

4.2.1. Critical Realism

Critical realism formed a central ontological foundation of this thesis, shaping my approach to the status of talk and narrative data. This approach, which is most often related to the work of Roy Bhaskar (1978), is concerned with recognising the ontological differences between the natural and social world. Critical realists understand that within social research, there is a *real* world that exists beyond participants' thoughts and actions, whilst simultaneously recognising the importance of how people construct and understand their own social worlds. Critical realists are therefore able to maintain a sense of ontological realism, understanding that there is a world that exists independently of human thought and action, in conjunction to being open to epistemological constructivism, through which they understand human experience and knowledge as being rooted in our own perspectives and standpoints (see Maxwell 2012).

Within this research, I adopted a critical realist perspective towards participants' talk, recognising that whilst the accounts the participants shared may or may not reflect the facts of their experiences, they reflected their own constructions of reality and the ways in which they had perceived events from their own standpoint. In this way, I understood the participants' narrative accounts as being representative of the subjective truth of their experiences. Adopting this perspective enabled me to approach the data collected as being rooted within the temporal and spatial context of the research interview, reflecting the process of being constructed by the participants and myself as a researcher. Understanding that for participants the accounts they had shared had been *real* for them in that context, freed me from the burden of having to explore whether in fact the participants' talk reflected the objective truth of their experiences, since the

value of the accounts lay in their subjective truth and the way in which the 'truth' had been constructed by the participants.

Beyond the ontological logic of this approach, there was also an ethical dimension to my use of the critical realist perspective. Since the participants in this research were all negotiating a context in which their own or their families' accounts or testimonies were being assessed for their validity, I was keen to minimise any of the ways in which this research could mimic aspects of the asylum context. In light of this, when participants shared their experiences of their migration journeys or the reasons why they had had to flee, I did not probe into the validity of their claims. I was less concerned with the objective reality of the participants' experiences and much more with the subjective truth of how they saw, understood and communicated their own reality.

4.2.2. Feminist Qualitative Research

Beyond critical realist perspectives, feminist and postcolonial approaches to reality and the construction of knowledge formed an important part of the ontological and epistemological foundations of this thesis and will now be explored in turn. Feminist qualitative research is diverse and dynamic, spanning multiple disciplines and perspectives (see Oleson 2013 for a review). Within the broad field of feminist qualitative research, there are several key themes that shaped this research, some of which link closely to postcolonial perspectives and are therefore explored further in the following section.

As Virginia Oleson argues in her review of feminist qualitative research, if there is a dominant or overarching concern that unites research in the field, it is the issue of knowledge and knowledges (Oleson 2013). From this, she argues that the key questions surrounding whose knowledge is considered knowledge, how and where knowledge can be obtained and the purposes which knowledge serve, underpin much feminist inquiry. These questions are of particular relevance to this research, since within the context of this thesis I have been especially concerned with the ways in which the power to create knowledge was unevenly distributed between the capacity of myself as a researcher and the young people as participants. Understanding that this uneven distribution is often inherent to the research process motivated me to adopt a reflexive approach to the

production of knowledge throughout the research and provoked me to ask critical questions about my responsibility as a researcher.

Reflexive research requires the recognition that knowledge is created through a shared and collaborative process, in which data is produced through both the researcher's and the participants' own interpretations and is therefore rooted within the particular temporal and spatial research context (see Diaz 2002). To practice reflexivity as a researcher means to engage in a continuous and challenging assessment of the knowledge producing dynamics that are inherent to the research process, understanding how one's background as a researcher may shape how knowledge is defined, produced and disseminated (Oleson 2013). The sensitive nature of much of the research for this thesis made me acutely aware of my responsibility as a researcher, to pay reflexive attention to the process of knowledge production.

In addition to influencing my focus on reflexivity, my ontological and epistemological engagement with feminist qualitative research also shaped how I approached the understanding of voice and the status of talk within the research interviews. Concerns about how to avoid exploiting or distorting research participants' voices have long been a concern of feminist qualitative researchers. In recent years, critical research from postcolonial and poststructural feminists has worked to problematise the very nature of voice and the frequently positioned binary opposite, silence. Within such scholarship, researchers have aimed to move away from the binary that posits voice and expression as positive and silence as negative (Malhotra & Rowe 2013). Instead, scholars argue that both silence and voice must be problematised and interrogated in relation to the present and the historical contexts within which they have been produced. This means that feminist qualitative researchers have shifted away from the idea that their research could '*give voice*' to their participants, focusing instead on their own responsibility as researchers to recognise how voices are framed within their research and to what ends such voices are used. Within this thesis, feminist and postcolonial scholarship on voice has been important in helping me to engage with the ways in which I have framed, transcribed and analysed the research data.

Beyond influencing the ontological and epistemological foundations of this research, the concerns of feminist qualitative research described above, also shaped the way in which I viewed the research topic of this thesis. Since all of the participants in this research were involved, either directly or indirectly, in the process of seeking recognition for their own or their families' stories, they had each experienced to some

extent, a struggle around voice, silence and recognition. As later chapters of this thesis explore, the process of seeking asylum is in many ways, a process of seeking recognition for one's voice and experiences. Connecting back to the discussion of the politics of recognition in Chapter Three, the process of seeking asylum is one in which the questions of who has the right to speak for and provide knowledge of personal experiences, lie at the core. For these reasons, concerns of feminist qualitative research around knowledge, voice and power, took on a further significance in this research, shaping both my methodological and substantive concerns.

4.2.3. Postcolonial Perspectives

In addition to feminist perspectives on voice and silence, this research was informed by postcolonial research that has further problematised concepts of representation and recognition. Within this field, scholars have critiqued the dominant framing of human rights as a top-down affair, where voice can be given by the powerful to the powerless as a means of empowering them. In response to the work of NGOs and development agencies that often work under this model within the Global South, scholars have argued that giving voice to overcome the act of silencing might itself be a further act of silencing (see Bhambra and Shilliam's analysis 2009).

The paradox that the act of trying to overcome silencing can itself reinforce the silencing is particularly relevant for academic researchers as they engage in the production of knowledge. As Bhambra and Shilliam write, for academic researchers, there can be a dilemma surrounding the responsibility to "listen and recognise the silenced 'other' so as to expose the power relation of silencing by denaturalising proscribed social meanings and identities" (Bhambra & Shilliam 2009; 8). Since academics may seek to represent lived experiences of silenced *others* through their work, whilst at the same time speaking from a position of privilege as an 'intellectual', they can experience significant tensions. Such tensions can mean that even the most well meaning of intellectuals can, in the act of representation, work to further reinforce processes of silencing (see Sider & Smith 2007).

Gayatri Spivak famously addressed the issue of voice and representation in her essay *'Can the Subaltern Speak?'* (1988). Here she explored whether the production of knowledge in relation to subaltern people can ever be achieved without further

extending the colonial and imperial project. In her essay, Spivak argued that for any social transformation to take place, the silences present within academic discourses and the wider social world must be addressed. In response to this, sociologists Bhambra and Shilliam (2009) have identified a three-part conceptual framework that regards how silence and processes of silencing can be understood. Within this thesis, this framework provides both a foundation to the methodological and ethical approaches used, whilst also feeding into my substantive focus on the experiences of young refugees.

Bhambra and Shilliam (2009) argue first that any understanding about silence must be built on analysis that exposes how silence can render certain social categories of meaning and identities included and others excluded. From this, they secondly argue that researchers should set about exposing the act of silencing as that which reproduces hierarchies of political power through the construction of meanings and identities. The final component of this approach argues that academics must reflect consistently on their responsibility to undermine the reproduction of silences by problematising silence where they can.

The considerations of Bhambra and Shilliam link closely with the epistemological questions referred to in earlier sections of this chapter, concerning the who, how, where and why of knowledge production. Within this research, their framework provided me with a basis for understanding and making sense of my responsibility as a researcher, whilst also allowing me to understand the ways in which my engagement with the research participants stemmed from a position of privilege and could risk further '*othering*' or silencing them.

Having considered the ontological and epistemological foundations of this thesis, this chapter will now turn to examine the focus on stories within the research design. The following discussion will provide some further reflections around why I decided to place stories at the centre of the analysis and the methodological and theoretical ideas that underpinned this approach.

4.3. Why Stories?

This chapter opened with a discussion of how the research questions evolved to become centred around a focus on narrative. In this section of the chapter, I will seek to expand on the focus on narrative within this thesis, charting the journey of '*the story*' within the

research design. To begin, I will briefly examine the broad field of narrative inquiry before moving to set out the narrative approach used.

Stories are a part of everyday life and constitute a means for human beings to negotiate and communicate their experiences. Narrative inquiry is a subtype of qualitative research that focuses on foregrounding experiences as narrated by those who have lived them. For researchers, narratives, or stories as they are often also interchangeably called, provide a productive site through which to examine the meanings that people ascribe to their experiences (see Eastmond 2007). Within the field, the definition of 'narrative' itself is often in dispute, since, unlike other qualitative approaches, narrative research offers no overall rules in relation to when narrative accounts become stories and vice versa, what constitutes a story or narrative and when these stories begin and end (see Andrews et al. 2013).

In their recent discussion of narrative research, narrative scholars Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou comment how researchers most often choose to frame their research in terms of narrative because in doing so, they believe it is possible to see "different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change" (Andrews et al. 2013; 1). As a diverse group, narrative researchers are interested in topics such as the practice of storytelling as a social action, the language, context, content and function of narration and the processes through which stories are co-constructed between researchers and participants (see Chase 2011; Squire 2008; Riessman 2008 for overviews of the field).

Narrative inquiry can be understood as being centred on the dynamic relationship between experience and expression, in which experience can structure expression, whilst expression also provides a way to organise and structure experience. As anthropologist Edward Bruner identified in his work '*Experience and its Expression*' (1986), the relationship between experience, expression and reality can be complex and multi-faceted. Bruner argued that it is impossible to completely know somebody else's experiences, since 'everybody censures or represses, or may not be fully aware of, or able to articulate, certain aspects of what has been experienced' (Bruner 1986; 5). Analytically, this means that researchers need to distinguish between the life as it is *lived*, which pertains to the events that occur in a person's life, the life as it is *experienced*, regarding to the meaning drawn from these events, and the life as it is *told*, which concerns how experience is framed and recounted in a particular context

(Bruner 1986). Researchers such as Marita Eastmond, have also suggested a further layer of interpretation, the life as *text*, which concerns researchers' perceptions and uses of a story (Eastmond 2007).

The broad approach towards narrative adopted in this thesis can be summed up in the words of Andrews et al. who comment that by focusing on narratives, researchers are able to "investigate not just how stories are structured and the ways in which they work, but also who produces them and by what means; the mechanisms by which they are consumed; how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted and what, if any, effects they have. For many of us, problematic as they are, narratives carry traces of human lives that we want to understand" (Andrews et al. 2013; 2). Following Andrews et al's approach, in this thesis, I have placed the emphasis less on the linguistic pattern and structure of narratives and more on understanding the functions of narrative in the social and political world and how these contexts determine how narratives are received. This approach to narrative has been shaped by an understanding that although narratives can be problematic, raising questions about the relationships between the life as *told, lived*, *experienced* and as *text,* they can also provide a gateway towards understanding experiences of human life.

The narrative approach of this thesis was organised around a threefold framework. The first dimension of this approach was discussed at the beginning of this chapter and regards the power that stories can carry within the lives of young people seeking asylum. Central to this aspect was the notion of the material nature of certain stories, where in the case of young asylum seekers, the accounts that are given of their past experiences, either by themselves or their guardian, can take on a particular materiality within their lives. Within a context where the young people or their family members have to tell stories of their experiences, their narrative accounts can become like objects of evidence, which have a particular purchase and political role in their lives.

The second dimension of the narrative framework employed in this research concerned the use of narrative as a research method. Since stories can play such a significant role in the lives of young people seeking asylum, it made sense to mirror the research focus on stories with a methodological and analytical approach that also focused on narrative. In addition to this, whilst other researchers have written about the role of narrative in asylum seekers and refugees' lives, there has not been an in-depth examination of the role of stories in the lives of young people seeking asylum. Whilst

this gap provided a productive area for this thesis to contribute to, it also presented the fundamental question of how to conduct a narrative approach on the very thing that matters and carries such political purchase within the lives of the participants.

In engaging with this question, it was clear that on one level the act of asking the young people to generate a story about their lives within the research context mirrored in many ways what was being asked of them within the asylum context, prompting them to reflect on their experiences and express them on a one-off occasion, whilst being recorded. The fact that I was unknown to the young people added a further layer of similarity between the research context and asylum interviews. However, beyond these links, the fundamental difference between the use of narrative as a research method and the use of narrative within the asylum interview, was that within the research context, I was not there to pass judgement on the validity of participants' narratives and approached them as valuable representations of subjective truth or the *'life as told',* whether or not they actually pertained to the objective truth of participants lives.

The central distinction between the narrative context of the research interview and that of the asylum assessment was that like most narrative research, this research did not have as its central purpose "the documentation of an objective truth" (Squire et al. 2015; 109). Narrative researchers, when reporting on their work, are often met with the question, which asks something like *'is this story true?'* Such a question can be difficult to answer, since, narrative scholars can also ask, "What does truth mean when it is applied to descriptions of human experience?" (Squire et al. 2015; 109) Beyond this question of how truth is defined when narratives shift and change across contexts, there can be the further question of whether *'what is true'* really matters in a context. Whilst within the context of the asylum interview, the focus is placed on establishing whether an individual meets the criteria of the Refugee Convention and therefore can be considered as a legitimate refugee, the research context had no such focus on establishing the validity of participants' narrative accounts.

In terms of the debate about narrative and narrative truth, it is important to recognise that of course there are narratives that sit closer to the objective truth than others, corresponding in a greater degree to events as they occurred. However, even within the most truthful of accounts, there can be shadows of fiction, which may be seen within shifts in the plot, the chronology or the ways in which people are characterised. Narratives that sit nearer the more fictionalised end of the spectrum are still of value to

narrative researchers, since they can still be a means by which individuals convey the meanings that they hope to communicate.

Whilst narrative research rarely focuses on verifying the objective truths of people's lives, it can yield great insights into the subjective truth of how the world appears and is experienced in the mindsets of others (see Squire et al. 2015). For this reason, beyond the substantive relevance of a narrative approach to the subject matter of this thesis, it was also adopted as a methodological approach. By shifting the focus away from using narrative to establish objective truths, to the use of narrative to explore the frameworks of meaning by which individuals communicate and live their lives, the narrative approach of this research fundamentally differed from that used within the asylum context.

Returning to discuss the dimensions of the narrative framework within this thesis, the final dimension concerned the '*stories of the stories*' as they were told within this thesis. This thesis seeks to tell a story of stories that were collected within the research context, stories which tell of experiences of migration journeys and where narrative testimony has been assessed in the asylum process. Whilst this approach to story is complex and multilayered, since it is not easy to tell the story of stories about stories, I considered that taking such an approach was necessary to enable me to engage with the messy reality of story within the lives of young people seeking asylum. Beyond this, whilst narrative approaches have been used within refugee research (see Eastmond 2007) and have been identified as central political devices within the processes of seeking asylum (see Sigona 2014), there is a gap regarding research that explores the significance of stories in the lives of young people seeking asylum.

To review the narrative framework described here, the three components were therefore as follows:

1. *The Materiality of Asylum Stories:*
   The research participants, either by themselves or along with their families, are called on to tell a story within the asylum process. The act of telling a story in this context is saturated with political and social consequences, with the stories told having differing levels of political purchase as they are dissected and scrutinised for credibility.

2. Story As Methodology:

The focus on story becomes a research method in addition to the research focus and in some ways mirrors the method that is used within the asylum context. The fundamental difference between these two contexts is that within the research interviews the young people's stories are not sought so that they can be scrutinised or validated/invalidated. Instead, they are positioned as valuable and valid on their own, as representations of the subjective truth of the young people's experiences.

3. The Thesis as a Story:

The final aspect of the narrative approach is the story of the ways in which the participants' narratives have been used and represented within this research, in which for myself as a researcher they have held a particular purchase as data.

This threefold approach to narrative required me to be constantly aware and reflexive as I worked across these different levels of story, understanding that by doing so, I may encounter complex ethical and practical issues. A discussion of the ethical issues that surrounded the research approach and analysis is included in later sections of this chapter. The focus will now turn to examine how I approached the study of participants' narratives by discussing the method, design and context of this research.

4.4. Research Context

4.4.1. The Welsh Context

I chose to conduct my research in Wales for several reasons. Firstly as a researcher based at a Welsh university, I was keen to conduct the research in proximal locations to the university so that there would be no added practical constraints on negotiating access and developing research relationships.

Beyond this, the Welsh context of devolution provided an interesting context from which to explore the experiences of young people seeking asylum. Whilst immigration is not a devolved issue, the welfare of children and children's rights for children living in Wales are Welsh Government (WG) responsibilities. The UNCRC has been adopted as the basis of policymaking for children and young people in Wales and Ministers have to pay due regard to the Convention when making any ministerial

decisions (WG 2014). This focus on children's rights in Wales made it a particularly interesting place to engage with the experiences of young people seeking asylum.

Since 1999, asylum seekers have been housed across specified dispersal areas in the UK, on a no-choice basis to relieve the burden on Local Authorities near airports in London (Spencer 2011). Within Wales, there are four dispersal areas – Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham. For this research, I decided to spread my focus across the three dispersal areas within South Wales. Since the refugee sector can be quite small within each of the individual cities, with many individuals known across different services, I chose to conduct my research across the large geographical area of South Wales to protect the anonymity of my participants.

4.4.2. Schools & Advocacy Projects

Initially I had planned to conduct my research based at an advocacy project that worked with young people seeking asylum across South Wales. However, once my fieldwork began, it became clear that solely focusing on this project would not provide enough participants for my research to be viable. The nature of the advocacy project meant that some of the young people referred to the service were in very vulnerable circumstances and it was not appropriate for them to take part in the research. I therefore realised that I would need to adopt a broader approach by extending the research context.

Three months into my fieldwork, I extended my research context to schools, as they provided a suitable way of accessing a good number of young people within the same context. Schools in or around the centre of the three dispersal cities were chosen since they had the highest numbers of pupils who were seeking asylum or who had received refugee status.

4.4.3. Negotiating Access

Access to the participants in the advocacy project was gained through a contact that worked there. The management were very supportive of the research and it was decided that individual advocates would ask young people if they wanted to be involved. This worked well, with some young people deciding to participate and others declining. After young people had decided that they wanted to take part, their contact details were

emailed over to me and I contacted them to set up a suitable time and place to conduct the interview.

Negotiating access with schools was also a relatively straightforward process. Through a personal contact, I became aware of Local Authority provision for teaching English as an additional language (EAL) to asylum seeking, gypsy and traveller pupils. From this, I approached each of the Local Authorities and received general permission to conduct research in each area. I then got in touch with each of the different EAL support agencies, which put me in touch with the Head Teacher or members of the Senior Leadership Team at the relevant schools.

Following this, I visited each school to meet the relevant member of staff coordinating inclusion and EAL provision to plan how the research would work. It was decided in each school that a member of staff would draw up a timetable and I would carry out the interviews over a couple of days, with 30 - 50 minutes slots for each interview.

4.4.4. Research Participants

The research was conducted with 42 young people, who were accessed through an opportunistic, purposive sampling frame. The participants ranged from ages 12 – 23 years, with the average age being 15 years. Four participants were over 18 years old, and 38 participants were under 18 years. Within the sample there were 22 male participants and 20 female participants. Six interviews were conducted in advocacy-based settings, whilst the remainder took place in schools.

The participants originated from a spread of 19 countries across the world, displayed in the map in Figure 3. The five most recurrent countries of origin were Afghanistan, Vietnam, Sudan, Syria and Pakistan.

Figure 3. Participant Countries of Origin

In terms of seeking asylum, only three participants had received their refugee status, giving them leave to remain in the UK indefinitely. Out of the remaining participants, nine young people were unaccompanied or separated, seeking asylum without family members or a guardian. Of these separated young people, four had been trafficked to the UK.

It is important to recognise that whilst the participants were drawn together because of the shared experience of seeking asylum, they were a largely heterogeneous group with many different experiences that had led them to seek asylum. The reasons that the young people had fled their countries of origin varied across the group, from broader scale geopolitics such as civil wars or political persecution to more personal reasons such as their family getting in trouble with the police or avoiding forced marriage.

The young people also showed great variation in how much they understood about seeking asylum. Some young people were fully aware of the reason for their claim and the progress of their application; others were less aware, understanding little more than that they were in the UK to receive a better education. This variance meant that I had to practise sensitivity in how I talked about seeking asylum, not assuming any level of knowledge from the young people.

Another important consideration was the fact that whilst five participants had received refugee status and come to the end of their asylum claim, for the majority of the participants, seeking asylum was a present reality and had not reached any resolution. As a researcher, being aware and sensitive to this and the uncertainty that many of the participants were facing was a central consideration within the fieldwork. Since I was researching young people's stories, I was particularly aware that the young people were also being called upon to provide narratives within the context of their asylum claims. This mean that the accounts that participants constructed within the research context could not be understood as being separate from the wider process of seeking asylum.

4.5. Method

4.5.1. Narrative Interviews

The purpose of this research was to explore and understand the stories young people told about their experiences of migration journeys and experiences of seeking asylum, using narrative interviews. These interviews or narrative occasions (see Riessman 2008) were understood as contexts where two active participants, myself as a researcher and the participant, jointly constructed narrative and meaning together (see Gubrium & Holstein 2002). To facilitate narratives in conversation, I purposefully asked open questions to encourage participants to speak and direct the conversation in their own way.

Often research with children and young people has focused on closing the power gap between the researcher and the researched (see Gallagher 2008). Here power is seen as a commodity, possessed by adults or other dominant groups but not by children or other subordinates. In an attempt to move away from an oppositional view of power in terms of the powerful and the powerless, I adopted a view of power linked to Foucault's work on the multivalency of power. Here both power and the resistance to power are understood as being situated across multiple sites and micro levels (see Robinson & Kellet 2004). Power is not a property or something to be owned and instead exists within the relations between different people.

By understanding power as something that exists in exchange, I was keen to move away from the question and answer formats of research interviews that work to a more traditional structure and understanding of power. Instead, I focused on the narrative interview as a place for exchange, where both participants shape the direction and focus of the conversation. Whilst this does not mean that traditional anxieties about the power imbalance between adult researchers and young participants were absent, I hoped that by creating a more fluid environment where participants could direct the focus of the exchange in relation to their experiences, this problem would be lessened.

Understanding that different participants would respond to the research context in different ways, I recognised that it was important to prepare a number of broad questions in case some participants were less forthcoming and expected more guidance in what to talk about (See Appendix 1). These open-ended questions were

structured chronologically, starting with where the young people had come from and their reasons for migration. They then moved to focus on their journeys and experiences within the UK.

Beyond this loose structure, the aim of the interviews was to create an open space for the participants to tell stories about whatever they chose to. Whilst narrative researchers argue that the specific wording used in a question is less important than a focus on reciprocity and being emotionally attentive, certain kinds of questions are understood to provide more narrative opportunities than others (see Riessman 2008). In line with this, all questions began by asking, "*Can you tell me about….*" to encourage the participants to create their own narratives in whichever way was most meaningful to them.

All interviews finished with a question designed to be positive, focusing on their favourite things such as hobbies or foods. This focus was important to ensure that the interviews, which often contained traumatic or troubling narratives, finished in a positive way. Following this, the participants were invited to add anything and ask me any questions.

4.5.2. Context and Timing

For the interviews conducted in schools, the time and length of the interviews was decided by the research contact within the school, in line with timetabling considerations. This meant that I had little control over the practical details of the interviews, working to a predetermined schedule. The drawback of this was that I sometimes felt that interviews could have continued on beyond the allocated time.

In each of the schools, the research contact created a timetable over one week, giving 40 minutes on average for each interview. I was given access to a small meeting room and the participants were asked to come to that room for their allocated slot. This system worked well, since the research contacts had communicated with each of the participants and the majority turned up.

For the advocacy-based interviews, a different procedure occurred, where the advocate made contact with me if a participant was interested in taking part. Following this, I made contact to arrange a suitable time and place. These interviews all took place in meeting rooms in libraries or within Refugee Council offices across

South Wales. Since these interviews did not have the time constraints of a school timetable, they were much longer than the school interviews, generally lasting two hours.

A discussion of the various ethical challenges of conducting the research interviews, both within the school based and advocacy based contexts is included later on in this chapter. The focus will now turn to examine the journey of data analysis, discussing the analytical approach adopted and the challenges faced.

4.6. The Analytical Journey

This chapter has so far sought to map out the research process, charting the evolution of the research questions, research design and methods. This section will turn to consider the process of transcription, data analysis and writing, discussing the thinking behind the three findings chapters and the challenges faced during the analytical process. It will discuss three different stages of the analytical process, beginning with the process of transcription before moving to discuss the process of analysing the participants' accounts and that of writing up. Within each of these stages, the discussion seeks to chart my own analytical journey and the personal and ethical challenges that I faced.

4.6.1. Recording and Transcribing the Data

All of the research interviews were recorded through both a Dictaphone and Apple iPhone Voice Memos app to limit the damage if there was any issue with one of the pieces of recording equipment. Beyond recording the interviews, no field notes were made during interviews to ensure that I could engage as actively as possible with participants as we spoke.

After each interview, the voice memo was emailed to my home computer to ensure the data was further protected. They were also stored on Dropbox online storage and on my password protected external hard drive. In each of these storage methods, the data was password protected. After the interviews, when the data had been stored in these different ways, the interviews were deleted from both my phone and the Dictaphone.

When all of the fieldwork was completed, I began the process of transcription. After the volume of interviews I had conducted and the sensitivity of much of the data, I was conscious that when I began the task of transcription, it was not simply an administrative task and instead understood it to be a first stage of analysis. Following Riessman, I understood that the act of transcribing is therefore neither neutral nor objective and is instead an interpretive process, which points the analysis in a certain direction (Riessman 2008). Whilst I was aware at this stage that my analytical approach would not be discourse or conversation analysis, my focus on narrative meant that a detailed approach to transcription would still be appropriate. I therefore chose to adapt Jeffersonian style (Jefferson 2004), a style most often used in conversation analysis, into a more basic style that sufficiently captured pauses, emphases, speed and volume in line with what was required for my later analysis. The following segment is lifted from one of my interviews to provide an example of the transcription approach used.

Symbol	Meaning
(.)	Small pause
(4)	Silence with no. of seconds
(Quietly)	Quiet speech
Underline	Faster speech
(Slowly)	Slowly
Bold	Used for emphasis

Figure 4. Transcription Key

"A: **Yeah I love interpreting**! I love it. Coz when I left London, I went to school and I was doing Health and Social Care and I just wanted to try everything, I wanted to do everything. I was doing Health and Social Care and then after that I went to college I was doing Spanish and Italian. Coz I thought the two languages are quite similar to each other. I didn't learn it fully because we had to leave the college. But for me no languages are hard really because even before college I was studying Farsi, in church as well. And I was going to learn Polish as well. (.) I just **love** languages. Especially in UK, because there so many different people form different countries here (2) It's easy to practice, like Kurdish, I never like, be able to speak

properly because I went to Russian school and everything but here I pick it up, friends
from college, school, everything. (2) So it's just easy for me really."

In this extract, chosen here because it demonstrates most of the transcription key shown in the table above, one of the participants, Safia, is discussing her love of languages and her recent experience of speaking and learning different languages. As the extract shows, the transcription style chosen facilitates analysis of pauses, pace and volume, whilst still making it easy to read the narratives as a cohesive piece of talk. Whilst the process of transcribing the 42 research interviews in this way was time consuming, it enabled me to engage more fully with the temporal and sonic qualities of the talk and the ways in which participants used pauses, silences and emphasis to construct the stories they told.

One of the most striking aspects of the process of transcription was the emotional labour that it required from me as a researcher, an experience that I was unprepared for. When I embarked on the first stages of transcription, I was aware that on an intellectual level, the process of transcription formed an important stage of early analysis. For this reason, I began to think carefully about the style that I would use and the ways in which I was interpreting the data. However, I quickly found that after a couple of days of transcribing the first interview I was feeling emotionally heavy in a way that I had not anticipated or experienced during the research process until that point. My experience relates to Moran-Ellis' notion of pain by proxy, regarding the emotional strain that researchers can experience when dealing with distressing narratives or disturbing data (Moran-Ellis 1997; 181). As Bloor et al. (2007) also write, those who transcribe distressing data have been found to be particularly vulnerable to this effect.

Whilst the emotionally sensitive nature of many of the research interviews was sometimes difficult to deal with, I found ways to cope with it and on the whole, enjoyed the process of conducting the research interviews and meeting the participants. However, I soon found that once I brought the research interview out of the research context and into my own home as I set about transcribing them, the process felt very different. Instead of going through the motions transcribing 'data', the stories I was hearing in my headphones each day felt extremely real and emotionally intense.

The experience of struggling with some of the more emotional aspects of transcribing the research interviews introduced to me the importance of not approaching the research process as a solely intellectual endeavour. Instead, the process of transcription highlighted to me the more emotive and very human aspects of conducting qualitative research, aspects which, until that point I had overlooked. As I worked through the transcription process I began to become more emotionally literate about the process of conducting qualitative research, understanding it to be a very human and individual process. Overall, the experience of emotional labour helped me to become more reflexive as I analysed and wrote up the data, making me more sensitive to my own emotional reactions and how these shaped my approach.

4.6.2. Structuring the Analysis

As previously discussed, in light of the ways in which narratives can hold a significant meaning within the lives of young refugees, I decided to focus the analysis around a narrative framework. However, I did not conduct 'formal' narrative analysis, which is defined by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) as the analysis of the structures of narratives. Instead I focused more on narrative function, exploring the functions that stories play in the social world, by situating them within the cultural, social and institutional discourses, which shape both their production and how they are received. This approach is more informal in the sense that it takes a less systematic approach to understanding narratives, drawing meaning less from their linguistic structures and more from contextual factors.

One benefit of taking a less formal and more contextually informed approach to analysis is that it avoids some of what Atkinson (1992) defined as the 'culture of fragmentation', often a symptom of qualitative data analysis based on coding and categorising. Instead, by dealing with the data holistically from the start and seeking to engage with the functions that stories serve in the political and social contexts within which they are recounted, less formal approaches to analysis can further ensure that the data analysis is not decontextualised. As Coffey and Atkinson write, one of the benefits of analysing data through a narrative lens is that it enables researchers to think beyond the data by engaging with the ways in which stories and accounts are "socially and culturally managed and constructed" (Coffey and Atkinson 1996; 80).

For this thesis, which had both a substantive as well as methodological focus on narrative, this point was particularly pertinent.

A practical issue with a more holistic approach to analysis can arise from the large body of data that narrative researchers have to work with. Since this research was based on over 40 narrative interviews, some of which lasted over several hours, the volume of data seemed to be a significant obstacle to my taking a broad contextual narrative approach. To negotiate this problem, I decided to initially conduct a thematic analysis of each interview, by creating a summary of the stories told and the key themes that emerged. These one-page summaries were created on Microsoft Word and enabled me to map the data in a very general way, providing a quick way to understand and access the narratives, without compromising any of the original data.

Using this initial stage of thematic analysis as a foundation, I then developed a keyword coding system, where I coded each one-page research summary with keywords such as '*Future*' or '*Trauma*'. To further enable me to access the data easily, I entered these into a simple analysis matrix table created with Microsoft Excel, which helped me to familiarise myself with some of the key themes of each interview and the commonalities across the whole dataset. The processes of creating one-page summaries and the keyword matrix were intended as a means to help me to navigate and familiarise myself with the large data set.

After creating summaries of each interview, I set about identifying key themes across the research in line with the research questions, focusing on key themes of journeys, stories and time. To do this, I worked through each of the interviews and organised them in relation to these broad themes. From this, I recognised that it would work well to divide the analytical chapters of the thesis across the research questions, deciding to focus each chapter on answering one of the research questions. After deciding on the broad analytic themes in line with the research questions, I then worked through each chapter in turn, conducting the analysis and writing each one before moving on to the next chapter. This process was broadly structured around identifying the most relevant interviews and extracts in relation to each theme and analysing these in turn. I then set about writing the chapters, working through them by starting with Chapter Five focusing on journeys before moving to Chapter Six, which examines the functions of stories and Chapter Seven, which explores time. The focus will now turn to discussing the process of writing each of the analytical chapters.

4.6.3. Writing up the Analysis

The first analysis chapter, Chapter Five, sought to answer the research question focused on journeys. As this was the first of the findings chapters, I decided that it would be appropriate to adopt a broad-brush approach to analysis, providing an introduction to the data collected. Since this thesis was based on a wealth of narrative data collected from across 42 interviews, with young people who came from multiple countries and had had a variety of experiences, in addition to answering the research question on journeys, Chapter Five also sought to set the scene by introducing the data which had been collected and some of the broad experiences of migration that featured across participants' accounts.

The structure of Chapter Five emerged from my early analysis of participants' journey accounts, where several key themes emerged. These themes related to aspects of journeys such as the process of feeling uprooted, the process of being in transit and emotive aspects of journeys, such as feeling anchored or as if one had been ruptured by the journey. After identifying these key themes, I selected salient moments across the narratives that explicated each of these themes. I then organised the chapter into four sections, devoting each section to one of these journey themes.
Whilst a critique of Chapter Five could focus on the fact that the broad-brush approach adopted, along with the analytic method of using small extracts did not allow for in-depth analysis of participants full narratives, adopting such an approach enabled me to work with a good range of data across the dataset.

A further limitation of Chapter Five could regard the way in which the analysis took the narratives of the participants at face value, treating them as if *'the life told'* directly reflects their experiences. This was firstly an ethical decision, since by not questioning the validity of the participants' journey narratives, and treating them as representative of their experience, I was able to further distance the research process from the context of the asylum interview. Beyond this, I was clear that a more critical exploration of narrative, validity and truth would form the focus of Chapter Six, and so decided that Chapter Five would focus largely on the '*life as told'*.

Chapter Six, which responded to the research question about the functions of participants' stories, took a significantly different approach to analysis than Chapter Five, by focusing on two in-depth case studies instead of analysing data from across many different participants. There were several reasons for this decision. Firstly, the

research topic, which focused on the functions that stories play in the lives of participants as they seek asylum, required an in-depth engagement with the contexts and backgrounds of the participants and their stories. To achieve this on a broad level with many different participants from across the dataset would have been impossible and would have only allowed for a surface level analysis. Beyond this, following the broader analytical approach of Chapter Five, I wanted to grapple more deeply with the data in Chapter Six by exploring the experiences of two of the participants in more detail. The analytical process of Chapter Six therefore centred on the identification of two case studies within the dataset, which each offered a significant amount of data focusing on the themes of story, testimony and truth. I chose two of the longest interviews from the dataset and focused on the participants' experiences of providing accounts of their lives within the asylum context.

In terms of my personal analytical journey, I found the process of writing up Chapter Six most difficult and emotionally draining. The narratives I focused on concerned themes of torture, sexual violence and humiliation, and as I engaged with these accounts, I found myself struggling with how best to analyse them. The emotional labour that I encountered when writing Chapter Six had a significant impact on the first couple of drafts I completed. In a pattern that I saw repeated through much of the writing of this thesis, I recognised that when dealing with emotionally sensitive data, I often wrote first drafts in a cold and detached way, which, considering the nature of the data in this thesis, often seemed inappropriate and harsh when being read. In the case of Chapter Six, earlier drafts focused coldly on the structure of narrative talk, engaging with narratives of torture and violence by analysing the technical aspects of the language. Whilst I did not set out to write in this way, I found that the pattern of writing an earlier draft in a cold and detached way later gave way to a more meaningful, textured and humane engagement and was a method of protecting myself as I went about the analytic process. The process of going through multiple drafts, which got increasingly less cold and detached as the process went on, enabled me to reach an analytic balance that I was happy with in the end.

The final analysis chapter, Chapter Seven, explores participants' experiences of time and the ways in which their lives were governed by the temporal rhythms of the asylum process. Chapter Seven mirrors the structure of Chapter Five, being divided into four sections, which each focused on a particular temporal rhythm or

experience of time in the participants' lives. The analytic process also had parallels to Chapter Six, since I again grappled with the emotional labour of analysing data that focused on trauma and the protracted uncertainty faced by the participants. Furthermore, like Chapter Five, Chapter Seven also deals largely with the *'life as told'*, treating participants' narratives as representative of their experiences, and analysing these experiences as a means of better understanding the temporal governance of asylum-seekers lives.

Taken together, the three analysis chapters of this thesis chart the journeys of both the research participants and my own journey as a researcher as I analysed the data. In terms of the participants, the analysis chapters trace the journeys of the participants to the UK, exploring their methods of transit and the emotive aspects of the migration journeys. From this, the analysis explores the journeys of two participants as they entered they UK and brought their stories of trauma and persecution to the UK asylum authorities. The analysis then ends by examining the daily reality of life as a young asylum seeker, touching on the concurrent rhythms of enforced waiting and rush, which can compound the insecurity that the young people experience.

In tandem to the ways in which the analysis of this thesis reflects the participants' journeys, it also reflects my own journey as I engaged with the data. As I approached the first analysis chapter, Chapter Five, I worked at a broad level across all of the participants' stories, exploring how journeys featured in the stories that the young people told. As I moved into Chapter Six, I began to focus in on two participant case studies, developing a detailed engagement with their stories and the politics and purchase of narratives in their lives. This deeper level engagement also had an affective aspect, requiring me to engage on an emotional level with the accounts that I was analysing. For the final analysis chapter, Chapter Seven, I then felt as if I almost rose up and out of the data, being able to adopt once again a detailed exploration of a particular theme across multiple participant accounts.

4.6.4. What Story to Tell?

The analytical process of this thesis was underpinned by a key question that asked, what I, as a researcher should do with the stories that had been told. By the end of

fieldwork, I had conducted 42 interviews and had participated in the process of generating narrative data with young people from around the world. Throughout this process, I was constantly grappling with the question of what story to tell with this research. My central concern was that, in my desire to direct this research to policy-focused research audiences, I could risk repeating previously heard narratives about the lives of young refugees, which focus on their vulnerability and the protracted insecurities they faced. Whilst these were all key elements of my findings, I did not want to recast an already established narrative and hoped instead to frame the young people's stories in a different way.

The analysis chapters of this thesis represent my aim to move away from telling a story that is already known i.e. that young people seeking asylum are vulnerable in multiple ways, particularly in regards to their mental health, education and legal rights. Instead, I hoped that by choosing to draw the narratives differently by focusing on under-researched areas such as journeys, stories and time, I would be able to present the insecurity of the participants in this research in a fresh way. In doing so, I hoped to highlight the uncertainty that the participants faced, whilst also exploring some of the ways in which this precarity was created and sustained by the broader politics of mobility, narrative and temporality.

As a researcher with a large dataset, I was aware that the process of writing a thesis is a personal affair with the decisions about which data to analyse and discuss being highly subjective. As I wrote this thesis and identified themes of precarity and insecurity across the participants' narratives, I was particularly aware that the decision to tell these particular stories from the data was rooted in both my academic research interest and my emotional engagement with the data. As I reflected on this, I was once again confronted with the power of the researcher to draw participants' stories in certain ways, and the related duty researchers have to steward and represent the words and meanings we have been entrusted with, by those whose lives we have researched. To examine the political ethics of conducting this kind of research, the final section of this chapter explores the various ethical challenges that I encountered during the journey of this thesis.

4.7. Whose Stories?

This chapter has discussed the methodological journey of this thesis, charting the evolution of the research questions, method and analysis. To close the chapter, I will reflect on the broad political ethical issues that can surround the process of conducting social research and will also discuss some of the specific ethical considerations that have shaped the different stages of this thesis.

As narrative researchers Squire et al. have articulated, "the ethics of narrative research matter because both narrative researchers and research participants think that stories matter and that they can make a difference and be useful to people" (2015; 108). My approach to making the *'ethics of narrative research matter'* in the context of this thesis was characterised by my constant engagement with several fundamental ethical questions concerning issues of stewardship, representation, harm and exploitation. I engaged with questions touching on issues such as the ownership of research data, since if the data is comprised of narratives of other peoples' lives, I wondered how it could ever and should ever be the *'property'* of the researcher. I also considered issues of confidentiality and anonymity, wondering whether these were aspects that could ever be guaranteed to participants.

Beyond these various questions, the ethical concerns of this thesis were in many ways framed by a fundamental dilemma, which has been articulated by Kenneth Plummer, who asks, "by what right can an academic enter the subjective world of other human beings and report back to the wider world on them?" (2001; 206). This question, which relates back to the politics of knowledge production explored earlier on in this chapter, pushed me to reflexively engage with how and where I was going to take forward *'and report on'* the stories that had been generated within the research context.

In addition to my own ethical considerations, which are explored in more detail in the coming sections, this research was also shaped by the external ethical support of Cardiff School of Social Science Ethical Committee. The committee granted ethical approval for the research, both at the beginning of fieldwork and also later on in the research process when I extended my fieldwork to include school-based research. I also received a CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) check for the research.

4.7.1. The Research Interviews

From the outset of this research, I was aware of the vulnerable circumstances surrounding the participants and my responsibility as a researcher to ensure that no further risk was created. Like many researchers, I considered the potential harm of the interviews against the potential benefits of participation, both individually through the sharing of experiences and more broadly through any contribution to research and policy understanding. Whilst I did not subscribe to the view that my research was '*giving voice*' to the participants, my previous experiences working alongside young refugees had shown me that the asylum context was often one where young people struggled to find room to express their feelings about their experiences, often hiding them from their peers or only speaking about them in official contexts such as asylum interviews. Understanding this meant that whilst I did not assume there would be clear benefits for the young people who took part in this research, I also did not make the assumption that their participation would automatically be negative and cause them harm.

In terms of causing harm, I was particularly aware that my research topic could create emotional distress for the young people and I was therefore driven to create a research environment characterised by care, respect and trust. I was also conscious that the research interview can be a strange environment, where researchers aim to forge intimacy between strangers (see Alderson and Morrow 2011). To lessen the artificiality of this encounter, I adopted the 'sympathetic' techniques as identified by Alderson and Morrow (2011), practicing active listening, asking follow up questions and frequently checking verbally and through body language that participants were comfortable to carry on talking.

I also adopted distraction strategies to divert attention from distressing topics such as the loss of a family member. Conducting the interviews on a table covered by a very large map not only provided a helpful focal point within the interview conversation but also created space to ask about topics such as international football teams and cuisines, if the conversation became too emotionally intense and needed moving on. These diversion strategies have also been adopted in other studies where young people are interviewed about sensitive topics (see Evans and Becker 2009).

In terms of the time immediately after the research interviews, I made sure that the teachers and support workers were aware of the timings and context of each

interview to ensure that they could provide any additional support the participants might need beyond the research encounter. Beyond this, there was generally no other follow up after the interview apart from a few particular cases. In one case, I had child protection concerns about the parental abuse I had been told about during an interview. Although in the interview, the young person had mentioned the involvement of both the school and social services, I had a responsibility to follow this up in the appropriate ways. On the day of the interview, I alerted teachers at two levels of management within the school, repeating this by email later, to ensure that they were aware of what had been talked about. They both separately assured me that the school and social services were involved so I understood that no further follow up was required.

In another case, the participant at an advocacy based interview expressed frustration at struggling to write a research proposal for their university course. Since I was looking for ways to make the research relationship more reciprocal, I decided to offer to help her. We met in a public library a week later and spent a couple of hours together, going over how to write her piece. After this, I helped proofread her work before she submitted it and she later contacted me to let me know her grade.

4.7.2. Consent and Information

As part of creating a research environment of care, trust and respect, I was driven to ensure that each participant understood the purpose of the research, since time spent orally explaining the research in a calm manner is widely understood to be a fundamental part of ethical practice (see Alderson and Morrow 2011). In addition I understood that it is helpful for researchers to create a short poster or leaflet explaining the research. Under the UNCRC (1989), these aspects respect children's rights to information (Article 13) and freedom to form their own views (Article 12).

I created information letters for each of the research contexts and gatekeepers at different levels. For research in the schools, I secured Local Authority permission before writing letters for Head teachers and Senior Leaders within the schools and provided a copy of the pupil information sheet, so that the teachers could make an informed decision about allowing the research within their school. For the advocacy

project, I also wrote a detailed letter and provided a copy of the information sheet that would be given to participants (see Appendix 2 for examples).

Whilst the letters to gatekeepers were more formal, the young people's information sheet was colourful and informal, with a selection of diverse pictures depicting young people's journeys. It then briefly described the research, answering different questions about the focus, aims, taking part and the opportunity to withdraw participation at any time following the examples given in Alderson and Morrow (2011). Since I was aware that language barriers might limit the participants' comprehension of the information, I used simple language and talked through the information about the research with each participant. In the advocacy interviews, since participants only took part if they had already made clear to their support worker that they would like to, consent in some ways had already been received. Despite this, I still went through the same process, going through the information with each participant to ensure that they understood what the research was about.

For the school-based interviews, since participants had been timetabled to attend the interview as part of the school day, negotiating informed consent was more problematic. To ensure that these pupils did not just see the interview as another compulsory part of the school day I made it clear that at any point they could go back to their lessons. If participants expressed desire to return to their lessons, the interview was cut short, which happened in a couple of cases.

In each of the interviews, I viewed the young person as a capable social agent, able to make decisions about their own lives. For this reason, once consent of the school or advocacy organisation had been sought, I only sought consent of the young person. This was also following the guidance of my School's ethics committee, who advised that a school or charity acts as the parent by providing consent, so only the consent of the young person needs to be sought.

After the information sheet had been explained to participants, I asked them if they still wanted to take part and if so, we began the interview. I also asked if they were happy for me to record our conversation so that I could write it up later. Throughout the interview I repeatedly reminded participants that our conversation was part of a wider project – saying things like '*as part of my research I am interested in finding out about...*' At the end of each interview, I asked whether the participant had any questions to ask and sought further affirmation that they were happy for me

to use the recording of the interview in my project. None of the participants objected to this.

4.7.3. Confidentiality and Anonymity

The importance of maintaining confidentiality and keeping participants data and participation anonymous were among some my most serious ethical concerns. Since the participant group in my research were generally under 18 years and going through the asylum system, traditional research concerns of confidentiality were compounded. For young people who had fled political conflict, violence or had been trafficked, keeping their locations and identities confidential was fundamental to their safety. For this reason, I decided that whilst I would name my research as Welsh research, and be open about having conducted it across three of the dispersal cities in South Wales, I would not provide any further information about the research context. This meant that I could limit any traceability of the young people.

The interviews themselves were held in private meeting rooms, apart from on one occasion, which the participant had rearranged at the last minute with the result that no meeting rooms were available. This interview was conducted in a quiet corner of a library. Once interviews were conducted, the data were stored under a pseudonym. Since the interviews contained ethically sensitive data such as discussion of ethnicity, political or religious beliefs, no record of the participants name or context was kept alongside the data so that it could not be traced. In addition to this, in terms of the analysis and dissemination, at no point was the data distinguishable in terms of where it had been collected. This meant that whilst individual schools and advocacy settings were interested in the specific findings in relation to their settings, they were to be only given a general discussion of findings in relation to the participant group as a whole.

4.7.4. 'Stolen Stories'? Reflecting on the Boundaries of the Research Encounter

Researchers working with refugee communities have written much about the ethical challenges of conducting research with displaced communities, whether within the context of refugee camp, detention centres or community contexts. Within these

discussions, there has been a focus on the issues that can occur when researchers conduct one-off, time limited interviews with members of refugee communities and then never see the research participants again. This approach has been argued to, in many cases, represent a violation of human rights, positioning refugees as '*objects*' of research (see Pittaway et al. 2010). In a discussion of these issues, refugee researchers Pittaway et al. (2010) list the some of the central concerns that have been raised by refugee communities about the difficulties they had faced through taking part in social research. One of these issues concerned the feeling that some researchers '*steal*' the stories of community members, gathering stories which are characterised by great emotional weight, only to never make contact again.

From the outset of this research, I was driven to ensure that the fieldwork would be based on research relationships built over time and based on trust and respect (see Mackenzie et al. 2007). Following Pittaway et al.'s observations about stolen stories, I was particularly keen to ensure that the participants would not feel exploited in sharing their stories with me and in light of this, hoped to move away from the one-off interview format as much as possible. However whilst I did not let go of these aims, it became clear that I would not be conducting a longitudinal project with a small group of participants, which would have allowed me to develop research relationships over a long period of time. Instead, the format of the research was adjusted to suit the constraints of the school day, meaning that for the majority of the interviews, I only met participants on the day of the interview and after 40 minutes together, the contact was over.

The advocacy-based interviews were less constrained, taking place outside of the school context and within public libraries, university meeting rooms and charity offices. Whilst the advocacy interviews were also one-off, they were much more fluid once they had begun, being conducted without the time constraints of the school day and the boundaries that were imposed by the ringing school bell. This meant that the advocacy-based interviews generally lasted several hours, only ending once the participants had finished sharing their experiences.

Whilst initially, I was fearful about conducting research in a way that refugee researchers have largely guarded against, meeting participants in a one-off, generally time-limited way and then never to see them again, I later began to see that there can be ethical benefits within such an approach. Whilst I do not doubt that in some cases, a one-off approach to sensitive research where participants share details of trauma,

pain and loss in single interviews may be interpreted as data grabbing, within this research I saw that adopting such an approach could also provide a helpful way of giving the research clear boundaries.

The process of conducting research within schools, compared to the more fluid context of libraries and meeting rooms, enabled me to make certain comparisons about the characteristics of each context and the ways in which these impacted on the interviews that were conducted. As I began to reflect on this at a late stage within the research process, I began to see how the advocacy-based interviews, which lacked the clear and pre-set boundaries of the school context, were often characterised by more ambiguous and 'leaky' research. In the less defined contexts of the research conversations in libraries and meeting rooms, where the coordinates of the research context were often less clear, I found that sometimes the interviews began to resemble a more therapy-based context.

The dangers of more ambiguous research became particularly apparent in an interview with one young person, Rosheen, who had shared particularly sensitive stories of trauma and loss. After the interview, which took place in a public setting, and lasted several hours, I began to see how the fluid and extended context of the interview had given the research a less defined structure. I later found out that this particular young person had misconstrued the purpose of the interview and had thought that it was a social or mentoring relationship, which may be able to be repeated again in the future. Whilst I do not know how the young person had gone away with this view, I was aware that the fluidity and lack of boundaries that shaped our conversation had most likely contributed to it.

A further issue with the more fluid and less bounded way of conducting the research was that in the advocacy interviews, unlike the school-based interviews, I had little assurance that the young person would be able to receive any necessary emotional support after the interview, since unlike the school-based interviews, I could not ensure that they would have the supportive structures of teachers and their peers around them. Going back to the example of the interview with Rosheen, after the interview, where she had just recounted some of the most traumatic aspects of her life, I could not ensure any immediate support would be available to her.

In contrast to the issues created by the lack of boundaries around the advocacy interviews, the school-based interviews took place within the temporal structures of the school day. This gave both the participants and myself clear expectations of how

long the conversation would last, understanding that we only had the duration of a lesson to talk. By absorbing the research interviews into the school day, which is a context, in which young people would be accustomed to extraordinary activities, such as trips and other one-off activities, the research interviews became simply another feature of the participants' school day, embedded within their usual timetable.

Whilst the school-based interviews often covered similarly emotionally heavy ground as the advocacy interviews, the boundaries of the school day seemed to provide a helpful structure, demarcating the emotionally charged nature of research interviews within the confines of the clearly structured school day. One clear example of this was when I was conducting an interview in a school with a participant called Sophie. Within our 45-minute conversation, Sophie had shared some of the difficulties she had faced since migrating to the UK, tearfully describing experiences such as bullying, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Whilst the interview with Sophie was one of the most emotionally charged and sensitive of the research as a whole, what was interesting was that when the school bell rang, Sophie completely readjusted herself, wiped her eyes and shifted back into the sunny happy person who had greeted me less than hour earlier. After the interviews, I endeavoured to do as much as I could to ascertain the Sophie was happy to return to her lessons and ensured that her teachers knew of the sensitive and emotional nature of our conversation. However, it seemed as if the clear boundaries of our conversation had helped Sophie to engage deeply with the research within the context of our conversation, but then also rise out of it and shift back into the normality of the school day.

As I have reflected on the notion of 'stolen stories' and the warnings against conducting time-limited, one-off research with refugee participants, I have also become aware of some of the benefits of conducting more structured conversations with research participants. From my own experience, I would argue that when working with young refugees, short-term research with clear boundaries can offer ethical benefits, since as a population, young refugees are often navigating ambiguous and uncertain circumstances. Within this context, adding a further layer of ambiguity to young people's lives, through a fluid and unstructured research project over several weeks and months, might in fact be less helpful than a one off research encounter.

4.8. Conclusion

This chapter began by briefly discussing the evolution of the research questions and how a focus on 'story' became central to this thesis. From this starting point, this chapter has set out the ontological, epistemological and methodological literature that I have worked with to enable me to develop a research design and methodological approach focused on the storied aspects of young refugees' lives. Through this chapter, I have set out some of the practical aspects of this research, such as the characteristics of the participants and the different research contexts. I have also provided a set of reflections on the ethical considerations that have surrounded this research and some of the issues that I have had to negotiate.

Following the methodological discussions of this chapter, the thesis will now turn to explore the findings of this research in three analysis chapters. The first analysis chapter, Chapter Five is the longest and most expansive, providing analysis of multiple participants' accounts of their migration journeys to the UK.

Chapter Five: Precarious Journeys

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the participants' journey experiences by concentrating on the experiences of flight and transit through which they became refugees. As discussed previously in Chapter Four, this chapter is the longest of the three analysis chapters and works with the theme of journeys across multiple participant accounts. This chapter is therefore one of breadth, not focusing on one or two participants in particular, but instead seeking to demonstrate the centrality of journey experiences for the participant group as a whole. The chapter is divided into four sections, each of which explores the common aspects of the participants' journeys as identified from the analysis.

As discussed in Chapter Two, whilst refugee journeys are understood to be central to the experience of being a refugee, there is a significant lack of research regarding the processes and significance of refugee journeys. This absence stems from the fact that refugee researchers tend to focus on people's experience at one end of the migration process or the other, focusing either on the causes of exile or on experiences of settlement and therefore overlooking the journeying process itself (see BenEzer and Zetter 2015).

This chapter responds to this gap by placing the participants' refugee journeys at the centre of the analysis and in doing so, makes two contributions to the field. Firstly, the analysis focuses solely on participants' journey experiences, examining their accounts of what happened when they had left their country of origin, but did not yet feel as though they were settled in the UK. The chapter therefore makes a significant departure from refugee research that has overlooked the significance of refugee journeys. Furthermore, by focusing on the journey experiences of young people, the chapter also responds to BenEzer and Zetter's specific call for research that examines the ways in which age can influence the experience and meaning of refugee journeys. Within a global context where more than half of refugees are under 18 years old, the study of young people's refugee journeys is particularly timely and important.

The chapter begins by mapping out narratives that focus on the uprooted nature of refugee journeys, where participants discuss the process of leaving their homes. From this, the discussion moves to concentrate on participants' narratives of transit, where they discuss modes of travel and the role that smugglers played in

facilitating their journeys. The third aspect focuses on participants' experiences of being 'anchored' whilst on the move, where the young people discuss how aspects such as their religious faith provided them with a sense of security and purpose during their journeys. The final section concerns a sense of rupture where the participants described how their journeys have led to a sense of spatial and temporal dislocation. The chapter closes by relating the analysis of refugee journeys to earlier discussions of precarity and discusses how this chapter has taken forward these ideas.

5.1. Uprooted

up-root / ʌpˈruːt/

1. To pull up (a plant and its roots) from the ground.
2. To destroy or remove completely; eradicate.
3. To force to leave an accustomed or native location.

To be uprooted is to be pulled up. The definitions above suggest that it is not an act of free choice but instead comes as a survival response to force, violence or loss. For refugees, the temporality of being uprooted can be sudden and harsh where movement is required quickly. At another level, this action can signify an ending to entire histories of family, ancestry and connection with a particular land. These concurrent temporal dynamics can mean that the uprooting process can create a precarious situation for refugees, where risking departure from what is known is laden with the potential for both imminent personal danger and more protracted displacement.

In this section of the chapter, I will consider two main themes that arose from participants' accounts of being uprooted. To begin, I will examine accounts of sudden and unpredictable departure.

5.1.1. Sudden Departures

For all of the young people interviewed in this research, the decision to leave their homes and travel elsewhere was made by their siblings, parents, other family members or friends. As in other studies with young refugees (see Hopkins and Hill 2008), the young people never made the decision to leave themselves and were often not told why their family was leaving or why they were being sent on a journey alone. To provide an insight into sudden nature of the young people's experiences of being

uprooted, I will now discuss two narrative extracts, which serve as exemplars of the wider body of participants' experiences as a whole.

Quraish, aged 13, described leaving Afghanistan with his brother,

"I was, I was, sad and angry. I can't remember, he, my brother told me like, we are going to leave the city and I thought we were going to like, having fun, going some other place, when he told me but, but he goes to me – we're not going for fun, we're going to escape from this place. I was like, missing, my everything – friends, family, country. Everything"

Quraish's words provide an appropriate introduction to the collective experiences of the participants as they were uprooted. As it was for Quraish, for the other young people, the experience of leaving their homes was a largely unexpected and emotional experience, where they only began to realise the significance of what was occurring once they were already on the move. Quraish's words encapsulate this experience and within only a couple of sentences, he sets out the temporal and spatial adjustments that the process of uprooting required of him. First, we see the temporal duality of being uprooted, where the suddenness of his departure contrasts with the magnitude of leaving behind whole worlds of familiarity. What may have initially seemed to be a sudden temporary trip away *"for fun"*, actually turned out to be a much more extended process of escaping *"this place".* To escape is to get away quickly and depart with, most often, little intention of return. This sense of permanence and the way that it contrasts with both the sudden nature of departure and Quraish's expectations about what was occurring, highlights the concurrent temporal rhythms that can underpin processes of being uprooted.

Through Quraish's brief account, we can also see the spatial implications of being uprooted, where through his departure he describes missing *"my everything – friends, family, country. Everything."* This phrase, where Quraish describes his everything as that which encompasses his social and familial ties, along with his attachment or sense of belonging to his country demonstrates the multi-scalar aspects of uprooting, where what is being left behind is situated across both the intimate scales of the familial and social, alongside the broader scale of the nation. Quraish's

account signifies his lack of control over the process of uprooting and the confusion that this event caused.

A further example of this lack of control can be found in the account of Safia, a participant who left Georgia with her brother when she was 14. She explained,

"And then one day, Dad just woke us up in the middle of the night, gave us our passport, literally we didn't have, not suitcase or anything on us. He just took us to the airport. We didn't even know. We fell asleep because we were like, (.) in Gatwick, then when we realised something was wrong because before we were like 'its so cool, we're in a plane and going somewhere' and then we were just like no, I think its something serious".

Like Quraish, Safia had little understanding or preparation time before beginning her journey, having been woken up unexpectedly one night. Her account shows how hasty and unforeseen the process of being uprooted can be, where she is woken up suddenly and taken to the airport without any time to pack her belongings. At the moment of being taken to the airport, Safia describes how they *"didn't even know"*, suggesting that she and her brother were unaware of the implications of what was happening and why. It is only once she has already travelled on a plane and has arrived in the UK, that she begins to understand that it may be *"something serious"*.

Quraish and Safia's accounts illuminate several aspects of the process of being uprooted for young refugees. Firstly, their accounts lend support to the notion put forward by refugee researchers Zetter and BenEzer, who argue that the physical aspects of refugee journeys can take place at a different pace from the journey of the mind. This sense that the physical act of leaving one's home can occur separately from a sense of mental separation is pertinent to Quraish and Safia's accounts, since they were both unsure what was happening when they left their homes.

The lack of mental preparation time that both Quraish and Safia had before they began their physical journeys relates to the second point that I want to make from their accounts. In their discussion of refugee journeys, BenEzer and Zetter have described how journeys generally start before the person starts moving, beginning in the anticipation of events that may prompt a journey or in the actual preparations. Since BenEzer and Zetter do not specify the ages of the refugees that they are discussing, it can be assumed that their point is general one. However, as we have

seen, both Quraish and Safia's accounts indicate their lack of involvement in the decision-making process around their journeys and any of the surrounding preparations, with their journeys only seeming to begin at the point of departure and the implications of their flight only being processed once they were already on the move. These points relate closely to the accounts of the wider participant group, where none of the participants described being involved in the planning and anticipation of their journeys and many commented about how they were left little time to mentally or physically prepare. This differentiation between the participants' experiences as a whole and what BenEzer and Zetter set out as the norm, demonstrates the importance of investigating young refugees' journey experiences as a specific research topic in its own right.

5.1.2. Trauma and Uprooting

Beyond the lack of control and preparation that participants described experiencing as they left their homes, a further common theme across many of the participants' accounts concerned the trauma of being uprooted. Within the limited field of research on refugee journeys, scholars such as Gadi BenEzer have discussed how the process of setting out on refugee journeys can be a major source of pain and distress for refugees (see BenEzer 2005; 87,152). In this research, one of the ways through which the traumatic or painful nature of participants' journeys was hinted at, was through the young people's reticence to talk about the process of being uprooted. Some participants skimmed over their journey in their narratives and preferred to talk about the events that led to their departure or their arrival in the UK. In the case of one of these participants, Javad, it became clear that he had made a conscious decision not to talk about his journey and the experience of being uprooted. When asked about his journey, Javad said,

"H: And can you tell me about the journey – leaving Tehran and coming to the UK?

J: I feel (3) I don't want to explain. I don't want to say. I don't, I don't want to explain. I can't remember it. I dunno, I can't remember it. I just, I just want to delete

it. I never want to talk about it. Because it's horrible. Horrible. (2) If I don't want to talk about it – I say I can't remember it. (.)"

To Javad, the experience of leaving Tehran and travelling to the UK is clearly something that he neither wants to speak about or have to remember. He explains that to avoid speaking about this experience, he says he cannot remember it, suggesting that his inability to remember is less a case of a lapse in memory and perhaps more an instance of not being emotionally able to recollect what occurred.

Within the context of the research interview, there was no pressure for participants such as Javad to speak about aspects of their experiences that they wished to remain silent about. In fact, I viewed this expression of their agency positively. However, when reflecting on Javad's words and his control over what he would and would not speak about, I was struck by the ways in which this sense of agency over his story, whilst welcome in the research interview, would likely be compromised within the asylum system. Whilst Javad was able to explain his desire to delete his experiences within the research interview, the centrality of testimony within the asylum system would mean that within that context, it would most likely be necessary for young people like Javad to share aspects of their experience that they wished to *"delete".* In fact, within the asylum context, if young people like Javad chose not to speak about certain experiences, such as the reasons that they left their homes and travelled to the UK, it could most likely hinder their asylum claim. These issues around story, memory and testimony are explored in more detail in Chapter Six.

Javad's account can be further illuminated by considering the links between trauma and memory. Whilst this thesis does not intend to engage deeply with or develop the psychological literature on displacement and trauma or the psychotherapeutic literature around memory and trauma, scholarship from these areas can be used to shed light on Javad's desire to erase his journey experiences. Psychoanalysts such as Roy Shafer have argued that when we tell our life story to others, we are also telling it to ourselves. In these contexts, an inability to tell a narrative to ourselves can prevent us narrating it to others (see Shafer 1981). Riessman has made a similar point, arguing that as much as people tell stories about their lives, they often also live the stories that they tell, making the very act of narration painful (Riessman 2008).

BenEzer has taken ideas around trauma and memory and related them to refugee journeys, commenting "as long as a trauma remains alive, active, not processed...the person will find it difficult to construct the story for him/herself that will include the trauma in a 'manageable' way so that s/he can successfully sail through it. The trauma will still be too emotionally charged for that to happen" (BenEzer 2005; 157). It is not possible to know if this was the case for Javad, however, his words describing his desire to delete his memory of his journey experience and to never have to explain or speak about it again, suggest that it is a difficult experience for him to both remember and recount.

The experiences of each of the participants mentioned here signify some of the difficulties that young refugees can face as they leave their homes and uproot their lives and the lack of control that they can experience in relation to this process. Whilst migration is generally viewed as a spatial process where time is only implicit, these extracts also foreground the ways in which being uprooted can be as much of a temporal experience as it is a spatial one. From the sudden and often shocking nature of leaving to the difficulty of seeking to organise painful past memories of this experience within the present, the participants' experiences considered here demonstrate the temporal and spatial reconfigurations that the process of uprooting can involve. This analysis has extended the limited field of literature around how refugees negotiate the different phases of their journeys by demonstrating the lack of control and autonomy that young refugees have over embarking on their journeys. In the next section, the focus moves to engage with participants' narratives of transit, focusing on modes of travel and the role that smugglers play in young refugees' journeys.

5.2. Transit

tran·sit, trɑːns-,-nz-/

1. n. The carrying of people or things from one place to another
2. n. The action of passing through or across a place

To be in transit means to pass through one place, en route to another. It can take the form of a single journey using one mode of transport to get from A to B, or can be more complex and fragmented, taking place across multiple sites using various modes of travel. In terms of time, transit experiences can be limited to the duration of a plane

or train journey or may be more sprawling, being made up of accelerated periods of movement alongside more sedentary aspects of waiting.

The ways in which one experiences transit relates closely to an embodied politics of mobility, where some can move through space with more ease that others. Whilst a small number of people globally enjoy unrestricted mobility rights, most people are caught within borders (see Khosravi 2010; 4). This differentiation of transit can be linked to financial capabilities, according to which some people purchase first class tickets or pay to travel on quicker routes to ensure a more comfortable or shorter journey. Beyond this, the differentiation of transit is largely dependent on citizenship and geopolitics, where some move freely due to their inhabitance of certain identities and ownership of certain passports, whilst others can be subjected to a high degree of control through strict visa regimes.

The politics of mobility means that for those people who do not have access to privileged objects like visas and passports, or who inhabit bodies that are seen to be out of place, regularized transit may not be possible. Instead they may be forced to seek alternative routes and more clandestine methods of movement. This is the case for many refugees, who adopt irregular migration strategies that take place outside of the regulatory norms of sending and receiving countries. Such methods include a range of travel types, combining often-precarious transit on boats, lorries or shipping containers with periods of walking across border zones (see IOM 2014).

In recent years, the use of clandestine methods and unregulated routes by refugees has increased in response to tighter immigration controls. Within this context, the mobility of groups such as refugees, who generally travel outside of the regulatory norms of sending and receiving countries, has become highly securitised, becoming positioned as an illegal and criminal act that deserves punishment (see Chapter Two for a discussion of this shift). Ethnographer Shahram Khosravi has written how the border system is "governed by criminalisation", with this making crime and punishment the context through which refugees, asylum seekers and the smugglers who facilitate their journeys, are constructed (Khosravi 2010). According to the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) by positioning asylum seeking as representative of criminal activity, border regimes can inadvertently push asylum seekers to adopt more clandestine and precarious methods of transit (IOM 2014).

The vast majority of participants in this research described experiences of transit that were characterised by irregular migration strategies and took place outside

of legal methods and routes. In most cases, smugglers, or agents, as many of the participants described them as, facilitated the young people's journeys, producing falsified identity documents and navigating young people through clandestine routes. In several cases, the participants reported that traffickers had coordinated their journeys, moving the young people for the purposes of exploitation. Beyond these different factors, all of the participants' transit accounts were united by the fact that their journey had taken place under the leadership and guidance of someone else.

5.2.1. Clandestine Journeys

Many of the participants' accounts of transit focused on the experience of travelling clandestinely within lorries or shipping containers and trying not to be found. The account of one participant, Ahmadullah, is representative of many of the other young people's experiences of transit, describing time spent in lorries and running across borders.

"H: So can you tell me about your journey?

A: We just went across the border, which is open to all Afghans, and you don't have to show passports or anything. My Dad took a car and that person brought us to Pakistan. And after that, my Dad spoke to an agent, who you pay to take you to some country and they brought us here. (2)…We had to travel by foot and truck as well. It was just like, you cross borders and you don't know at night and all that. It's just weird, yeah. It took us about four to five months. (2)… It was just horrible, you, you, you're like in a secret place that you wouldn't find and there's like 30/40 odd people and they can't even fit. So you are sitting really tight up and its really dark so you can pass the police and all that. And then we walked. We walked by deserts and all that. We had to run by the border of Iran over to Turkey. We had to run for half an hour because the agents, they don't give you passports. So you have to run because if the police caught us, we would get in big trouble…It was very horrible, very horrible. But the thing was, (.) I wasn't sure about where we were going. The agent was telling us each day, tonight we will pass this border and you need to be fast so the police can't catch you."

I want to consider Ahmadullah's journey account in relation to the three distinct stages that he describes, firstly, his transit across the border to Pakistan, then his journey by lorry and finally his transit on foot. Ahmadullah's account begins by describing the ease by which he could travel from Afghanistan to Pakistan without the need for passports because of the open borders. The straightforward nature of this crossing where he is simply driven over the border, acts as a counterpoint to the remainder of his journey account and the complex and secretive nature of his transit that follows.

Ahmadullah mentions the role of a migration agent in facilitating his transit and this is something that I will turn to discuss in the following paragraphs of this chapter. For now, I want to move to focus in on the language of Ahmadullah's account and the picture that it paints of a transit experience where he is both literally and metaphorically in the dark about where he is going. Across his description of his journey, Ahmadullah's vocabulary is characterised by a sense of anxiety and dark murkiness, where he is both hiding secretly in the dark and running across borders at night. His transit is one that takes place in the shadows, where he crosses borders in the night without knowing, and spends four to five months hidden in a secret place where he could not be found. His journey is also one that is characterised by being contained, forcing him to sit *"really tight up"* as he travels with 30 or 40 people who cannot fit in the space that they are contained within. The surreptitious nature of transit comes out strongly through Ahmadullah's words, where the lorry that he is in is kept dark so that it can pass police more easily.

Through the third stage of Ahmadullah's journey, which begins with the phrase, "*And then we walked",* we see the panic of precarious transit. Ahmadullah describes how he had to run across borders and hide from police because of his unregulated and therefore 'criminal' movement. Throughout the account, he states three times that his journey was *"horrible"*, portraying the anxiety, fear and discomfort of precarious, secretive and irregularised transit. The references to the police point to the wider criminalisation of irregular mobility and Ahmadullah's own awareness of the importance of keeping his movement hidden from the police.

Ahmadullah's transit, where he travelled for four to five months, was hidden in lorries and rushed stealthily across borders unsure of where he was going, is representative of many of the other participants' journey experiences. For example,

Abdul, another participant, also from Afghanistan said of his transit, "*I didn't see when I was in the container. Big car, truck. Sometimes lots of people. It took one month*". Whilst another participant, Bao, when asked about his journey, also commented, "*I just see the inside the container, but I can't see outside for a long time. Some time, some time I er, some time, I (4) sometime we are waiting for four or five days and after that we might see outside…Mmm, I feel (.) scared. Because we are there a long time and um, its very dark in, in the container.*"

These participants' experiences of travelling in the dark and spending days at a time locked within a container is indicative of the wider participant groups' journey experiences and the sense that their journeys took place hidden away in the dark. The young people's narratives, with their vocabularies of fear, darkness and hiding away in secret, contrast strongly to the ways in which conventional travel is often positioned within the minority world. Conventional international travel, and particularly that taken for leisure, is often presented within travel guides, blogs and newspaper supplements as being about 'seeing the world' or 'broadening one's horizons' by coming into contact with new vistas and cultures. Within this context, journeys are often seen to be exciting, holding the promise of opening up more of the world to oneself (see Cresswell 2006). These notions offer a stark contrast to the confusion, darkness and restrictive nature of the participants' experiences of transit in this research, where their travel seemed to literally stop them from 'seeing the world', containing them within dark spaces as they crossed borders.

5.2.2. Smugglers and Transit

I will return to the sharp contrasts between conventional international transit and the experiences of the participants in this research in later sections of this chapter. I am now going to turn to explore the role of smugglers or migration agents in facilitating the transit of young refugees. As discussed, the development of border-related bureaucracies and the general securitisation of migration has made it increasingly necessary for refugees to use the services of migration agents. To facilitate the process of migrating without documents, many refugees use the services of individuals or entire networks that work to facilitate people's entry into a new country (see Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012 for a study of smuggling). There is limited

research around the relationship between smugglers and migrants, with some studies pointing to issues of violence and exploitation, whilst others focus on smugglers' altruism and migrants' gratitude (see UNODC 2011 for a review). Since references to the role of smugglers featured heavily within participants' accounts of transit, I will spend the remainder of this section of the chapter discussing participants' relationships with those who facilitated their journeys.

One participant, Ananjan, whose experiences are explored in detail in Chapter Six, left Sri Lanka with the help of a migration agent, after he had been imprisoned and tortured in Sri Lanka. After his father managed to pay enough to secure Ananjan's release from prison, Ananjan travelled to the UK. He said,

"One and a half months, um, my Father, (.) came to give money to the guards. To escape from the prison. After about one and a half weeks, I came out. After, that, there was a Muslim agent. Agent you know, illegally, doing, illegally doing transfer, smuggling of people and that agent, they said, you are going abroad. I don't know which country and er, what. That agent is my God. I just follow him. I feel I will die but suddenly I escape from them (the prison guards). *(.) And then they fill my visa form; two times I went with him outside. Once visa office and once the airport. He did everything. Documents."*

Ananjan's whole process of international transit seems to depend on his agent. It is his agent who says that Ananjan will be going abroad and the agent who determines his destination and secures his documents. For Ananjan, who described feeling as though he thought he would die, his agent represents a God-like figure within his narrative, being one who he will *"just follow"*. Through Ananjan's account, we see how migration smugglers or agents can offer refugees a way out of situations there may seem to be no obvious or legal way out of. As we will see in Chapter Six, in the research interview, Ananjan described being imprisoned and tortured within Sri Lanka and commented at how his life would have been at risk if he had remained in the country. In this context, it makes sense why Ananjan's agent, as the one who offers him a way out of Sri Lanka by providing the means for him to travel abroad, is seen to be his God.

Policy discourses around illegal migration have largely focused on the criminal aspects of migration smuggling, such as the nature of smuggling as an illegal

profit making activity and the links between smuggling, organised crime and drug dealing. In terms of the relationship between refugees and their smugglers, policy and media discourses have therefore often raised concerns about the unequal power relationships that can centre on exploitation. In relation to this, Ananjan's account tells us something of the complexity of the relationships that can exist between refugees and smugglers, with his words portraying a different side to this context. Whilst Ananjan's agent will have profited from this exchange, it is clear that it is an exchange where Ananjan also benefits. Ananjan's words also describe a relationship of trust between himself and his agent, showing his dependence on his smuggler and the ways in which he will follow him wherever he goes.

Migration scholars have found that a significant level of trust is involved in the smuggling business, where refugees are dependent on their smugglers, whilst in turn; smugglers depend on peer recommendation as a means to recruit new customers (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012). The participants in this research did not describe migration smuggling as it is often represented within policy discourses, where it is discussed as an illegal business or a criminal activity. Instead, the participants focused on the more social aspects of the smuggling business, commenting on it as something "*a friend of a friend could help me with*".

One participant, Daniel, described leaving Nigeria with his mother and the help of an agent who was known through a personal contact, saying, "*My Mum's friends they got a little money and they say, they know someone who can help us get there, who can give us, like, you know, its like a visa, for like the UK.*" Like Daniel, other participants spoke about smuggling in this way, seeing it as a means through which they could receive help to travel to the UK. This more casual and social nature of the smuggling business, where it is something that is embedded within refugees' social networks and to them, is seen more as the process of eliciting help rather than engaging in criminal activity, highlights a significant gap between the journey experiences of irregular migrants and the ways in which they can become represented within policy or media discourses.

As discussed, research on migration smuggling has largely focused on the business transactions or criminal aspects of the phenomenon and, with a few recent (see van Liempt 2014; Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012) has generally overlooked the social and subjective aspects of the process. Within this research, one of the most striking aspects of participants' accounts of transit was the young people's experience

of being left by their smuggler upon their on arrival in the UK. Several of the young people described feelings of abandonment and disorientation when they reached the UK and found that their smuggler had unexpectedly left them. One participant, Daniel, whose experience I drew on above, continued his account by describing the moment when the smuggler left.

"My Mum's friends they got a little money and they say, they know someone who can help us get there, who can give us, like, you know, its like a visa, for like the UK. So this person, she said she is going to follow us there, so we like are in the UK and that person, do you know in the UK there are some like, cafes, or something like that. So the person said we should wait in the café (.) she said she is just going to come back so we are like ok. And we wait for her. And she says that she is going to get the visa and we are alright. And we stay there for a very very long time until we don't see anybody and we finally discover that she ran away and put us there. When we are there, we ask somebody – what can we do?"

Daniel's account of his transit process begins by explaining how he and his mother came to find their smuggler and then jumps over the actual process of the journey and being in transit, by moving to discuss his arrival in the UK. The emphasis that Daniel gives to the process of arriving in the UK within his narrative and the suggested significance of this over his actual journey or experience of departure is interesting and suggests that, like experiences of being uprooted, experiences of arrival can have a similar level of significance for young refugees. From Daniel's account, we see again the level of trust that refugees place in their smugglers, where he understands that the smuggler is going to sort out their visa to the UK and follow them there. Upon arrival within the UK we see Daniel's disorientation that stems from waiting for his agent and the fact that she fails to return. Through Daniel's words about how he and his mother were waiting *"a very very long time"*, his lack of control over his arrival in the UK is made clear. Through his question, *"what can we do?"* we also see his confusion and uncertainty over how they should proceed. Daniel's account creates a sense that within the relationship between refugees and smugglers, smugglers may create a sense of security and control when present, but that this can quickly turn into uncertainty and confusion when they leave.

Daniel's experience of being left unexpectedly by his agent was closely mirrored within several of the other participants' accounts. This experience was particularly acute within Melissa's account of arriving in the UK and realising that her smuggler had abandoned her. Melissa began her description of her journey saying,

"My parents die suddenly in a car crash, my parents die in August and I fled here in October. Just two months. And it was, it was hard. Depressing. I came here, with my, my, my friend's parents arranged everything so that I could come here. First I didn't know where I was going. It was just like, they pay an agent to bring me here. And he brought me here. And then he left me in Leeds. In the police station in Leeds."

Unlike Daniel, Melissa travelled from Cameroon alone as a separated young person, without a parent or guardian. This meant that for her the precarity of transit and the surrounding risks of violence and exploitation were likely to be more pronounced (see UNODC 2011). Like Daniel, Melissa skims over the actual physical experience of being in transit, only mentioning that an agent was paid to bring her to the UK and then stating that "*he brought me here".* Melissa also then devotes a substantial amount of her account towards describing the experience of arriving in the UK and being left by her agent. In the extended narrative extract below, included in full because it acts as an exemplar of several other participants' accounts, Melissa describes what happened after her agent left her.

"I went to the police station because the agent had said – wait here, my friend is coming to pick you. And he give me his name – he said his name is Paul. When I went to the police station, I say I have been waiting for soooo long. I saw a policeman and I ask, I am waiting for somebody here, for. I speak in French. I said I have been waiting for somebody for three hours. And that person, hasn't turned up. And I had my period. It was so painful. I didn't know what to do, where to go and then they took me to the police station. Then they start asking me questions! On the phone they call an interpreter. I had to say everything. They asked me do you have paper – I said no, I don't have paper. (3) They say what is your name – they said – do you know that person? I say no – I don't know the agent, he said to me, his friend was coming. It was very confusing. And then the police say, you are illegal, you don't have paper. They will find that person, and then they will send me back to Cameroon. (.) It was so,

when I went to the police station, they put me like a criminal in a cell. I had my period, with no pad, nothing. No food. I slept in the bed with no sheet – nothing. I started to realise, like OMG, I'm not in a good position. See?"

Melissa's account is threaded through with a sense of precarity, as she expresses her lack of control over the different aspects of her arrival in the UK. We see first her powerlessness over being left by her migration agent and the uncertainty she faces as the stranger she waits for fails to arrive. We see how after three hours, Melissa recognises her need for help and seeks the assistance of a police officer. Before we hear about what happens with the police officer, Melissa turns to describe the beginning of her period. The abrupt and sudden nature of Melissa's shift away from her description of talking to the police officer towards her discussion of her period works to create a sense that her period is an interruption or an unexpected intrusion on the events she narrates.

As Melissa continues, we see that she is unsure how to act and where to go and is taken to the police station. Upon arrival she is questioned, being asked about her papers, her name and her contacts. Those who question her are nameless, being anonymous agents of power who, in a foreign language, ask Melissa her name, question her relationship to her agent and pronounce her as *"illegal"*. Despite the fact that Melissa's journey has in one sense ended, in that she has arrived in the UK, she experiences no welcome and instead is told that she will be sent back to where she has travelled from. Melissa's journey account ends with her describing being locked up *"like a criminal in a cell"*. She has no food, a bed with no sheet and has no way of attending her personal hygiene.

From Melissa's account, we can see the complexity of mobility for refugees and the ways in which their transit outside of the regulatory norms of sending and receiving countries can lead to them being positioned as criminals. The centrality of papers, which most likely refer to documents such as visas and passports, in enabling the police officers to ascertain whether Melissa is a legal or an illegal traveller highlights the power of passports as a means to categorise people at the level of their identity. The fact that Melissa's paperless transit means that it is now legitimate to hold her in a police cell, further underlines how the criminalisation of migration has become the principle way of governing those who migrate irregularly. As migration

ethnographer Khosravi writes, governing irregular migration in this way 'creates criminals to be able to punish them' (2010; 21).

The similarity of both Melissa and Daniel's accounts of being left by their agent, especially in the fact that they both chose to skim over the process of transit and focus instead on this experience suggests that it carried a high level of significance for them both. The commonality of participants describing being unexpectedly left by a smuggler also indicates that this experience may be common for young refugees and that a further exploration of these experiences would be an interesting avenue for future research. Furthermore, as a general point, the fact that both Melissa and Daniel's experiences of transit are perceived to go beyond their arrival in the UK underlines the fact that for many refugees, the experience of transit does not end with physical arrival. This point seems particularly pertinent for refugees whose journeys are organised by agents or smugglers, since they have little control over the beginning or ending of their journey, not being able to plan for where they will be or when they will arrive.

I began this chapter with a section on the uprootings that can occur at the beginning of young refugees' migration journeys, where all of the participants' described having a lack of control over leaving their homes and beginning their journeys. From exploring both Daniel and Melissa's accounts of being abandoned by their migration agents and the occurrence of this event at the end of their physical transit, it seems that the process of discarding or abandoning in some ways mirrors the process of being uprooted. Whilst uprooting occurs at the beginning of the migration journey, the process of discarding occurs once participants have completed their journeys to the UK and the smuggler has fulfilled their end of the transaction. Through this, there is a sense that the journeys of young refugees can be bookended by processes of uprootings and those of discardings, which despite the fact that they may occur in different contexts and be caused by different individuals, are united in the fact that they centre on the lack of control that young refugees can have over both the beginnings and endings of their journeys.

The discussions of this section of the chapter have shed light on the ways in which borders regulate the movement of people. In doing so, this discussion has pointed to what Massey has termed the "highly complex social differentiation" that structures the level of control that individuals across the world have over their ability to initiate their mobility and means of transit, or on the other hand, their right to settle

or remain in a certain place (Massey 1994; 4). From this discussion, it is clear that the transit of refugees is highly governed and that this governance is related to the criminalisation of irregularised transit. This governance does not only take place at physical borders but is also performed within borders, as in the case of Melissa, who found herself to be physically within the UK but because of her lack of the right papers became positioned as an outsider, being criminalised as she found herself locked away in a police cell.

Summing up the transit experiences discussed in this chapter, it is clear that for the participants in this research, their journeys were often clandestine and precarious. In addition to the fact that many of the young people experienced their journeys whilst being in the dark in the back of lorries or shipping containers, the majority were also metaphorically in the dark about where they were going and why they had to leave. The analysis in this section has demonstrated that young refugees not only can have little control over the process of leaving their homes, but can also have little power over their transit, deferring instead to a migration agent who determines their routes and arrival.

This discussion has also taken forward debates about the relationships between smugglers and refugees. The participants' accounts considered here have highlighted the key role that smugglers play in facilitating migration journeys and has also pointed to the level of abandonment and confusion that young people can experience when the smugglers leave. Further research that considers this complex relationship and how young people navigate their contact with smugglers represents an interesting area for future research. The next section of the chapter will move to concentrate on participants' journey narratives, which focus on a sense of anchoring or rootedness whilst being on the move.

5.3. Anchor

/ˈaŋkə/

1. **n.** A heavy object used to moor a ship to the sea bottom
2. **n.** A person or a thing, which can be relied upon to provide security, stability or confidence in an otherwise situation; mainstay. *'Hope was their only anchor'*

This section of the chapter considers participants' experiences of stability and confidence during their transit. In the context of this chapter, this section is particularly important in providing a more holistic sense of the experience of being on

a refugee journey and the role of young people's agency in negotiating and processing their experiences in different ways. Whilst it is clear from the extracts so far that the journeys of young refugees can be risky and characterised by a great deal of uncertainty, through this section of the chapter I want to shed light on some of the creative and adaptive ways in which young people secure themselves within the context of their journeys. Within this section of the chapter, I will explore the four main types of anchoring that I identified through analysis, focusing firstly on moral and spiritual anchors, before turning to examine the role of physical and temporal anchors.

5.3.1. Moral and Spiritual Anchors

Within the psychological and social work literature surrounding the experiences of refugees and in particular, young refugees, there have been several studies, which indicate the anchoring role that religion plays for refugees as they settle in their host countries (see Hirschman 2004; Raghallaigh and Gilligan 2010; Raghallaigh 2011), Within this literature, researchers have found that faith in God can provide a significant coping resource for young refugees by helping them to maintain a sense of continuity and peace as they adapt to new contexts and cultures. However, since these studies all focus on the role of faith in helping refugees integrate in their host cultures, little is known about the role that religious faith plays for young people within the context of their journeys.

Within this research, multiple participants described how their belief in God or religious faith had provided them with a sense of security during their journey. For these participants, many of whom were experiencing profound uncertainty, their belief in God could be seen to be acting as an anchor, helping them make sense of and process their journey whilst also driving them forwards. When one participant, Safia, was recounting her own and her brother's experience of transit, she explained how she felt as though God was directing her journey and had intervened to change her course. She said,

"And then one day, Dad just woke us up in the middle of the night, gave us our passport, literally we didn't have, not suitcase or anything on us. He just took us to

the airport. We didn't even know. Yeah, obviously we knew we had problems but we didn't know it would go that far. And especially because we were only 15. Just turned 15, and it was only me and my twin brother. (2) And um and I dunno maybe, I'm sure (.) God did this, I'm sure because our tickets were to Barbados. (.) It was a transit. So from Georgia, we went to Ukraine I think. From Ukraine (2) to Gatwick"

Linking back to the uprooted section of this chapter, we see the abruptness of Safia's uprooting process, where she had little control over the beginning of her journey and little time to pack or prepare. When she moves to describe her transit, we see how in the midst of this journey that Safia had little control over, she believed that God had played a role in directing her steps and changing her destination. Upon arriving in the UK, Safia later explained how she had found out from the UK Border officials that she had relatives living in the UK leading her to be particularly grateful that she and her brother had ended up in the UK instead of Barbados.

Threaded through many of the participants', such as Safia's, journey accounts, was the view that God had played some role in the participants' transit, by either being there with the young people as they travelled or helping to direct their steps as they transited on routes that they had little knowledge of or control over. This sense of the presence or intervention of God within the context of participants' journeys builds on previous literature about the role of religion as a coping strategy for refugees in contexts of integration, by suggesting that faith in God can also be an important aspect of journey experiences in providing young people with a sense of purpose and direction.

Further on in the interview, Safia mentioned being angry about the fact that she had to embark on her migration journey and leave Georgia and come to the UK. As she described how she felt, she made reference to God again, further explaining how her faith had enabled her to make sense of what had happened.

"S: I'm angry. At, at the world. I can't blame it on God, no way. (3)
H: Do you have a strong belief in God?
S: Yeah, I do. I do. I believe that no matter what, everything happens for a reason. But sometimes you just have, you wanna know what the reasons are."

Through Safia's words, we see that her belief in God not only anchored her by providing a sense of guiding and direction but by also giving her the means to accept the situations that she faced. Within social work studies of the role of religion in the lives of young refugees, researchers found that whilst young people often struggled to trust those around them, they reported a high level of trust in the overriding purposes and guidance of God (see Raghallaigh and Gilligan 2010). Through the accounts of participants like Safia, this research has suggested that exploring the role of faith in refugee journeys could be an interesting avenue for future research. In particular, research that departs from a sole focus on psychological concepts such as coping or resilience and instead examines the ways in which refugees make sense of their faith in the context of their journeys and also make sense of their journeys in the context of their faith, could provide further insights into how refugees anchor themselves during their journeys.

For other participants in this research, a belief in God could be seen to provide a different kind of anchoring by helping them to make sense of their place in the world. This sense of grounding is particularly significant since immigration policies have been found to undermine the sense of dignity that refugees' can experience, (see Hammerstad 2014). In response to the human-level geopolitics of citizenship and migration that shaped the experiences of the young people as they travelled, several remarked that this was "*God's world*" and that it was not for any human to decide who could and who could not reside in a particular place because "*God created the world for everyone*".

Ananjan, a participant from Sri Lanka, echoed this sentiment, explaining,

"*Same blood. We are all humans. Only colour difference. Same pain, same blood. Same everything. You are happy here, why do we have people dying there? (.) God gave this world, this resource for everyone. Suddenly they take everything and make different parts. (.) This is not fair. I'm a human. I can stay anywhere. This is all the world mine too.*"

Ananjan's words speak of a sense of collective humanity, of equality, of global citizenship and of rights. He unites all human beings together, commenting that despite exterior differences such as the colour of people's skin, at their core, all

humans are alike, being united by the *"Same pain, same blood. Same everything"*. After expressing this foundational belief in a collective humanity and a God-given world for all, we see Ananjan express his indignation about the ways in which the world has been divided up into different parts. Those who *"take everything and make different parts"* are anonymous agents of authority who are understood to have suddenly carved the world up in a different way to the order that God intended. Ananjan's closing words, where he stakes his claim in his shared identity as a human being and points to his right to live anywhere, stands in sharp contrast to the divisive immigration regimes that he and the other participants described negotiating.

In Chapter Three, I discussed scholarship around the notion of precarity and precarious lives, which concerns the differential levels of value and meaning that can be attributed to different human lives, depending on where they live and whether they are deemed to be an insider to be protected or as a threat to be kept at bay. As this chapter has so far made clear, when young refugees travel on their migration journeys, they can find themselves being holed up in darkened containers as a means to avoid police and locked up in police cells upon arrival to the UK. As many of the participants described navigating these exclusionary and criminalising border policies that shaped their journeys, they also often expressed a sort of counter belief in the notion that the world belonged to God and that every human being had equal worth.

Other participants described similar beliefs to Ananjan, saying things such as, *"That's God's world"* and *"He created earth for people to live there, so who are you as a human being to tell who to live there and who not to live there, when God created the world for everyone. And I'm like – why do I have to have a passport to show you? Like why do I have to pay you for a little place to like live on? God gave it to us."*

Ananjan and the other participants' comments provide a sense that having a belief in a God-created world for all gave participants a sense of confidence in their own shared humanity. This sense of the young people rooting and grounding themselves in their identity as human beings seems almost radical in the context of forced migration and asylum, where they will have encountered countless policies of control and exclusion that may work to undermine this belief. Within the young people's migration journeys, where they were often acutely aware of where they could and could not travel freely and were often positioned as threats or criminals, the process of holding a strong belief in a God-created world for all seems almost radical.

Holding such a belief may have been a means through which the young people anchored themselves and sought to counter the negative influence of exclusionary immigration policies over their lives.

5.3.2. Physical Anchoring

Beyond a sense of spiritual and moral anchors, several of the participants in this research described experiencing a sense of anchoring when they found out that they had received permission to remain in the UK. This experience often occurred several months or even years after the participants' physical journey to the UK had been completed. Despite this, I have considered these experiences within this discussion of 'refugee journeys' in light of the way in which participants described the process of receiving refugee status as a sort of physical anchoring which indicated that they could remain in the UK and that their journeys had come to an end.

One participant, Jahan, left Damascus in Syria with his father and brother. He explained how he felt at the moment that he had received news of their refugee status.

"Then we stay there for one month and then we take, err, they accept for us to stay here. Then we were happy. I was like, um, I was sleeping and my Dad was doing something beside me and they call him and he answer and they say to him, um, congratulations, you get the I.D card. And he say, 'oh thank you, thank you, thank you very much' like this and then I woke up and I say to my Dad – what's wrong? And he say to me – we are accepted! And then we are shouting like this, and I go to my brother, he was in the bathroom and I told him. I'm like, because um, I was worried, if we get given it or not because, if we will not given acceptance, we will go back to Syria. Yeah. Yeah. I was so happy."

Through Jahan's words, we can see how the process of receiving refugee status can be seen as both an ending of a journey on one hand, whilst also carrying the promise of ensuring that a refugee does not have to embark on a return journey. In this way, refugee status can indicate both a sense of arrival and permanence, where a refugee's experience of living in the UK is no longer in limbo and they know that their journey

has come to an end. Jahan's brother, Massoud, shared a similar story of the joy and relief of receiving refugee status, saying,

"You are so happy! Because, err, my Father, he, he didn't tell us, me and my brother, so it was a surprise. And then after one day, my Father, he show us and I tell him, what's that, he tells me, this, this, this is the refugee status! They accept us! And we were so happy, they say after one month, we go to other house, for us alone. So err, we stayed like two months and a half and after that, we come to our new house. (4) It's not hard. It's not hard here. It's not hard to live here"

Through Massoud and Jahan's accounts, the process of receiving leave to remain seems to represent both an ending point and a new beginning, signifying in many ways their 'arrival' in the UK, despite the fact they had actually physically arrived many months previously. Since for Jahan and Massoud, a return to Damascus would have meant returning to a city ravaged by war, it is as if the process of receiving both refugee status and a new home anchors and secures their new lives in the UK.

The accounts of participants like Jahan and Massoud tell us something about the temporal characteristics of refugee journeys and the ways in which the moment of arrival is not always clearly defined. As BenEzer and Zetter have written, "the journey often does not end with the physical arrival at the destination, and sometimes it does not end at all. It is contingent on many circumstances" (2015; 11). For Jahan and Massoud, until the moment of receiving refugee status, being returned to Syria was always a possibility, despite the fact that they were now living in the UK. Their accounts of receiving refugee status suggest that despite the fact that their physical arrival in the UK happened many months previously, the process of receiving permission to remain in the UK represented a sort of physical anchoring by indicating that their journeys had come to an end.

5.3.3. Temporal Anchoring

At the time of the research interview, the majority of the participants in this research had not yet received permission to remain in the UK. For these participants, the hope of receiving it in the future, along with a perseverance to keep pushing forwards

seemed to provide them with a sense of anchoring during their journey. As the young people recounted their experiences, it was as if their imagined futures had been motivating them to keep going through long and uncertain journeys, giving them a sense of motivation to keep moving forwards. Some participants spoke about making an active choice to anchor and root themselves in the future and the present by choosing not to dwell on their experiences in the past. One participant, Muhammed, spoke about trying to root himself in the present rather than thinking about his past experiences by saying, *"I forgot it; I tried to forget it because I want to start new life. I'm not going to forget it all I know, but I try to take it off my head and think about here"*.

Another participant, Quraish, who had travelled from Afghanistan with his brother, spoke about deciding to focus on the future and not dwelling on the past. When asked whether he though much about his life in Afghanistan he said,

> *"No I don't really think, its like, there's no good things to remember, like what happened in my life. Just forget everything and think about the future. Like you have to follow your dreams."*

The constellation of both Quraish and Muhammed's words, where the past is something that they try to forget or in Muhammed's words, "*take it off my head"* and they both try to instead "*think about here"* or "*think about the future"* suggests that this temporal orientation is necessary to help them move away from the past. Sociologists concerned with time have argued that people, as cultural and social beings are future orientated (Adam 1994), always looking to and anticipating their future selves. Whilst both Quraish and Muhammed's words do suggest a similar kind orientation where they are directing their minds away from the past and towards their present and future lives, it seems as though this almost myopic orientation stems less from a general human positioning towards the future and more from the grim necessity of getting away from the events of the past.

The words of Quraish and Muhammed relate to recent research within refugee studies that has looked at how young people navigate the uncertainties of being refugees by adopting a future-orientated outlook on life (see Allsopp et al. 2014). Such research has found that one of the ways in which young refugees demonstrate

their agency within their experiences of seeking asylum is through maintaining an active focus on their hopes for the future, even when the future looks uncertain. This discussion has developed these ideas by suggesting that since the experiences of young refugees on their journeys and within their home countries can be too painful to remember, maintaining a myopic focus on the future can be a way of helping them to move away from the past and maintain a sense of moving forwards. In this way, a present or future orientation might be as much about escaping the past as actively focusing on the present or the future.

All migration journeys have inherent within them some idea and anticipation of the future. As this chapter has shown, these journeys are often embarked upon due to both a fear of an unwanted future and in anticipation of a more positive and secure one. In light of this, many of the participants' narratives of their journeys were anchored around the future, with participants preferring to speak about their hopes and dreams rather than previous experiences. This finding develops other research with young refugees, which has found that once in the UK, one of the ways in which young refugees develop a sense of control over their lives is through orientating themselves towards their future hopes and dreams (see Allsopp et al. 2014). In this research, the accounts of some young people demonstrated that whilst an orientation towards the future had not been possible in their home countries since their day-to-day existence was so uncertain, the process of undertaking a journey to the UK had enabled them to begin to focus on the future in a way that they had not been able to do previously. One such participant, Priya explained,

"Here I have all the opportunities and I can be successful here but over there not. No future, nothing. We don't know what's going to happen. Are we going to live today or are we going to die today? But here I know I am going to live."

"So many nice people here!...They make me think more dreams! They are giving me lots of opportunities! Everybody actually – they are giving me lots of opportunities – I'm having to think about more dreams! Like working in an office, that's a nice one. Like just (.) sitting in your own cabin, own table, own computer, own work.

H: So now you are here you think of lots of dreams?

P: Yeah, yeah I do. But over there, nothing was my dream. Nothing. Nothing. Here lots of dreams, I am totally changed. (2)"

Priya's words create a striking contrast between her past life in Afghanistan where she was unable to think beyond the temporality of each day and the future life that she has imagined for herself in the UK, in which she now looks to the future and sees herself as having opportunities to be successful. Priya's experience and the shift from having *"No future, nothing",* to a more open future, demonstrates a way in which young refugees' migration journeys can reconfigure their experience of time by opening up new temporalities. Whilst migration journeys are most often thought of as spatial journeys into new locations, contexts and cultures, through the accounts of Priya and some of the other participants in this chapter, there is a sense that refugee journeys can also be journeys into new experiences of time, being journeys into the future. Whilst for Quraish and Muhammed, this sense of journeying into the future was characterised by a sense of necessity and escape from a traumatic past, for Priya, it is as if her refugee journey has enabled her to travel into the 'future', travelling through time as well as through space. The theme of time in relation to the participants' narratives will be picked up again to form the focus of Chapter Seven.

The narratives in this section have highlighted how young refugees can create a variety of anchors for themselves whilst they may be physically uprooted or experiencing the uncertainty that comes from being a refugee. Through exploring the role of spiritual, moral, physical and temporal anchors, this analysis has pointed to the multiple domains through which this anchoring can occur and the variety of ways through which young refugees can root and secure themselves whilst on the move. The next and final section of this chapter highlights participants' narratives of rupture, in which they describe a sense of being violently breached or broken.

5.4. Rupture

ˈrʌptʃə/

1. **v.** To break, breach or disturb
2. **n.** An instance of breaking or bursting suddenly and completely.

This section of the chapter focuses on participants' narratives that were characterised by a sense of rupture, dislocation or being broken apart. For many of the participants, this experience of rupture or feeling broken apart came after their physical migration journey had been completed. I have included these narrative accounts in this chapter on journeys for two reasons. Firstly, the temporality of migration journeys, and in particular, the question of when a refugee experiences a sense of arrival or the sense that a journey has been completed is complex. As this chapter has discussed, the uncertainty that refugees can face as they negotiate the complexities of seeking asylum can mean that they journey is not perceived to end with their physical arrival at their destination. In fact for some, it has been suggested that the journey is perceived to never end (see BenEzer and Zetter 2015). This means that whilst the narrative accounts discussed below often related to the participants' experiences whilst they were living in the UK, they can be broadly considered within the category of 'journey narratives'.

A further reason to consider participants' narratives of rupture within this chapter follows the notion from BenEzer and Zetter (2015) who argue that the process of migration journeys may help explain "the disjunctive and sometimes enduring pathological behaviour of refugees, which may be grounded in the traumatic, but little understood, experience of the journey as the motor force of the trauma" (2015; 18). Whilst through this thesis, I do not aim to examine trauma or pathological behaviour, being more interested in the ways in which young people negotiate their daily lives within the context of migration journeys, I do not want to sweep over the fact that many of the participants' narratives conveyed a sense of disjuncture and dislocation that may have stemmed from experiences of trauma.

The experience of rupture or disruption has been discussed in relation to forced migration and asylum, where scholars have discussed the temporal and spatial dislocation that can surround dramatic and sudden changes in refugees' lives. Examples include Melanie Griffiths' work around deportation and detention, where she has explored how these sudden and unexpected experiences can work to override

and rupture the temporal expectations that individuals have (Griffiths 2013; 13). This final section of the chapter will develop this broad area of inquiry by examining the ways in which both spatial and temporal experiences of rupture featured in participants' journey narratives. The following analysis is divided in half in relation to the two different aspects of the definition of rupture included above. The first half examines the experiences of one participant, Meraj, in relation to the notion that something can be ruptured gradually and cumulatively over time. The second half explores the experiences of another participant, Safia, in relation to the idea that rupture can also be an instance of something being broken suddenly and acutely.

5.4.1. Gradual and Cumulative Rupture

Within this research, several of the participants described experiencing a sense of temporal or spatial dislocation both within the countries that they had fled and within the UK. A strong sense of being disturbed and breached came through the narrative account of Meraj, a participant who had left the Syrian Civil War with his mother and sister. Describing his life in Syria, Meraj said,

"We left because there is many fighting in Syria. It was, like you feel and always you listen like, the gun, the machine gun, all the time. You can't sleep and always they throw something – you can't open your eyes. You feel always really, like you eyes are crying. And like you can't go to school in the morning. The fighting - it's like, from here to the end of the street. (.) You can't sleep because you feel like at anytime, they can broke the door and they come and kill everybody. You can't sleep. You are asleep and your eyes are open."

Meraj describes how the war in Syria has disrupted and disturbed his everyday life in multiple ways, identifying four clear areas of rupture. Firstly, he describes sonic ruptures, explaining how he is constantly bombarded with the sound of machine guns. He then moves to describe visual ruptures, saying how *"you can't open your eyes. You feel always really, like you eyes are crying"*. Beyond these aspects, the war can be seen to be breaking into and disrupting the ordinary patterns of daily life, preventing Meraj from going to school each morning and restricting him to confines

of his house. Finally, Meraj describes how his bio-rhythms have been ruptured by the war, seen in his words, '*you can't sleep. You are asleep and your eyes are open*'. It seems as though a proper sense of rest evades Meraj, since even when he does manage to sleep, his eyes remain open. Through these four different domains of rupture, we see how holistic and encompassing the impact of war has been on Meraj's life, disrupting the functioning of his body, his natural rhythms and the patterns of his days.

Following Meraj's description of the ways in which his daily life was ruptured in Syria, he moved to describe how the experience of leaving Syria had led him to feel as though he was out of place and out of time. He said,

"I feel like I want to go back to my country but I can't…I feel like I can't speak here. I just need to shut up. Because like, you can't speak here in this country if you are an asylum-seeker. You can't speak. If you speak, maybe they will make you go back to your country. Maybe."

"It's bad. You feel you are in place, not your place."

Through Meraj's words, *"you feel you are in place, not your place",* we see a sense of disjuncture and dislocation, where although he is physically in a place, it is not his own place and so emotively he feels a sense of displacement. Meraj's comments about desiring on the one hand to go back to Syria, but feeling fearful on the other hand about being sent back, underline this impression that he is out of place, where he cannot go back to the place he has come from and is fearful and anxious in the place he resides. Meraj's comment about being fearful to speak in the UK because of his status as an asylum seeker and his anxiety about being sent back to Syria, create a sense that he has shrunk himself back and made himself smaller, silent and less noticeable, so that his dislocation might be less apparent to those around him.

The word displacement is understood as the 'action of moving something from its place or position' and as this thesis has shown, it is often used in place of the term forced migration, to describe the experiences of refugees. Through Meraj's words, *"You feel you are in place, not your place"* we see a different angle on this term, and the ways in which 'displacement' can also be used to denote the emotional rupture that refugees can experience as they leave and live outside of their home countries.

Following Meraj's account above, he moved to describe how the experiences that he had had, had worked to place him outside of the natural experience of time.

"The, the life I live, like it makes me be an old man. Because nobody my age, he see what I see. (4) Like, nobody, live like in ____(asylum hostel) house. Nobody like have, like bullied. Nobody see his Dad when he hit him. Or he hit his Mum or he put you like in room without any light and without window and he closes it… Because, everybody my age, he just think about what he will play, with his game, I just feel like, everybody will hit me."

Meraj's words create a sense that time has been accelerated and his experiences have made him like '*an old man*'. Meraj contrasts his experience to that of other boys his age and through this, creates a juxtaposition between his experiences of fear and the freedom and play that he understands characterise the experiences of other boys his age. Through this comparison, we see how Meraj's experiences of violence and fear stand in stark contrast to the discourses of freedom and play that often underpin the way in which boyhood is constructed (see Ellis 2008).

If we take these three sections of Meraj's account together, we can see how he has experienced a sense of rupture across multiple aspects of his life. Through his account of war in Syria, we saw how he had experienced sonic, visual and biorhythmic ruptures, in addition to ruptures to the pattern of everyday life. Through the other extracts of his account, he describes emotional and temporal ruptures, where he experiences a sense of emotional dislocation alongside a sense that the chronological timing of natural ageing has been disturbed. The specific definition of rupture used to frame this section regarded being ruptured as being broken, breached and disturbed. Applying this to Meraj's narrative account makes clear the multiple ways in which his life has been ruptured and broken into in multiple debilitating ways.

Meraj's experience can be related back to a concept that was introduced in Chapters 2 and 3, concerning the notion of 'everyday violence'. His experiences detailed here highlight how, as Wells and Montgomery have commented, for some children globally, experiences of violence can become a "routine part of everyday life at different scales from the individual to the nation" (2014; 1). Meraj's experience highlights how he has experienced violence and terror across multiple scales, being

subject to war and violence on a national scale, whilst also feeling exposed to intimate and personal threats of being 'hit' within the intimate space of his family and through the actions of bullying peers. Through Meraj's narrative, there is a sense that these multiple scales of violence come together to create a cumulative sense of rupture within his everyday life.

5.4.2. Direct and Acute Rupture

The second part of the definition included at the beginning of this section concerned an instance of rupture as something "breaking or bursting suddenly and completely". Whilst the previous discussion of Meraj's experiences of rupture considered his experiences across multiple sites and aspects of his life, creating a multi-faceted picture of cumulative rupture, in this section, I want to consider specific instances of direct and immediate rupture. The sense of being ruptured suddenly came through several participants' accounts of times where they had experienced abrupt intrusions and invasions into their homes, either through the violence of war or through unexpected immigration raids. Here, I want to focus on the experience of one participant, Safia, whose account of experiencing a dawn immigration raid formed a substantial focus within the research interview.

Immigration raids, or 'dawn raids' as they are often known, involve the sudden intrusion of border agents into the homes of asylum-seekers and other migrants. Whilst some of these raids lead directly to deportation, others do not and can therefore work to create a sense of anxiety for asylum seekers about whether they are going to be deported (see Griffiths et al. 2013). Safia and her family were initially due to be deported a week before the raid happened, however, her mother was ill and was not in a fit state to fly. After this first deportation attempt, they were taken back to a detention centre before being sent back to South Wales whilst their case continued. Safia was alone in the house one morning when the raid happened. Safia's account is an extremely forceful example of the immediacy of rupture that came through several of the participants' accounts and since her account provides such a striking exemplar of this theme, I have included it in full below.

"But something really, really bad happened as soon as they took us back to the house. …Literally, literally two days later from when they brought us back from detention, they came back again. Two days later. I was there on my own, I was sleeping. I was upstairs in my sister's room. Um (2) coz I got scared from what happened last time when they came. Because that's what used to happen in Georgia, like in the middle of the night, someone would just smash a door, smash a window and wake everyone up. So I wouldn't like want to be asleep on my own without a light on or anything, so that day obviously, because no one was in the house, and I was 16, 15, I, um, I left the lights everywhere on (.) and I even put the music on just in case I hear something I feel like I'm not paranoid…And it was about four o'clock in the morning and all I could hear is just someone smashed the door really really hard, like the whole door just went in. (.) And then I just went like this I opened my eyes and all I could see is the door in my room opening. They open it and I can see eight people in there and I fainted straight away. I got scared, I just screamed really loud and I fainted. Yeah two days after, they came back to take us and they were like oh because you're underage, we're not going to take you. (2) Wow its crazy. They got scared because I really, like I fainted, like I couldn't talk, I was shocked, I was really really scared."

Safia's shocking account provides an acute narrative of instantaneous rupture, where, like the definition that began this section described, the intimate and personal space of her home is suddenly broken and burst into. We learn that Safia has experienced similar shocking occurrences in the past, where in Georgia, her house would be often broken into in the night. These experiences have left Safia fearful of sleeping alone in the house, requiring her to leave lights and music on so that she doesn't get too anxious about the darkness or sounds that she hears. What is therefore particularly shocking about Safia's account is the fact that these previous dangers of sudden intrusion, which most likely formed part of the reason that she and her brother fled, mirror the experience that happens to her in the UK, the country where she has come to seek refuge and sanctuary.

Safia's account is replete with a vocabulary of intrusion as she describes how "*someone smashed the door really really hard, like the whole door just went in*" and strangers encroached in on the personal and intimate spaces of her home. We see how she is woken suddenly at four o'clock in the morning, her natural biorhythms sharply and abruptly disrupted as she hears her door smashed open. Those who enter

do so into the personal space of her home, seemingly barging in without invitation or warning. When Safia opens her eyes, she describes seeing *"the door in my room opening"* and *"eight people"* standing there. Through her words, we see how those who enter trespass do so not only into her home but also into the even more private and personal space of the bedroom. Safia's words portray her vulnerability in this moment, as she is woken up suddenly, alone in the house, disorientated both because of her sudden awakening and the shocking nature of this intrusion.

Safia has an almost visceral bodily response to the intrusion, screaming and fainting straight away. The word rupture can be understood as being a process of discontinuity or a chasm, where in response to being breached the form of something is immediately and fundamentally altered. This description seems relevant to Safia's experience, where through the encroachment into her home, she faints and in doing so, is rendered motionless and speechless as if her body's natural state has been fundamentally ruptured.

Meraj's account of rupture pointed to the multiple domains and cumulative ways through which his body and his life had been ruptured through war in Syria, his journey to the UK and his emotional sense of dislocation. In contrast, through Safia's account, we see how experiences of rupture can also be immediate and acute. Whilst Safia, like Meraj, may have experienced a sense of rupture across other domains of her life, her words portray an acute experience of being sharply ruptured and breached, causing her body to almost pass out of time by being rendered motionless and speechless. Taken together, both Safia and Meraj's experiences point to the ways in which experiences of war, migration journeys and the experiences that follow can create a sense of rupture in the lives of young refugees. As their accounts highlight, this rupture can be experienced acutely at the level of the body, leading young people to effectively pass out of space and time, or it can also be experienced in a more sweeping and generalised way, where young people have a more sustained sense of being out of place and living out of kilter with the normal experiences of time and age.

In the following concluding section, I will draw together the discussions of the participants' journey experiences in this chapter in relation to theoretical work around precarity and precarious lives.

5.5. Journeys and Precarity

This chapter is titled 'Precarious Journeys' and before moving into the conclusion, I am going to discuss its findings in relation to concepts of precarity and the precarious nature of life. As discussed in Chapter Three, across books such as 'Frames of War' (2010) and 'Precarious Life' (2004) Judith Butler has written about the universal precarious nature of life, which she argues is something that is both universally and socially shared. Beyond a sense of universal vulnerability, Butler proposes that precarity is a politically mediated condition of experience, characterised by an uneven distribution across humankind. This means that certain populations are more precarious than others, being differentially exposed to risks of injury, violence of death. To exemplify these ideas, Butler traces the precarity of life through particular cases and contexts, focusing on issues such as indefinite detention of prisoners and the politics of torture photography.

In this chapter, I have sought to adopt a similar approach to Butler by taking the concept of maximised precarity as an overarching frame over the chapter and, whilst my consideration of this has rarely been made explicit, it is clear that this concept is weaved through the participants' accounts of their journeys and the extreme precarity that they can experience. We have seen how young refugees can be made precarious by the violent or threatening acts of both state and non-state actors, leaving their parents or families with a sense that escape is the best option. The discussion of the theme 'uprooted' has also shown how young people can have little control over the journeys that they embark on, being dependant on their family members to lead them or on smugglers or traffickers to facilitate their journeys. The precariousness of young refugees is threaded through their transit, where not only does their travel occur secretly in the shadowy worlds of darkened trucks and shipping containers, but their very bodies can become criminalised and positioned as threats in the process. Furthermore, the insecurity of refugee journeys and related immigration processes means that young people can experience both an acute and a more generalised sense of rupture in their daily lives.

Taking these ideas, it is clear that in addition to providing examples of precarious living in detail, this chapter has highlighted some of the ways in which children and young people are made particularly precarious because of their age. Whilst Butler briefly makes reference to the precarity of children in her work,

discussing the ways in which the deaths of Palestinian children can be seen to 'count less' than the deaths of Israeli children (2010; xxvii), here, she discusses precarity as a broad concept linked to nationality and does not attune to the specific precarity that children are exposed to because of their age.

The discussions of this chapter have shown that paying specific attention to the impact of childhood in relation to precarity can enrich our understanding of the processes through which certain lives become more insecure than others. It is clear that the lives of the young people in this research have been made precarious not only by their exposure to violence, war and other threats but also because of their age. Indeed, it is their age and status as young people that means that they have little control over their journeys are therefore moved via the decisions and methods of adults. Building on Butler and Lorey's work, I therefore want to make the simple point that it is important to attune into the maximised precarity that children and young people face, which arises not only through the geopolitical contexts that they navigate, but also directly because of their age.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to contribute to a significant gap in the field of refugee studies by focusing on how young refugees navigate and process their migration journeys. The analysis has shown that the journey narratives of young refugees touch on multiple aspects of migration journeys and can encompass the period of transit, the physical arrival at a destination and beyond. The analysis of the first theme, *Uprooted*, demonstrated the lack of control that young people can have over the process of being uprooted and the trauma that this experience can cause for them. Following this, the second theme of *Transit* pointed to the clandestine and secretive nature of travel for young refugees and the centrality of their relationship with migration agents and smugglers. *Anchor*, the third theme, highlighted the multiple ways through which young refugees secure themselves whilst on their migration journeys, pointing to the role of moral, spiritual, physical and temporal anchors. Finally, the fourth theme, *Rupture* demonstrated how young refugees' experiences of war and their migration journeys can create both sweeping and more sudden and acute experiences of rupture across bodily, temporal and emotional domains.

The breadth of data considered in this chapter gives support to BenEzer and Zetter's (2015) assertion that refugee journeys provide a productive lens through which to explore refugees' experiences and that overlooking this aspect of refugees' lives neglects a significant aspect of the experience of being a refugee. Beyond filling this gap by developing a detailed analysis of young refugees' journey experiences, this chapter has responded to BenEzer and Zetter's call for journey research in several ways.

Firstly, the chapter has demonstrated the significance of journey experiences for young refugees, pointing to the multiple ways through which migration journeys can impact on young people's lives. For some young people, they can be journeys that create and compound experiences of trauma and pain, whilst for others, migration journeys can open up new opportunities, being the means through which young people begin to think about and hope for the future.

Secondly, the discussions of this chapter have highlighted the importance of considering the journey experiences of young refugees in their own right, demonstrating some of the key ways in which young people's journey experiences might differ from adults. This analysis has highlighted the specific maximised precarity that young refugees are exposed to through their status as young people, having little control over the beginning, process or ending of their journeys. Since young people represent 50% of the displaced population globally, it is clear that further understanding these distinctions between the refugee journeys of children and adults represents an important area for future research.

By examining the participants' refugee journeys, this chapter has responded to the first research question of this thesis, setting out the central aspects of the stories that young refugees tell about their journeying experiences. The next chapter will now move to examine the third research question by exploring the functions that stories serve in the lives of young refugees.

Chapter Six: Precarious Stories

As discussed in previous chapters, precarious living can be characterised as that which is insecure, risky and not easily controlled. To be in precarious circumstances means to be unable to secure a viable future, being vulnerable to destabilisation and risk. This theme of precarious living runs as a thread through the analytical chapters of this thesis, bringing together aspects of the participants' lives that they described as being out of their control. Building on the previous chapter, which focused on the precarious nature of young people's journeys, this chapter shifts the focus to the precarious nature of their stories within the asylum context. For all of the participants in this research, whilst migrating away from their home country was a step towards living what Butler terms a more 'livable life' (Butler 2010; viii), it was not sufficient to secure their futures. Instead, when they entered the UK and sought asylum, they joined another process characterised by uncertainty, requiring them and their families to place their stories in the hands of others.

This chapter responds to the third research question of this thesis, concerning the function of stories within the asylum process. Through analysis of two case studies, it explores how the discursive and embodied stories of participants were read and spoken for within the asylum system. The two participants, whose accounts form the focus of this chapter, had both claimed asylum separately from their families and as such had had a direct experience of navigating the system.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the politics of testimony within the asylum system and the ways in which stories can be vulnerable to dissection and dispute in this context. From this, the focus then moves to analyse the first case study of Ananjan, a participant who described fleeing torture and imprisonment in Sri Lanka and was seeking protection within the UK. The analysis of Ananjan's account begins by exploring the precarious nature of his imprisonment before moving to discuss how his discursive and embodied stories were received within the asylum system.

The second case study, chosen because it offers further insights into the storied politics of the asylum system, focuses on Rehema. Rehema left Egypt and sought asylum alone in the UK, based on the risks that she would face in Egypt in light of her sexuality. Rehema's account points to the corporeal politics that shape how bodies are recognised within the asylum system, leaving refugees' embodied

stories vulnerable to being opened up and scrutinised by others. Her account also demonstrates the precarious nature of seeking asylum based on a claim for identity.

6.1. The Politics of Testimony

Testimony is central to the experience of being a refugee, with personal narratives of past events forming the basis of most asylum decisions (see Herlihy & Turner 2007; Sigona 2014). The legal process of gaining refugee status generally requires that a person describe their experiences, in order for decision makers to establish whether they meet the criteria set out under the 1951 Refugee Convention. Under the Convention, a refugee is someone 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 their nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (UN 1951).

The nature of the Refugee Convention means that in the context of claiming asylum, refugees must be able to demonstrate the existence of a *'well founded'* fear of persecution and on what grounds. Since there is often a paucity of evidence to support an applicant's claim, asylum decisions can rely heavily on personal accounts of the events that led to their departure. This means that participating in the asylum system often demands that a person must reflect on and provide evidence for things not easily proved, such as traumatic past experiences or their religious, political or sexual identity.

When forced to flee, young refugees can lose claim to their homes and belongings and as they move into asylum systems, there can be a sense that they can also lose claim to their own stories and accounts of their experiences. As the following analysis demonstrates, the process of becoming legitimised as a refugee can extend beyond the voices and bodies of refugees themselves, becoming dispersed through the voices of experts and other witnesses who are called to speak on their behalf. This process can involve a sense of being 'opened up', where the stories that a refugee tells about their life and those stories that they embody, can take on material value, becoming pieces of evidence which others lay claim to speak for and assess.

The precarious nature of refugees' stories within the context of the asylum system can be compounded by a 'culture of disbelief', which is said to shape the way both adult and child claimants are viewed (see Sigona 2014; Crawley 2009). As Sigona writes, because of the widespread culture of negativity that exists towards asylum seekers in society more broadly, within the asylum system, they can often be positioned as liars with bogus claims (Sigona 2014). In support of Sigona's claim, other scholars have suggested that there is strong evidence pointing to the Home Office's propensity to disbelieve the testimonies of asylum claimants for highly subjective reasons and refuse asylum on these grounds (Souter 2011).

As the analysis of this chapter will demonstrate, within a context where the voices of asylum seekers can be viewed with suspicion, their stories testifying to past experiences and future risks of persecution can be insufficient to support their asylum claim. In fact, such can be the level of disbelief surrounding asylum seekers, that their voices increasingly need to be corroborated by more trustworthy others (see Sigona 2014; Fassin 2012). These expert others, such as doctors and other witnesses can be called on to speak for the asylum applicant and their body, being asked to make sense of their words and what their bodies show.

One of the central questions Judith Butler asks in her book, *'Precarious Life'*, considers what it means to be ethically responsive to the suffering of others (2004; 141). In considering this, Butler reflects on the ways in which the suffering of others is framed and how this framing affects our response. As she comments on the War on Terror and the indefinite detention of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, Butler describes how the suffering of others can be framed in relation to broader norms, which determine questions of humanisation or dehumanisation (Butler 2004). These normative conceptions of the human are created through processes of exclusion and work to produce a host of 'unlivable lives' for those whose legal and political status is suspended (Butler 2004; xv).

Questions about the recognisability of suffering lie at the heart of this chapter. Through analysis of two very different case studies, the chapter explores how the asylum system, which can be context that works to 'recognise' the validity of the suffering of some, whilst disregarding that of others, can create precarious lives for those who navigate it. The chapter is divided into two, exploring each of the participants' accounts in turn, with the two analytic sections beginning with a brief overview of the participant's narrative interview and background. These brief

explanatory summaries are lifted from interview summaries that were created during the first stage of the analytic process and are included here to provide context to the analysis that follows.

6.2. Ananjan

6.2.1. Participant Overview

In the research interview, Ananjan reported how he came to the UK alone from Sri Lanka after his involvement in the Civil War meant that his life was at risk there. Ananjan is a member of the Tamil minority and as a teenager, assisted family members who were fighting as part of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). He described how he acted as a messenger carrying information between different factions of the LTTE. Several years later, he was found and imprisoned by the Sri Lankan army. In the research interview, he told of how he was subject to several different forms of torture during his time in prison and was left with physical and psychological scars.

After one and a half months in prison, his father paid a guard and Ananjan was let out. He then spent several months at a hospital in Colombo before leaving on a plane to the UK.

The chapter will now focus on Ananjan's narrative of his time in prison and his latter experience of recounting this period of his life within the context of the asylum system.

6.2.2. Narrating Trauma

Ananjan's research interview lasted over two hours and focused largely on his account of being kidnapped, tortured and imprisoned within Sri Lanka. As we sat in a quiet meeting room and he recounted the narrative below, I was struck by the weight and power of the stories he carried, shocking in the brutality they portrayed, but also deeply moving in their poetry.

Ananjan began his narrative of being imprisoned in response to a question,

"H: So then what happened after your exams, before you came to the UK?

A: *It was 2011. September. Err, (.) I was in my, (.) home. In the night, three people came and they take me to prison. They take me to, they handcuff me and they used my T-shirt to cover my face. (.) Then they take me to prison. That's not an ordinary prison. That's a torture prison. Yeah. 1 and a half months, I am there. Um. First, they put me, first three days, I was in the small box. We can't move or stand. (.) Just me. After that they transfer me to another room. There are three people, like Tamil people. We are not allowed to speak or anything. They are all naked you know. We have no clothes. We are all four people naked at that time. After that they transfer the other three. Er, and er, its, er, (2) um, (.) that's, um, it's a very dirty place. Very dirty. Open toilet. (.) the drinking water and the toilet water are the same. It's not like this here. And one shower. And the chair is fixed the floor. We can't move. Handcuffed backside. All the time. When they are questioning. And different tortures. Um, (.) beating. And toilet. They use toilet on us. It's a dark place. There is no light. When they come, they only put light. And you know blood smell. Dirty blood smell. (.) Its like, um, butcher shop. Butcher smell. Blood. And many people, many people die. (.) It's, you know steel get dirty, long time if it isn't clean.*

H: Like rusty?

A: *Yeah that kind of thing. (.) It's a bad experience. One and a half months. (.) I thought I would die, because, yeah, once they burn my backside, um, and I got 16 burn marks. I got a medical report and photos and everything for asylum. 16 burn marks with knife. Hot. Backside, five, six big marks. Legs. Yeah. My handcuffed scars and legs have cigarette burns. And then, (.) here, on my arm, and here, and backside big marks. Once I was sleeping, I feel some little pain, after my burn. (.) So I wake up, I touch it but I can't move because you know, skin, is very sore. I touch this and there are ants, eating my burn. No medication. Its like, white, you know coming out of it. I feel maybe, 10 or 20 ants eating my burn. I can't forget that. (.) Before I am dead, there are animals eating my body. Everyone, when they are dead, animals eat the body but for me, before I am dead. I'm alive, they eat me."*

In relation to Ananjan's account above, I seek to make a couple of analytic observations by exploring how his words connect to the broader theme of extreme and maximised precarity that frames these analytic chapters. To begin with a contextual point, it is significant to note that the events he reports took place in 2011, two years after the official end of the Sri Lankan Civil War. His account of events, which he describes as taking place during a ceasefire, point to a country that was not at peace, but was instead still reacting to the divisions of war. Beyond the value of Ananjan's account as a personal narrative, it is also located within a broader field of other narrative accounts of the Sri Lanka Civil War. Within this, it has particular relevance in supporting the findings of human rights groups, who have reported that torture perpetrated by state actors in Sri Lanka, of Tamils associated with the LTTE, continued beyond the 2009 ceasefire. Relating this back to Judith Butler's politics of recognition discussed in earlier chapters, suggests that since Ananjan's took place outside the 'official' context of war during a ceasefire, his experiences may have been 'unrecognisable' and hidden from the lens of the world.

Beyond their geopolitical significance, Ananjan's words stand as a personal account of the violence and rupture of war and the way in which brutal acts can have the power of obscuring the self. The individuals who come to take Ananjan away are nameless and are only referred to as 'they'. They come at night, into his home, a place of safety and intimacy and intrude without seeming to secure permission. They do not ask, request or seek consent. Instead, they only take. The phrase, *'they take me'*, is repeated three times within his account, emphasising this sense of being seized by anonymous figures of authority. As he is taken, Ananjan too is anonymised, with his face covered, positioning him as an unidentified and faceless victim.

Within the prison, Ananjan describes being physically constrained, both within the prison walls and within the '*small box'*, where he is held for three days, unable to move or stand. He is then transferred to a room with three other Tamil prisoners, where they are further restricted, being unable to speak and forced to remain naked at all times. In this room, Ananjan is immobile, constantly seated on a chair that is *'fixed the floor'*, with his hands cuffed behind him. The prison is dirty, with an open toilet that is used for drinking water as well as excretion. However, the toilet is not the only receptacle for excrement, as Ananjan describes how the guards *'use toilet on us'*. Through this act, Ananjan is dehumanised, being treated as a receptacle for waste and not a human whose life is deemed valuable.

The raw materiality of reducing Ananjan to a receptacle for waste can be related to Cindi Katz's notion of childhood as waste, where she describes various ways in which the figure of the child becomes a figure of waste, disposable and dispossessed (Katz 2011). In a context where insecurity ricochets through contemporary life, Katz argues that young people can become dispossessed from viable futures through the uneven effects of globalisation, seen through their experiences of famine, environmental disasters and war. Across the world, as these young people are dispossessed they can become exposed to the possibilities of exploitation and further dispossession, increasing their precariousness. Ananjan, like other young people who have been exposed to war, exists in this extreme precarious space. His words, which describe how he is reduced to serving as a receptacle for waste, echo his precarious status as a part of the childhood 'waste' of the Sri Lankan Civil War.

The precarious nature of Ananjan's body within the prison is further exemplified through his words that liken the prison to a butcher's. This image, alongside the other references to blood and death in his narrative, evokes the impression of a slaughterhouse, in which death can be both seen and smelt. The sense of proximity to death and decay continues as Ananjan describes his wounds, listing the 16 burn marks on his arms, backside and legs. As he turns his focus to one of these wounds, he ends his account with an extraordinary story that sums up the macabre nature of life in the '*torture prison*'.

Ananjan's narrative of waking up to find ants eating his wound is remarkable in the awful poetry of what he describes. His body is intruded upon by *'10 or 20'* ants, who, like those who took Ananjan from his home, do not seek permission, but encroach, taking what they please. Through this act, Ananjan is reduced to his wounded flesh, becoming animal-like as he turns into a source of food for tiny insects. As white liquid seeps out of his wound, he feels the ants eating his burnt flesh, something he says he will never forget. This story straddles the worlds of life and death, since whilst Ananjan is alive, his body is feasted on as if he were dead. Like the image of butchery, this story evokes the proximity to death and decay that exists in the prison, where bodies are injured, die and are eaten alive.

The brutal butchery of the prison, where bodies are both violated by humans and eaten by animals, is hidden from the world, with the suffering contained within its walls. The events Ananjan that describes are further hidden, since they occur during

what is meant to be a ceasefire signifying the end of the Civil War. However, instead of peace and reconciliation, Ananjan describes torture and violence concealed within the bounded confines of the prison, in which Ananjan and the other prisoners are shackled to their chairs. Their suffering is not public, and beyond themselves there are no witnesses to their decaying wounded bodies. Instead '*a secret war*', as Ananjan referred to earlier on in his account, continues beyond the ceasefire, concealed from the eyes of the public.

As I read Ananjan's account of torture, I was struck by some of the ways it related to a recently published account of life as a prisoner in Guantanamo Bay. In the first account of its kind, Mohamedou Ould Slahi recounted how he and countless other prisoners were individually and collectively emasculated in Guantanamo, as prison guards sought various ways to re-establish their power and dominance (Slahi 2015). In a similar way, Ananjan, like the prisoners in Guantanamo, is treated as if he is beyond the frame of humanity, with his wellbeing not being recognised as important by those who imprison him. Like Judith Butler's description of Iraqi men who have been imprisoned by the US army, Ananjan's status as 'less than human is not only presupposed by the torture but reinstituted by it' (Butler 2004; 93).

Like the conditions that Slahi described in Guantanamo, Ananjan describes brutal acts of physical and psychological violence occurring in the prison. In this precarious context, Ananjan's body is not only a receptacle for waste but also for violence, with him receiving repeated physical blows that scar his body. If we view Ananjan's words here in light of Cindi Katz's notion of childhood as waste, we see how Ananjan, whose childhood and youth has been dispossessed by war, is opened up to further exploitation and dispossession, being violated by those who imprison him as well as the animals that feast on his wounds.

Ananjan's account of his time in prison exemplifies much of the theme of maximised precarity that frames this analysis. From the covert way he was taken away and imprisoned outside of the 'official' context of war, to the way in which his body was treated as waste, being violated by those who imprisoned him, his narrative demonstrates how he has been dispossessed by conflict. Beyond this, the sense of precarity is amplified by the concealed and hidden nature of his suffering, which occurs outside of the boundaries of an officially recognised war. Were Ananjan and his fellow prisoners to die in the '*torture prison*' in 2011, it is likely that their suffering would not have been seen on the televisions or in the newspapers of the

world, failing to cause public outcry and rage. Instead, Ananjan and the other prisoners may have remained in prison, being left to be eaten by ants and leaving no public trace to be grieved. Following Butler, because Ananjan's suffering is unrecognised, his life risks becoming unlivable and ungrievable (Butler 2004).

Whilst Ananjan's experiences in the prison are not recorded in newspapers or anywhere else in the public domain, his body bears witness to his suffering. In the research interview, as he recounted being burnt in prison, he pointed to the scars on his arms that bear witness to these events. As the interview continued, I began to realise the significance of these scars for Ananjan, and the way in which, like the stories he told, they worked to provide an embodied, storied account of the torture and violence that he had received.

The chapter will now move to analyse a further section of Ananjan's narrative, in which he describes presenting an account of his imprisonment to UK asylum officials. His narrative of this experience, as recounted in the research interview, points to the centrality of testimony within the asylum process and the ways in which the discursive and embodied stories that a refugee tells can be interrogated and dissected by others. His words also highlight how this process can work to further increase the precarious nature of refugees' lives.

6.2.3. Contesting Testimony

Within Ananjan's account of his imprisonment, after describing the way in which he is he now scarred by *'16 burn marks',* he referred to how these marks have become the focus of investigation and verification within the asylum system. Ananjan's comment, "*I got 16 burn marks. I got a medical report and photos and everything for asylum",* points to the material politics that surrounds refugees stories within the asylum system, as medical reports along with discursive and embodied narratives become sources of evidence. The analysis of this chapter will now explore how these politics shaped Ananjan's experience, examining the paradoxical nature of stories within the asylum system, in which they are both powerful, as the crucial pieces of evidence, and also vulnerable to dispute and contestation.

"I ask my friend, one of my school friend, in Leeds, so he helps me. I call him and he said you go to Home Office and tell them your story. (.) And I went there and, they, they don't believe me. (.)

H: Oh really?

A: I had my screening interview. And then they send me to Wales. It's like many different people come there. Like me. Many people. It's like a hostel. After the second day, they say they ask me 217 questions and after they say, we can't believe you. And we can't believe your (.) injuries. Go to doctor and bring certificate. And then I go to doctor and the doctor believe. Finally then they call and they say we believe you have contact with LTTE and we can't believe your injuries and can't believe how you came here. You came illegally to this country, you enter illegally. And they said maybe the scars happened when you were fighting. (.) They say the scars, they are not torture. They come from fighting the army. They say I am a solider. They says its fighting injuries. Home Office are saying that. Doctor says no. It is torture. But Home Office say, no you are a solider. They say I am a terrorist. I'm a terrorist?! (.)"

Through Ananjan's narrative we see the precarious nature of stories within the asylum process and the ways in which, as an asylum seeker, his own voice and story must be spoken for and verified by more powerful others. Once doubt had been cast on his narrative account, the focus then shifts to his body, which was called to testify to his wounds, becoming the site understood to bear evidence of truth. Through this process, Ananjan's body, like that of many refugees, becomes a place where both power and truth have been inscribed in different contexts (Fassin & D'Halluin 2005). As Fassin and D'Halluin argue, the bodies of refugees may carry the marks of power, if, like Ananjan, they bear witness to the brutal acts of violence. These same marks or scars, when carried into a different space and time, can also become inscriptions of the 'truth', being positioned as pieces of evidence to be scrutinised.

As Ananjan's words highlight, his wounds do not speak on their own. Instead, they must be spoken for by a more reliable witness, such as a doctor, who can verify the existence of his wounds through a medical report and photographs. In Fassin's studies of asylum processes across Europe, he argues that reports like this are part of the materiality of trauma that has been introduced as part of a new regime of truth

over the past two decades (Fassin 2012). In a context where asylum seekers are increasingly viewed with suspicion, narrative accounts that testify to experiences of persecution are not longer sufficient to support a claim (Fassin and d'Halluin 2005). As Sigona (2014) notes, such is the level of disbelief that surrounds asylum seekers that their voices increasingly need to be corroborated by more trustworthy others who can speak for the asylum applicant and their body, being asked to make sense of what their bodies seem to show.

The notion that Ananjan's voice and wounds must be 'spoken for' points to his status as a precarious being who is not easily recognised within the frame of a reliable human. Through his account of this experience, it seems as though Ananjan's precarious status as an asylum seeker has reduced the power of both his voice and body to speak of his stories on his own, leaving it to others to verify and adjudicate his experiences.

There is a material aspect to this politics of recognition, since Ananjan's suffering is placed within a recognisable frame of torture wounds through the receipt of a medical certificate. In the asylum context, the medical certificate, as Fassin and D'Halluin argue, has become the "tenuous thread on which hangs the entire existence – both physical and political – of the asylum seeker" (Fassin and D'Halluin 2005; 606). Here, a new system of legitimacy has developed, in which the bodies of asylum seekers are frequently doubted and other more 'reliable' voices are called to testify on their behalf. However, there can be fundamental issues with the value placed on medical certificates within the asylum system such as what happens to asylum seekers whose wounds have faded or whose experiences of torture has left them unmarked.

The push towards materiality in the asylum system, in which the evidence that can be seen and verified by a doctor is held up, whilst torture that has left no marks may be ignored, points to a specific way in which the politics of recognition can be at work. For Ananjan, it was not enough for him to speak of or point to his wounds, with both his body and his voice being disbelieved by the Home Office. Instead, his wounds were only recognised as valid when a doctor, who could produce official verification, authenticated them. Through Ananjan's account we see the precarious nature of refugees voices within the asylum system, where their own stories are fragile and easily disputed, making it necessary for others to testify on their behalf.

The precarious nature of Ananjan's story becomes even more apparent through the final words of his account, where he describes being labelled as a terrorist

by the Home Office. He describes how the Home Office put forward their own account of what happened to him, proposing that since Ananjan had had contact with the LTTE, perhaps his scars came from fighting in the army, not torture. As Ananjan describes, *"They say I am a solider. They says it's fighting injuries. Home Office are saying that. Doctor says no. It is torture. But Home Office say, no you are a solider. They say I am a terrorist. I'm a terrorist?! (.)"*. Here, as with Ananjan's earlier description of being kidnapped, the individuals that decide the outcome of his asylum claim are nameless and remain so, being the impersonal agents of authority who pass judgement on his body and his claims. Where those in Sri Lanka had the power to 'take' Ananjan, imprison and injure him, these nameless individuals at the Home Office have the authority to either recognise his wounds or deny their existence or validity.

These points resonate with Judith Butler's analysis of how, in a post 9/11 context, the lives of others are apprehended through politically saturated frames, which determine what constitutes a human being and therefore, an intelligible and thus grievable life (Butler 2010; 1). In works such as *Precarious Life* and *Frames of War*, Butler highlights how these frames govern when and where a life counts as human and whether injury or loss of life cause public sadness, or do not register, remaining ungrievable and unrepresented (Butler 2004). Butler's ideas relate to Ananjan's experience, whose participation in the asylum system has put him in a precarious position that requires him to ask others in authority to recognise the discursive and bodily accounts of his suffering as credible and real.

Furthermore, in addition to his precarious position as an asylum seeker, Ananjan is viewed through another frame by the Home Office, that of a '*terrorist*', recounting, *"They say I am a terrorist. I'm a terrorist?! (.)"*. Earlier on in the research interview, Ananjan explained how he was a schoolboy when he assisted his family members who were in the LTTE, commenting that *"I didn't know what I was doing"*. He also mentioned viewing the LTTE as *"freedom fighters"*, who were fighting for *"a good and fair society"*. This understanding of events is at odds with the UK Government, who sees the LTTE as a terrorist organisation, having listed them as such since 2001 (Home Office 2015). Within the UN Refugee Convention there are certain exclusions that permit states to deny the asylum applications of individuals they have strong reason to believe have been involved in war crimes or other crimes against humanity. Whilst it is unclear whether these exclusions were invoked in

relation to Ananjan's case, the existence of this policy highlights the significance of Ananjan being termed '*a terrorist'* in the asylum context.

In relation to US foreign policy, Judith Butler has written, "yesterdays terrorists have a way of becoming tomorrow's freedom fighters and vice versa" (Butler 2010; 158), highlighting the contextually dependent nature of the way in which labels such as 'terrorist' are used across time and space. Whilst the LTTE represent to Ananjan a group of *"freedom fighters"* fighting for a *"good and fair society",* to the UK Government, they are terrorists. Within the asylum context, the use of this label works to position Ananjan outside of the bounds of what Butler terms the *'recognisable human',* reducing him to the realm of sub-humanity deemed undeserving of certain social and legal rights (2004). This realm, which is best evidenced in contexts such as Guantanamo Bay, works through an exclusionary process to produce a host of 'unlivable lives', whose legal and political status is suspended (Butler 2004; xv). Positioned as a 'terrorist', Ananjan becomes less recognisable as a human, making his suffering less noticeable and significant.

Relating Ananjan's experiences to this notion of recognisability raises an interesting question: What does it take for suffering to be recognised within the context of the asylum system? In Ananjan's case, it is clear that a discursive account, in answer to *'217 questions',* was not enough, nor were the bodily markings that testified to the wounds he described. A medical certificate, signed by an expert witness was also insufficient, since Ananjan was positioned as a 'terrorist', causing the nature of his wounds to be cast into doubt. Like that of an asylum seeker, the frame of *'the terrorist'* seems to work to make Ananjan's experiences unknowable and ungrievable, being disbelieved and not seen as sufficient to merit refugee status.

Ananjan's experiences point to the precarious nature of stories for asylum seekers as they navigate the asylum system. Whilst research has shown that testimony can serve powerful functions for refugees, often acting as the only source of evidence in their claim, it can also be fragile and precarious. This sense of precarity can be even more pronounced if, like Ananjan, refugees are positioned not only within the frame of 'the asylum seeker', but also within that of 'the terrorist'.

Taking these ideas, the analysis now moves to consider the experiences of another participant, Rehema, as she describes the process of navigating the asylum system. Unlike Ananjan's, Rehema's asylum claim, was not based on experience of war or violence but was instead a claim based on identity. Her account highlights the

ways in which refugees' bodies, like their stories, can become dispossessed within the asylum system, being spoken for and adjudicated by others, as the validity of their stories are assessed.

6.3. Rehema

6.3.1. Participant Overview

In her interview, Rehema shared how she came to the UK from Egypt with her mother, sister and brother and claimed asylum as a family. After several years as a teenager in the UK, Rehema's family's claim was denied. At this point, Rehema told her solicitor that she would like to file her own claim on the basis of her sexuality and the risk of violence that she would face if she was to return to Egypt. Whilst Rehema's family were later deported back to Egypt, Rehema received permission to remain in the UK, receiving refugee status after several appeals on her case.

The analysis now moves to examine Rehema's narrative in relation to the broader themes of this chapter.

6.3.2. How the Body Speaks/Is Spoken For

Analysis of Ananjan's account focused on how geopolitical frames worked to position both his discursive and embodied stories as precarious within the asylum process, as they were assessed in relation to frames of war and terrorism. As the chapter moves to explore Rehema's account, the analysis shifts away from this broad geopolitical perspective, focusing instead on the intimate scale of personal experience and identity. Where Ananjan brought stories of political violence to be assessed within the asylum process, Rehema brought an aspect of her identity. In trying to prove this to the Home Office, Rehema, like Ananjan, found that her body was called to testify alongside her discursive story. The following analysis of Rehema's account highlights the precarious nature of bodies within the asylum process as they both speak and are spoken for.

Rehema began her account of navigating the asylum process with a comment about the issue of proof, commenting on the paradox of being forced to find evidence for things that are not easily proved.

"It's horrific I think. The way it's done. Because also, to people who come from different cultures, you know, running away for their lives and then asked to provide evidence of things that you can't provide evidence for you know. Like. Yeah. And not knowing where to start. (.) For example, when I was asked to like, prove my sexuality. I was like how am I supposed to do that? Am I supposed, to like, have, like um. (.)"

Through Rehema's words, we see the complex nature of trying to prove an aspect of identity within the asylum system, where refugees are called upon to "*to provide evidence of things that you can't provide evidence for".* She explains how since her case was built on her sexuality she was required to prove this aspect of who she was. Rehema's experience can be understood in relation to another of Judith Butler's works, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), where Butler discusses the complexity of narrating one's identity and experience to others. In this book, Butler comments that no account given about oneself 'takes place outside of the structure of the address' (Butler 2005; 36). She continues saying, 'the address establishes the account as an account and so the account is completed only on the occasion when it is effectively exported and expropriated from the domain of what is my own' (Butler 2005; 36). These words highlight how crucial the context of an address is to what is narrated, with the act of narration causing the words of an individual's account to be exported from their personal domain and into a broader context.

Butler's points are significant in relation to Rehema, whose account of herself falls within a particular context of the asylum system, that of claiming a LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) identity. Recent government reports have expressed serious concerns about the considerable disbelief that surrounds applicants who identify as LGBT within the asylum system, stating that they often face extraordinary obstacles in attempting to establish credibility. Such reports have found that decisions on the validity of sexual and gender identity claims rely heavily on anecdotal evidence and place the onus on applicants to prove these identities (see Home Affairs Committee 2013).

The findings of government reports support the findings of academic research which argues that whilst many claims for refugee status rest on personal narrative, this is more likely in claims that are based on sexual and gender identities, in which there is often no other corroborating evidence (see Berg and Millbank 2009). This means that even more of a burden can be placed on personal testimony to provide the evidence needed to support an individual's claim. Within the research interview, Rehema shared the following narrative of her experience of giving an account of herself within the asylum context.

"*H: So your case was built on your sexuality – how did that all work out?*

R: Um, I was very lucky. At the time I looked like a massive butch. And um, I also lived in the UK for a while so I had the chance to meet people who know me, who could talk about me. I had a chance to see women, who I had sexual relationships with, and can go to court and humiliate themselves and say yeah she slept with me. That's what happened. (.) The whole thing is like the most invasion of privacy ever and (2) I was very lucky because I already lived in a Western country; I was kind of prepared to answer some of the questions. I was prepared to talk about (.) my sexuality anyway. If I had just come from Egypt with my mentality then, I wouldn't have been able to answer anything because it was so shocking what they were asking. I mean, its detailed stuff.
(4)
They ask, um, because I remember telling them like you know, I had an internet chat with someone and they go, like well, did you get naked then and did you do stuff like that? Did you have sex, on, on camera with them? And I was 17. (.) And um, you know, they'd ask me how many girlfriends have I had, how many one night stands have I had and um, (2) that's much, (.) it sounds bad that's better than actual cases I've heard of. Like some of my friends would be asked, are you top or bottom? And stuff like that. And just (2) it's horrible."

Rehema's narrative of giving an account of herself within the asylum process illuminates the precarious nature of the body within the asylum context and the ways in which the corporeal politics of asylum shape how it is viewed and assessed. In her account, Rehema made reference to the power of her embodied story within this

context, saying *"Um I was very lucky. At the time – I looked like a massive butch"*. Through these words, we see how the body speaks even when it is not directly called upon, embodying certain narratives that can work to either support or detract from the words that are said.

Rehema's words ("*massive butch*") create a sense that her appearance, which fits with cultural stereotypes of what it is to be a lesbian woman, does work by communicating her sexuality and in doing so, helping Rehema to be perceived as credible within the asylum system. This notion relates to UNHCR guidance, which advises border officials not to expect people claiming asylum on the basis of sexual orientations or gender identities to fit with a stereotyped appearance (UNHCR 2012). The fact that such guidance exists highlights the pervasive nature of this expectation and its power to shape asylum decisions globally.

Rehema's words resonate with those of Judith Butler, who commented that discursive stories can never fully capture the body to which they refer, describing the story of her body as "a condition of me that I can point to, but that I cannot narrate precisely" (Butler 2005; 38). Butler argues that whilst the body cannot be fully narrated it still 'constitutes the bodily condition of one's narrative account of oneself' (Butler 2005; 39), speaking even if it cannot be fully spoken of. This idea relates to Rehema's account, in which her appearance as a *"massive butch"* tells its own story, working to support her words. This power of the body to 'speak' within the asylum process, points to an assumption that within a credible claim, the words of discursive stories should match up to those which can be traced on the body.

Research has found that in Western asylum systems, representations of sexuality that do not conform to expected ideals can be silenced and unrecognised, leading some applicants to be described as being 'not gay enough for the government' (Morgan 2006; 144). Furthermore, since many sexual minorities live in countries where persecution is a common danger, they may have previously encountered a necessity to look 'straight' (Shuman and Bohmer 2014). As these individuals move into decision-making asylum contexts, they can encounter a new necessity for the body to 'speak' of sexuality in line with normative assumptions and expectations.

Rehema's account highlights that, beyond the power of her body to speak in line with her discursive claims, it also becomes the focus of the claims and judgements of others. Through this, her embodied story becomes precarious, lying further outside of her own control as it is spoken for and legitimised by others. An

example of this can be seen in Rehema's description of the way in which her ex-partners were called to testify to her sexuality. Since Rehema had lived in the UK for a while before her claim, she had had the chance to develop of a network of people who could also 'speak for' her sexuality. These friends and previous sexual partners were called into court to '*humiliate themselves*' and account for the fact that Rehema had slept with them. Whilst these individuals had had personal relationships with her, their participation in this decision-making process is still characterised by a sense of precarity since Rehema could not control how they spoke of her and her body.

Rehema was also called on to speak of her sexuality herself, being asked to describe the intimate sexual actions of her body. As Rehema described this process within the research interview, she commented how living in the UK had prepared her for the invasive and personal questions she was asked, saying, '*If I had just come from Egypt with my mentality then, I wouldn't have been able to answer anything because it was so shocking what they were asking. I mean, it's detailed stuff.*' Her words relate to the cultural silences that can exist around sexuality and gender, which shape what can and what cannot be spoken of. For women who have learnt that they must conceal their sexuality because of fear of prosecution, the idea that once in the UK they should share intimate details about their sexual life with an authority figure can seem shocking and counter-intuitive (see Berg and Millbank 2009; Shuman and Bohmer 2014).

As Rehema's narrative continued she described the kind of explicit questions she was asked about her sexual behaviour. Her words show how, in the asylum context, her most private and intimate experiences became pieces of evidence that were used to establish the credibility of her claims. The questions she was asked were humiliating and degrading, putting the onus on her to prove her sexuality through an account of her behaviour. In this context, Rehema's body becomes the focus of judgement, as she is expected to describe her previous sexual behaviours to prove her claim. Through this, these intimate acts, which before existed in a personal and private realm, are taken into the public realm, becoming pieces of evidence for others to speak of and assess. This process points again to the precarious nature of embodied stories within asylum decisions, highlighting how the body's appearance as well as its actions can become pieces of evidence, precariously dispersed through the voices and judgements of others.

Rehema's experiences highlight an aspect of the way in which refugees' stories can become vulnerable to scrutiny within the asylum system, as they are assessed in line with corporeal asylum politics. At one level this politics can be seen through the way in which the stories that Rehema embodied were assessed in line with expectations of 'visible' sexuality. Her embodied stories were therefore able to support her discursive claims, since her appearance matched normative expectations. At another, it is shown through the precarious nature of Rehema's body as it was spoken for and judged by others in court, with her intimate personal experiences taken from the private realm and into the public context of the court. Even as Rehema spoke for her body herself, it remained vulnerable to the judgements of others.

Whilst Ananjan and Rehema's accounts are very different, together they show the precarious nature of stories within the asylum system, in which both discursive and embodied narratives are assessed through socially and politically saturated frames. Their experiences show that whilst testimony can serve functions in the asylum context, the stories that a refugee tells can be precarious, being opened up to dissection and scrutiny by more powerful others. In the next section, this notion of precarious stories is discussed in relation to the broader themes of this thesis as a whole.

6.4. Conclusion: Stories as Passports?

This chapter was originally titled, 'Stories as Passports', a title chosen because it pointed to both the materiality and centrality of stories within the asylum system and the functions that they can serve. In line with this, early analysis of both Ananjan and Rehema's accounts pointed to the material nature of discursive and embodied stories as objects of evidence, shaped and refined by the asylum context. However, as this analysis went on, it became clear that this title was in some ways a misnomer, with not all stories being powerful enough to act as passports within the asylum process. Instead it became apparent that only *certain* stories could be passports in this context, being effective only if they could be proved and if they aligned with particular political and social expectations.

Judith Butler's argument that the lives of other human beings are apprehended through politically saturated frames appears to be particularly significant in relation to

Ananjan and Rehema's experiences of seeking asylum (Butler 2010). In seeking recognition in this context, Ananjan and Rehema stories were "effectively exported and expropriated" from the domain of what was their own (Butler 2005; 36). By seeking recognition for the validity of their stories, their discursive and embodied accounts were opened up, with the power to be legitimised, becoming dispersed through the voices of more powerful others.

For Ananjan, the geopolitics of war and terrorism shaped the way both his discursive and his embodied stories were received and whether he was recognised within the frame of the 'recognisable human'. He was treated both as a receptacle for waste, and following Cindi Katz, represented a part of the global childhood waste of war, where his life and future had been dramatically affected by his exposure to conflict in his childhood (Katz 2011). When his discursive account and his physical wounds were questioned in the asylum system Ananjan had to seek the recognition of a doctor, who could speak on his behalf. However, once this verification was secured, it was not enough to enable Ananjan to be recognised as a human in need of protection. Instead, the frame of 'the terrorist' became the most salient frame through which Ananjan's experiences were viewed.

Ananjan's experiences highlight how the politics of recognition can create a hierarchy where some, like those who are viewed within the dehumanising frame of a 'terrorist', have lives that are deemed ungrievable. As Butler writes, this status as an unrecognisable human creates a host of unlivable lives, which are characterised by extreme precarity and are seen to be undeserving of certain social and legal rights (Butler 2010). This precarity could be seen in Ananjan's life, since, at the time of the research interview, his asylum claim had been refused and he was living destitute, sleeping wherever he could and feeding himself only through foodbanks. Ananjan's circumstances were precarious as he lived without any legal claim to social rights and the provisions they would bring.

Moving to Rehema, her experiences also demonstrate how the politics of recognition works to shape how stories are received within the asylum process. Within her asylum claim, Rehema's body was called to testify, being scrutinised and expected to support her discursive claims. Through this process, Rehema's body became precarious and vulnerable to judgements that lay outside of her control. This sense of precarity was underlined by the way in which other people were called on to testify for Rehema and her body, speaking of private sexual acts in public so that they

could be used to verify her claims. In this context, it was not sufficient for Rehema to speak for herself through her stories or her body. Instead, the process of being legitimised as a 'recognisable' member of a local 'lesbian community' was only made possible through these other voices.

At the time of the research interview, Rehema, unlike Ananjan, had received refugee status and therefore had permission to permanently remain in the UK. Since Rehema's stories were able to align with normative expectations of gendered sexualities and could be traced on the body (or by what the body does to other bodies), they could be established as legitimate.

Both Ananjan and Rehema's experiences, though different, highlight the insecure nature of stories within the asylum process, in which it is clear that their own voices and bodies were unable to tell their stories for themselves. In this context, stories are fragile as they are opened up and become the focus of scrutiny as pieces of evidence. Within the asylum process, Ananjan and Rehema's stories became like objects that lay beyond the boundaries of their control, being spoken for, weighed up and assessed others. Just as their bodies when they were forced to migrate, Ananjan and Rehema's stories were precarious in the asylum process, in which the power to be legitimised was not held by themselves but was instead dispersed through the claims of others.

The analysis of Ananjan and Rehema's narrative accounts has highlighted how the broader geopolitical and social politics of recognition work to determine which stories get recognised within the asylum system, and consequently which individuals are seen within the lens of the recognisable human. It is clear that within this context stories do not simply act as passports. Instead, only certain stories, which can be proved, legitimised and recognised through politically and socially saturated frames may be believed and deemed as 'true'.

This chapter has worked through two case studies to examine how bodies and stories are read and spoken of within the asylum system. In the next chapter I will work across multiple participant accounts to explore some of the further ways in which a sense of maximised precarity characterised the young people's experiences of seeking asylum. Using a similar structure to Chapter Five, the next chapter responds to the second research question by exploring participants' experiences of time and precarity within the asylum system.

Chapter Seven: Precarious Time

Time and the way it is organised can be thought of as comprising a fundamental part of the governance of states. Whether through birth registration, the centrality of age in schooling or the temporal rhythms of institutions, all aspects of social, economic and political life can be seen through a temporal prism (see Anderson and Keith 2014). Within the context of the asylum system, there are particular temporal devices and tempos, which can be understood to govern in multiple ways. From sudden dawn raids and arbitrary cut-off dates, to the limbo of waiting years for an asylum decision, time has been found to be manipulated within the asylum system as a means to govern, confuse and control (see Griffiths 2013; Khosravi 2014; Allsopp et al. 2014).

This chapter responds to the second research question of the thesis by exploring how time features in the stories that young people seeking asylum tell about their experiences. By mapping time through the participant narratives, this chapter considers how the governance of time contributes to the precarious nature of life for young refugees as they navigate the asylum system. Throughout the chapter, my approach to time is informed by Barbara Adam's insight that, if time is to be grasped in its complexity, the relations between different aspects such as "clock time, chronology, social time and time consciousness, between motion, process, change, continuity and the temporal modalities of past, present and future" must be engaged with (Adam 1994; 13). The analysis therefore spans different aspects of time and temporality, exploring how the organisation and governance of time within the asylum system shapes young people's lives.

The chapter begins by discussing the idea of *disputed time*, examining how the use of chronological age markers in the asylum system can be used to categorise young asylum seekers. The chapter then moves to explore the tempo of *stasis*, where extended periods of temporal uncertainty are used to compound participants' sense of insecurity and lack of control. The third aspect of time discussed concerns *rushed time*, where the rush of deportation and decisions works to disorientate and confuse. The fourth section discusses *future time,* examining how the young people in this research made sense of their futures whilst being under immigration control. These different temporal aspects are then brought together in the concluding section, which focuses on the tactics of time within the asylum process.

7.1. Disputed Time

dis-pute (dĭ-spyo͞ot′)

1. To express disagreement over
2. To question the truth or the validity of; doubt.

To dispute means to call into question, to contest or to doubt. As the previous chapter highlighted, within the asylum system there are many features of an applicant's testimony that can cause disputes as the authenticity of their claims is contested. For young people who travel alone to the UK, their age, in addition to their story can be another aspect that may be called into question. In the asylum context, the importance placed on chronological age markers has been suggested as a key part of the way time is used to govern young people's lives (see Allsopp et al. 2014).

As Chapter Two discussed, within the asylum system chronological age markers are used to determine the level of provision a child receives. If a young person travels alone to the UK they are generally granted discretionary leave to remain in the UK until they are 17 ½, on the grounds that they cannot be sent back to their country of origin until they are aged 18. However, since a significant number of young asylum seekers arrive in the UK without any official documentation to prove their age, establishing eligibility is problematic (MCP 2012). In these instances, a young person's age may be disputed by social services. This was the case for several of the participants in this research.

One participant, Aamir migrated to the UK from Afghanistan, after both of his parents were killed in the war that began in 2001. He travelled to the UK without a guardian, transiting in lorries and ferries with other migrants. When Aamir arrived in the UK, police searched the lorry he was hiding in and found Aamir in a cupboard. In the research interview, Aamir described how directly after he was found, his age was disputed,

"They open the door, police come and check, I go in this big cupboard. Door lock. Police come, five people, come out, three Afghani and two others. But the police only have five people and there are six people. Two hours in the lorry I sit (3). They say where is the other one in the lorry? Look, and they say no one is here. But three hours go and the police come back, (.) open the cupboard, I sit. They say come out. (3) Then

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my social worker says I am 20. (4). After, I go to my solicitor, he say you are not 20, you are 15. (.) I say, that's right."

In Aamir's narrative, the dispute over his age exists as part of his account of his arrival in the UK making it seem like an additional part of his journey. He elaborated more on this process, saying,

"H: The social worker says you are 20?

A: I say no, the interpreter comes and says I am 14 or 15. The social worker still writes 20, open the bag give me one form, tells me to write here your name, and sign. I say no I won't write name, or sign. The police see, I show them the paper and they say it is crazy this, you are not 20. The social worker is crazy, no you are not 20. You're 14 or 15. I feel not good.
H: Um, and then you go to your solicitor?
A: Yeah, my age on the paper says 20, so my solicitor is fighting for the final age 15. The Home Office say, 20 but solicitor says 15, the Home Office says no 20. But Home Office say final age 20.
H: Ok so now so the Home Office say you are 15?
A: No they still say I am 20.
(6)
A: I go after 3 o' clock home and I can't sleep to 2 o' clock, 3 o'clock.
H: You can't sleep?
A: Yeah I can't sleep until 2 or 3 or 1 o'clock"

Aamir's account highlights the ambiguity of age, where in the absence of any official documentation, others offer their contrasting judgements. In this case, as in the previous discussion of proving testimony, the dearth of supporting evidence means that Aamir's voice stands against the social worker's and the Home Office's, both of whom hold considerably more power than Aamir in this process. The final judgment of Aamir as 20 years old is significant because it positions him outside the boundaries of recognised childhood and means that he can instead be treated as an adult. This means that he can be held in detention and deported without the need to establish adequate care arrangements for his return. Aamir's experience, where there is a

dispute over five years, relates to guidance that describes age determination as an inexact science, with a margin of error that can sometimes be as much as five years either side (Royal College Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) 2007).

Through Aamir's account, we see the emotional and physiological impact that age disputes can have on young people, as he explains that he struggles to sleep until the early hours of the morning. Later on in his interview, he explains how he is waiting for a visa but worries that the Home Office will send him back to Afghanistan.

"Waiting, they give me visa- no give me visa…maybe, maybe another time, they will catch me and send me to Afghanistan. (4) Not good. (4)…I want to stay here, not go back Afghanistan. I come first here, they say go back Afghanistan. I say no I don't want to go back Afghanistan. Too much fighting. I'm not going back"

Aamir's words convey the uncertainty that has been created by his age dispute, in which he is unsure whether he will be sent back to Afghanistan. He has little control over whether he can remain in the UK and is dependant on the decisions of the Home Office, which holds the authority to deport him back into, what he perceives to be, a context of danger.

Aamir's experience points to the significance of time as a border of recognition within the asylum process, made manifest through temporal eligibility criteria of being a child under 17 ½ (see Robertson 2014). The sociological context surrounding this seemingly arbitrary cut off point has been examined in earlier chapters, in which the work of scholars such as Imoh and Ame (2012), has been discussed as critiquing the globalised understanding of childhood as being under age 18. The politics of age within the asylum system means that when Aamir arrives in the UK and is found by the police, he finds himself automatically transported into a politics of recognition that seeks to situate him temporally. This process of recognition is framed by social, political and culturally saturated notions of childhood, which work to determine the highly subjective process of establishing Aamir's age.

As in Chapter Six, in which the absence of other evidence was seen to place a greater burden on Ananjan and Rehema's bodies to testify, age assessment decisions have been found to place an over-reliance on physical appearance and demeanour (Crawley 2012). This can be particularly problematic, not only because of the often

minimal physical differences between a young person of 16, 17 or 18 years, but also because of the way in which the length and trauma of the journey may make a young person appear older than they are. This point is relevant to the experience of another participant, Melissa, who explained how she had 'aged' through her experiences of coming to the UK and during her first few weeks in the country.

"Because you know, when I came, because when you are stressed and my photo, the photos they took in Leeds to send to the Home Office, and the photos I brought for the asylum interview were sooo different because I was not so stressed. When you are (.) when you have been under pressure, torture. And everything, if I show you even now those photos, you won't believe me. It was so bad"

Melissa's words convey the problematic nature of assessing age by relying on physical appearance, describing how the photographs taken when she first arrived in the UK made her look much older than those taken later at her asylum interview when she *"was not so stressed"*. Melissa, who came from Cameroon when both her parents were killed, described in depth her experiences of having her age disbelieved. In Chapter Five, Melissa's experiences of arriving in the UK and being held in a police cell on her arrival, were referred to in the context of her journey. Here, the narrative picks up where it was left in Chapter Five, where Melissa describes how her age was disputed whilst she was detained in the police station.

"They said to me – ok, they took my fingerprints. They did everything. Oh my God. Then the next day, I didn't even want to eat. I am still in the cell until Saturday. Before that, because I was under stress, pressure, everything – Thursday night, they took me to the hospital. Yeah because I was so, I didn't know what, what was happening! I was crying and scared and then in the hospital, I wanted to go to the toilet, the policeman was there – waiting for me outside. Everywhere, where I was going, the policeman was there. I said, maybe I have done something wrong?! Because I don't know. I was lying on the bed and the two policeman were there and they change the shift and someone else comes to replace him. So all the time, oh my God, then they took me back again in the cell! Until Saturday, when the Social Services came. And I gave my age. When I say I am, because in my country, when the year start, in January, even if I am born in December, I will be one in January. But

here, you have to wait until your birthday. I said I am 17. They said no, you are not 17 you are 18. I said no! So when they ask me my age – they say you are not 17, you look 18! When the social services came on Friday afternoon, they didn't take me, because they said, no you don't look that age. They say no, you look 18. We can't take you because you look 18. All the things they say, I didn't even understand!"

Melissa's experience highlights the stark difference between being acknowledged as a child, which would have meant she would have been taken away from the police cell and given alternative accommodation, and being judged as an adult. Through her narrative we also see the arbitrary nature of temporal eligibility criteria and assessment: she reports that she is told she looks 18 and not 17, even though there is generally not a significant amount of different between the appearance of people of these two ages. The fact that Melissa does 'not look' 17 means that social services refuse to take her away and she remains in the prison cell. In this instance, Melissa's body is understood to 'give away' her real age, exposing the inauthenticity of her claims that she is 17 years old.

Through Melissa's narrative the problematic relationship between the passing of chronological time and the contextually mediated experience of social time comes into view. For many young people, age assessments can be problematic because they are used to working with a different calendar system (see Bianchini 2011 for a discussion of this). Melissa describes how in Cameroon, age is recorded at the beginning of each calendar year whilst in the UK it is counted from the day an individual is born. When Melissa enters the UK asylum system the 'official' discourse of age is superimposed onto her as an alternative interpretation of the 'facts' of her age. However, this 'official' discourse is not based on objective facts but on a subjective judgement rooted in culturally mediated discourses of age.

In the research interview, Melissa continued, saying,

"H: And how did you feel when they told you you were 18?

M: I, I felt bad because, I was just like er, first you don't know what, what you are doing. Because I didn't know what is asylum, what, the, the, process, how the things go and everything. I didn't know all that and when you give your age, they don't

listen to you, you think oh my God. And the Social Services left me again there, I was smelling very bad, with my period, no pad. Nothing, nothing. No. They don't give me nothing, whatever"

Melissa describes a sense of confusion and disorientation when she arrived in the UK, commenting how she had no understanding of what asylum was or how the processes worked. She explains how when she told social services her age, they didn't listen and left her in the prison. As Melissa remained in the prison cell, she describes how she was left "*smelling very bad, with my period, no pad. Nothing, nothing",* with the lack of control she had over the hygiene of her body mirroring the lack of control she had over her perceived age. By not meeting the temporal eligibility of being a child, Melissa experiences greater precarity, being forced to remain in a police cell and feeling smelly and unclean. Like Aamir, Melissa's experience of having her age disputed serves to place her in a more precarious situation, where she is denied the extra provisions and social rights that being classified as a child would allow. Since she is not recognised through the frame of 'the child', the response of leaving her in a prison cell without access to basic hygiene is one that is more easily legitimised.

Lorey's work on governmental precarisation has been inspired by Foucault's work on governmentality, where he discusses how the practices through which states exercise sovereignty and power over their populations become rationalised as normal (Lorey 2015; Foucault 1982). In relation to both Aamir and Melissa's experiences, it is clear that in being assessed as adults, it becomes rational for the social services and the Home Office to treat them as they would adults, despite the fact that the age assessment system is highly subjective. Whether or not the 'facts' of Aamir's and Melissa's chronological age make them a child or not, the decisions of social workers become established as the rational benchmark by which they will be treated. Like Rehema and Ananjan's experiences described in Chapter Six, the judgement of Aamir and Melissa's ages lies outside of their control, leaving them vulnerable to the judgements of others.

Beyond this lack of control there are further aspects of Aamir and Melissa's experiences that point to the governance of precarity through time. Through both of their accounts, there is a sense that since their age disputes occur directly after they have arrived in the UK alone, they are both disorientated and confused by what is happening. By conducting age assessments so soon after Melissa and Aamir arrive,

they are rushed into a politics of age of which they have little awareness or understanding. Melissa comments on this general sense of confusion by saying,

"I, I felt bad because, I was just like er, first you don't know what, what you are doing. Because I didn't know what is asylum, what, the, the, process, how the things go and everything".

Melissa's words highlight how her lack of understanding about the asylum process serve to make her more uncertain within the system, which becomes less controllable and more difficult to navigate. In this context of confusion, it is possible that a young person's uncertainty may serve to limit the way in which they present and give an account of themselves, creating room for others to hold more power when making judgements about their identity. In this context, the already precarious nature of young asylum seekers, who may be confused and disorientated on their arrival in the UK, could serve to expose them to greater level of precarity, as they struggle to be recognised within the frame of 'the child'.

In these different ways, Aamir's and Melissa's experiences highlight how disputes about age can act as a further means by which young asylum seekers become more precarious. By simply arriving in the UK and stating their ages Melissa and Aamir are transported into a particular politics of recognition, which seeks to establish whether they can be viewed through the frame of 'the child'. This process is governed by a range of temporal factors, such as the difference between social and chronological time and the diversity of calendar systems and approaches to childhood worldwide. There are also broader factors such as the general confusion and anxiety created by asylum system, which could work to limit the ways in which young people can understand and control what is happening to them.

The chapter now moves away from the temporal device of chronological age markers and the issue of disputing age, to consider the impact of different tempos within the asylum system, such as stasis and rushing.

7.2. Stasis

sta-sis (stā′sĭs, stăs′ĭs)

1. A state or condition in which there is no action or progress; static situation
2. Stagnation of the flow of any fluids in the body
3. A period or state of inactivity; motionlessness

Time is often considered to exist on a trajectory, being progressive, continuous and dynamic (Griffiths et al. 2013). This is especially true in the context of migration, where mobility is generally associated with temporalities of acceleration. And yet for many refugees, time is described as being 'on hold' as they experience a suspension of time whilst the rest of the world continued to move forwards. This state can be described as a period of stasis or stagnation, in which there is no movement, progression or activity. In Western contexts, where time is approached in terms of how it can be used effectively, waiting is seen to signify waste, emptiness and lack of purpose (see Khosravi 2014). A sense of collective stasis was apparent across the interviews within this research, with participants expressing frustration and uncertainty as they waited for decisions on their own and their families' asylum claims.

Whilst all aspects of travel generally involve some measure of waiting, whether in airport lounges or traffic queues, the asylum process is particularly associated with slowness and stasis. After initial asylum interviews have taken place, communication with the Home Office can take months, as applicants wait for letters or for court hearings to be organised. The pressure and bureaucracy of the immigration system means that papers can often become lost; with reports of some refugees only finding out they had refugee status months and even years after it was granted (Griffiths 2013; Home Affairs Committee 2013). This limbo has been argued to be not only symptomatic of the bureaucratic inertia of asylum systems but also indicative of the way in which asylum systems are policed and controlled (see Cabot 2012).

The stasis and limbo of asylum seeking is framed by significant political, social and physical dimensions, which attempt to police and document the 'alien' presence of asylum seekers within state borders (see Kobelinsky 2006). This governance of stasis, which polices and controls the lives of asylum applicants, relates to the broader theme of governing precarity that frames this chapter. As Lorey writes, the precariousness that exists in societies can be "turned into the construction of

dangerous others, positioned respectively within and outside the political and social community as 'abnormal' and 'alien'." (Lorey 2015; 14). Constructing 'alien' others as those who are dangerous to the protection and stability of the political and social community, allows them to be legitimately treated as threats that must be policed and controlled. In the context of the asylum system, this can mean creating the conditions for asylum seekers to remain precarious in their legal status, allowing states to regulate their lives politically, legally and at the level of their identity (Cabot 2012). As the following extracts show, for the participants in this research, the regulated stasis produced by the asylum system worked to destabilise the young people, by exposing them to a greater sense of precarity and anxiety.

Many of the participants in this research made reference to the length of time they had been waiting to hear from the Home Office about the decisions on their own or their family's claim. Since the young people interviewed had either received asylum letters themselves or were responsible for translating any letters their families had received, they were often acutely aware of the last time communication had been made. Abdul, who had left Afghanistan with his brother after their parents had been killed in a drone strike, explained how long he had been waiting, saying,

"We are waiting. We are waiting for Home Office for 9 months. I'm feeling, um, what can I say? They said to my brother they would give answer in 6 months. My brother said to me, they will give us, inshallah visa in 6 months. But after 6 months I am waiting"

Abdul's understanding that the Home Office "*would give answer in 6 months*" points to a common experience across the participant narratives where the young people were either told by the Home Office or other key figures such as solicitors when they might be able to expect an update or final decision. For asylum seekers, who can often wait months or years for any decision on their claim, these potential future dates can become landmark points that they count down to, only to find out that in the end they hear nothing and instead remain in stasis.

Another participant, Ahmadullah, who had left Afghanistan with his father after the Taliban tried to recruit him, described what it was like to live in stasis, referring to a sense of the deceleration of time. Early on in the research interview,

Ahmadullah described how he was hoping his family would be able to receive passports and come to the UK.

"A: We are waiting for passports and to bring our family here.

H: Do you think about that much?

A: Not as much about passports as I do about my family. Because it's like, might as well just be with my family instead of being here. (2) 24 hours here seems like two whole years. (.) It's different. (.) Things go slowly – very much."

The way in which Ahmadullah refers to how *'24 hours* feels like *'two whole years'* suggests a stretching out and deceleration of the temporality of daily life. Through his exposure to stasis, Ahmadullah's words point to an additional temporality of an endless and timeless present that is experienced in parallel to the natural progression of everyday time. Later on in his narrative account, Ahmadullah referred again to his experience of stasis, saying in reference to seeking asylum,

"The way I think about it is, they take a very long time to decide and I'm not sure what they are going to do. All I'm waiting for is to hear what they are going to say. Is it yes or no? Stop wasting my time cos I (.) I waited four years, if you're not giving me any response just say – we don't want you. Then I could be reunited with my family. The waiting, that's the miserable part. I do think about it a lot in one way because then I could bring my family as fast as I could"

Through Ahmadullah's narrative, we get a glimpse of what it is like to live in the static context of the asylum system, where young people wait for decisions that they have little control over. His account connects to research findings of how migrants in detention tend to see no purpose to their waiting, seeing it as dead time that they have no control over (see Griffiths 2013; Kobelinsky 2006). Ahmadullah's narrative is characterised by this sense of uncertainty, in which he is frustrated that he has been waiting four years and may still be told he must go back to Afghanistan. His waiting is governed and controlled by nameless agents of authority, for which Ahmadullah can do nothing but wait on for a response.

The sense of having a lack of control over waiting was a central feature of another participant, Adam's account. Adam migrated from Nigeria with his mother and in the research interview, described what seeking asylum meant to him.

"Kind of like, you seek asylum about you know, what's happened in your country, what's going on in your life or something that is going to get you in trouble or going to kill you or something. Um, so we are waiting and I am afraid because they might say no. And they might send us back which is really bad and then I would I have to go and it would be really bad. We would have no more money; we would have to live in the street, which would be really, really worst. I think really about it, because sometimes, if they give us a letter from the Home Office, I was like, you know, very afraid. My heart would be like boom, boom, boom, really quick. It would be very, very hard. Because they might like say that we will be going back which would be really, really bad."

Through Adam's description of waiting for a decision from the Home Office we see the lack of control that he has over the outcome and the visceral anxiety that his fear (*'I am afraid …. very afraid'*), causes him, making his heart thump (*'boom boom boom'*). His explanation of how he feels whenever he receives a letter from the Home Office conveys a sense that certain aspects of his everyday life are governed by the asylum system, through the letters he fears coming through his door. This focus on asylum letters and the power they have over him relates back to the discussions of Chapter Three regarding the material nature of the asylum system, in which judgements exist within letters, visa forms and medical certificates. In this context, letters can be thought of as part of the apparatus of the state, working to reiterate state authority and discipline over asylum seekers' lives (see Darling 2013). Adam's experience was also echoed in the accounts of other participants in this research who described being scared every time that they received post.

As Adam's interview continued, he commented again on letters saying,

"Um, if they send a bad letter to us, it really makes me sad and afraid. When the letter comes, I read it because my Mum only speaks a little English – so that's why – if I first read the letter, I will get sad. I start getting afraid and it might cause me some problems. I get like (.) scared"

Adam describes how, because of his mother's limited English, he is responsible for reading the letters and telling his mother the outcome. There is a sense that his life is governed by both the fear of receiving a letter and the fear of not receiving one and being kept waiting. The reference to a '*bad letter*' and how it makes Adam *'sad and afraid',* points to what has been termed, the *"brutal materiality"* of the asylum process, where objects such as letters, visa documents and medical certificates become disconnected from the bureaucratic contexts that produce them and work to exert their own specific power (Cabot 2012; 69). From Adam's words, it seems as though when a letter comes from the Home Office, it acts to break through the stasis, disrupting Adam's waiting with a more intense anxiety, which causes his heart to go "*like boom, boom, boom, really quick*".

Whilst waiting is a central feature of the asylum system, as Jonathan Darling has argued, letters from the Home Office act to punctuate this experience, occurrences which may shift the nature or meaning of the waiting, directing it towards an impending appeal or removal (Darling 2013). As Adam's account suggests, similarly, the absence of letters can also serve to govern the lives of asylum seekers leaving them precarious to yet more stasis. After his comments about receiving letters, Adam spoke about dealing with this state of stasis and waiting, as follows:

"H: So how long have you been waiting?

A: More than a year. (.) Waiting is like, you know, thinking of what's going to happen next or anything like that. And I have been so patient about it. But I have started thinking, I can't be patient now because it is more that a year. And I heard about some people, they say that it takes more than 5 years and that after 5 years, people get told to leave the country."

As Adam describes, being in a constant state of stasis means his future is unknown and he does not know whether he will be waiting for more days, months or even years. In this context, young people like Adam, may fear on the one hand, that nothing will change and they will be forced to remain in stasis, whilst on the other, they can also dread receiving the decision that they fear the most.

In addition to describing a sense that periods of stasis or extended waiting can govern everyday life, other participants described how these experiences can cause vulnerability and a sense of shame. Periods of stasis or extended waiting can often be an experience of, what Victor Turner, termed 'liminality', describing the transitory stage between two social positions and identities (1969). According to postcolonial theorists, these periods in the 'between' spaces, can offer the potential for creativity, where new cultural hybridities emerge (Bhabha 1994). However, in addition to the potential for creativity, the insecurity of liminality can also generate vulnerability and anxiety. As Khosravi (2014) has commented, as experiences of liminality become extended into periods of protracted waiting, the ambiguity about the duration of the waiting can generate a sense of shame, depression and anxiety.

This sense of the shame of waiting came through particularly in one of the research interviews, with Megi, who had migrated with her mother and brother from Albania. At the end of the research interview, when I asked Megi if she had any questions, she gave the following response,

"I just have to say one thing. When my Mum broke up with my Dad, she decided to ask asylum – so that's why we moved here and now we are waiting for an answer. Asylum – is like, when you, ask, err to come, you want to move from one country to another because you have problems in your country and my Mum, because she had problems with my Dad, she really wanted to go away from him. So now we are waiting. That's the only thing that I'm nervous for and quite sad. Like I don't like, I don't speak about it many times because I don't feel well when I speak about it. Because, (.) I used live the way I used to live, like now, and I know that one day they might turn it back and I don't want to. It's hard waiting. I wait for two years now."

The way in which Megi waited until the end of the research interview to speak about her asylum status, suggests that it was something that was keen to avoid discussing. As she describes, the protracted limbo of waiting for two years was something that made Megi both nervous and sad, causing her to live in fear that any day her life could be changed back to the way it used to be. This sense of constant trepidation and dread that 'today could be the day', points to the way in which periods of waiting and stasis can work to govern the daily lives of young asylum seekers, creating feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability.

As this analysis has shown, the stasis and protracted limbo created by the asylum process is one of the ways in which the power of the state over asylum seekers can be constantly reasserted and maintained. Lack of information about how long the waiting will last or what they have to do to receive refugee status serves to make their lives unpredictable and insecure. This unpredictability, created by the endless waiting that could at any time be broken into by a decision letter, has been argued by researchers such as Jennifer Bagelman to be an expression of governmental authority and control in this context (2013). Through this manipulation of time, the precarity of young people who exist within the asylum system is maintained, rendering them powerless in relation to the decisions and timing of others.

7.3. Rushed Time

rush (rŭsh)

1. To move swiftly; hurry
2. To make a sudden or swift attack or charge
3. **n.** A sudden quick movement towards something.

To rush means to move with urgency. As a behaviour, the tempo of rushing is accelerated, signifying a sudden move towards something. As in the previous discussion of stasis, the impact of rushing and taking people by surprise lies in its unpredictability. Alongside tempos of stasis, asylum seekers also experience tempos of acceleration or rushing, in contexts such as dawn raids or only having 72 hours notice of a removal or transition into refugee status.

In terms of the governance of precarity, the tempo of rushing is characterized by a lack of control, where asylum seekers are left without any information about when change may occur and how much warning they will have. For the young people in this research, the most striking examples of this rushed pace were seen through their narratives of experiencing immigration raids. The experiences of Safia, who was subjected to a dawn immigration raid whilst at home alone, was previously explored in Chapter Five in relation to the sense of rupture that can characterise refugee journeys. The focus will now turn to another participant, Rehema, whose experiences were discussed in detail in Chapter Six. Rehema's experience of a dawn immigration raid, which latterly led to the deportation of her family, formed a significant focus within her research interview.

Rehema left Egypt with her mother, sister and brother and whilst they initially claimed asylum as a family, she later put in her own individual claim. Whilst Rehema received refugee status, her family's claim was refused and they were deported back to Egypt. Rehema described the day that her family's house was raided and they were removed to a detention centre, saying,

"She just rang me one day at 6am, screaming 'they're here, they're here'. What? How? Me and my friends just cycling from the other end of town. Not being able to do anything, seeing people, my friends and my family be manhandled, its, yeah. It was just out of the blue you know they, had a court hearing! You know. (.) They were gonna be take the same day."

Rehema's narrative points to the way in which dawn immigration raids can happen without warning, acting as, what refugee scholar Melanie Griffiths has termed a 'temporal tear' that breaks through the stasis, shocks and disturbs (2013). After being woken up abruptly at dawn, asylum seekers are taken to police stations and immigration removal centres, being given as little as 72 hours notice of their removal. This was the case for Rehema's family, who were woken at 6am by border agents, causing Rehema's mother to call her and scream, *'they're here, they're here'.* Her use of the unspecific word 'they', suggests that Rehema would know who she was talking about, as if it was always known that one day immigration officers would come.

Within Rehema's short account, there are several overlapping temporalities, which are each held together by a tempo of frenzy and rushing. There is firstly the temporality of Rehema's day, which begins somewhere outside of her mother's home and is broken into with her mother's anxious call. Rehema's rhetorical questions, *"What? How?"* point to the disorientating nature of the raid, which tears into the everyday temporality of Rehema's morning.

There is also the temporality of the raid, which happens characteristically *'out of the blue'* at dawn one day. As Melanie Griffiths argues, the sudden occurrence of dawn raids can involve a shift in the experience of temporality for asylum seekers, where long periods of stasis are intruded on violently with sudden bouts of frenzied time (2014). However, it is not just the occurrence of dawn raids that can serve to

destabilise asylum seekers, but also the threat that they may occur on any day, which works to deny people any control or capacity to predict or plan for their future[2].

Going back to Rehema's experience, beyond the shocking and abrupt temporality of the raid, lies the parallel temporality of Rehema's family's expected court date. Rehema and her family had been waiting for a court date in the future, which would provide a decision on her case. This expected date had become part of their future temporality, shaping how they expected their case to unfold. However, the raid disrupted this, showing no respect for the expected protocol of the court hearing. Instead, as Rehema said, her family were due to be taken that *"same day"*. The contrast between the expected court hearing sometime in the future and the sudden nature of both the raid and the rapid removal of Rehema's family later that day, points to the disorientating and frenzied nature of the tempos that can operate within the asylum system.

Rehema's words also highlight how the immigration raid has the effect of not only disrupting the present day but also putting an abrupt end to an expected future of legal proceedings and potential for her family to remain in the UK. The experience of the raid, in which the border agents suddenly burst into Rehema's mother's house, acts as a breach and sudden disruption that works to dramatically override and alter the family's temporal expectations of what is to come. Beyond this, Rehema commented on a further aspect of temporality that was brought up by the immigration raid, that of the past. As she described the period of time following her family's removal from the UK, Rehema explained how it had worked to transport her back into the past, saying,

"I think when my family were deported it made the things from Egypt real again. Like they were deported to that real situation. Like it actually still exists there, I just didn't think about it. And my mental health just went downhill from then. I wasn't able to go on buses or anything with many people around. Not be able to have a normal life, or just go to a shop because I needed milk"

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[2] Before studying for this PhD, I met a young woman from Cameroon, who had been seeking asylum for over a year and was worried that she was going to be removed. She explained that because of her fear each day of experiencing a dawn raid, she had set her alarm for 5am every day for a year, so that she would be awake if a raid ever occurred. Her experience shows how, even in the absence of a raid, the lives of asylum seekers can still be governed by the chance that they might occur.

Through Rehema's words, we see how the sudden and frantic actions of the immigration raid had lasting impacts beyond the deportation of her family. Before her family were deported back to Egypt, Rehema did not think much about the situation there. However, the removal of her family back into that situation served to make Rehema recognise how her experiences of the past still existed in the present and would now become a present reality for her family again. Through thinking about this, Rehema describes how her mental health *'went downhill'* and she was destabilised and unable to live a *'normal life'*.

Rehema's experiences point to the way in which her life and the lives of other asylum seekers can be governed through the manipulation of rushed and frenzied time in several ways. Firstly, the very existence of dawn immigration raids and their nature as events designed to shock asylum seekers when they are not expecting it, highlights how time can be manipulated within the asylum system to exert and maintain authority. The way that these raids may not run in line with the expected trajectory of events such an impending court case, only serves to make them more shocking. In addition to breaking into the stasis of waiting and tearing into the everyday temporality of an average day, immigration raids and their frenzied temporality can have a lasting impact, destabilising the sense of security an asylum seeker may have in their own home and carrying the threat that their future could be forever changed.

In the next section of this chapter, the analysis considers the aspect of 'future time' by exploring how young asylum seekers make sense of the future within a context that is shaped by the temporal tactics of immigration control. It also explores some of the ways in which young people employ their own strategies to work towards their future and counter the negative impacts of immigration control in their lives.

7.4. Future Time

Future (fyo͞oʹchər)

1. The indefinite time yet to come
2. (adj) at a later time; going or likely to happen or exist

The future refers to the temporality of what is to come and as future orientated beings, thinking about and planning for the future is a fundamental aspect of human experience (Adam 1994). In terms of time, the future is related most to social rather

than chronological time, being marked by emotions such as fear, hope and expectation. Whilst migration is most often associated with imagined futures of security and aspiration, in practice it is also related to the prospect of uncertain and insecure futures (Griffiths at al. 2013). For migrants who experience insecure immigration statuses this uncertainty can be particularly pronounced, as they wait on the decisions of the state that will act to determine their future in various ways.

Research with young asylum seekers has found that a sense of wellbeing is derived not only from a feeling of control in relation to the current and past aspects of their lives but also in relation to the future (see Chase 2013). For young people subject to immigration control, the process of thinking about and building a future has been found to involve a process of contested temporalities (see Allsopp et al. 2014). As this chapter has so far demonstrated, within the asylum process, time can be used as a tactic of state control, through strategies such as the use of chronological age markers and the concurrent rhythms of both stasis and frenzy. In relation to these different aspects, research with young asylum seekers has found that time is often perceived as something that is never on their side (Allsopp et al. 2014). This was the case for many of the participants in this research, who described a complex relationship towards the future, seeing it as being simultaneously characterised by anxiety and hope.

This section of the chapter explores these ideas, examining how the participants in this research viewed their futures and the ways in which their relationship with the future was mediated by the governance of time in the asylum process. Following recent studies exploring the futures of young people subject to immigration control, (see Allsopp et al. 2014), the analysis also seeks to highlight some of the ways in which young asylum seekers work to secure less precarious futures for themselves, exerting agency in different ways.

For some of the young people in this research, the pressures and uncertainty of the asylum process meant that they were no longer focused on the future and instead wished they could go back in time. This was the case for Safia, who had fled Georgia with her brother. She explained,

*"It's just the fact that I had to know so much when I was only 15, 16. Like I still wanted to be a little girl. Like **now** I want to be a little girl. If, if girls are 16,17 and think oh, they can't wait to grow up and they can have their own place and do*

*whatever they want to do. Like **no way**. I just want to be a little girl that doesn't care about so much. I want someone else to take care of me, like my parents. Coz it's really not nice when you haven't really seen much since you was little and all you have seen is your family suffering. (.) And then you just have to obviously as you growing, have to take, (2) take the control, like to help the family"*

Safia's words create the sense that her experience of the asylum process has placed her outside of the 'normal' trajectory of time, in which other young people tend to orient themselves towards their future. By contrasting her desire to *"be a little girl"* with the future-orientated ideas of others who, *"can't wait to grow up and they can have their own place and do whatever they want to do",* Safia positions herself outside of the way that other young people might relate to the future. Through this, Safia's words relate to the notion that time becomes suspended for asylum seekers as they experience a sense that they are 'not in time with others', since their experience of time is not like that of 'ordinary people' (Khosravi 2014).

As her narrative went on, Safia elaborated further, describing the sense that the future was not something she could think about, saying,

"I'm in the air. (.) I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. I can't make plans for tomorrow, (.) you, you just there, living for today. So today I had to meet you and then I have to meet my advocate and then I have to go to GP for my Mum and that's it. That's a day. And tomorrow it's another day"

Through Safia's words, *"I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. I can't make plans for tomorrow"* we see how in her life, the temporality of the future does not extend beyond each day. The uncertainty and unpredictability of the nature of time within the asylum process has created a sense that she is *"in the air"* and can only live one day at a time. Other research with young asylum seekers has found that the 'ontological security' required to orient one's life towards the future can be disrupted by the asylum process, which in its unpredictability, works to destabilise the self and limit young people's ability to sustain a biographical narrative (Giddens 1991; Chase 2013). For young people like Safia, the impact of the temporal confusion and control

within the asylum system can work to make the future seem unknowable and insecure.

Another participant Quraish, who came from Afghanistan with his brother, shared a similar experience of feeling as if he was outside of the 'ordinary experience' of time, saying,

"We have to wait for them to give us papers. I don't want to leave this place because my friends, my football, everything, my future, everything is going good here. Who don't want to stay here? I'm worried, I'm worried, if I will have to go back, I can't find my place where I'm going or anything. You can't be normal, you will have lost everything, football, your dreams. (.)"

Quraish, like many other young people within the asylum system, describes a sense of not being in 'normal' time as his future is uncertain. Since his future is unpredictable and he may be sent back to Afghanistan, he describes struggling to envisage his future, saying, *"I can't find my place where I'm going or anything"*. His words relate to the sense that being held in limbo means that planning for and thinking about the future can be something that is fraught with difficulty.

Whilst the majority of the participants in this research struggled to envisage and plan for the future, several described the ways that they had learnt to deal with the temporal tactics of immigration control by developing strategies of their own. Many of the participants explained how they sought to live lives which were as normal as possible, allowing them to keep 'in time' with their peers. Other young people, such as Melissa, used strategies such as keeping busy and focusing on the future as a way to lessen the uncertainty they faced. Melissa explained these strategies through describing what her advice to other young people in a similar situation to her would be.

"If you just stay in your room waiting for paper, its very hard. I always say to people – do something. Don't wait for the Home Office. Don't wait for the Home Office – we don't wait for the Home Office! Don't wait for the Home Office – you are wasting your time! Just do something. Stress is always there. Whatever you do. Stress is always there. But when you are engaged, doing something, then you can forget about paper, maybe for three or four hours. Easy. (.) And then when you go home, you say,

oh, oh no. But the next day, you have something to do. Your mind is not always there. It stop me thinking too much. You just keep busy. Tomorrow is another day… Whatever I am asked to participate in, I always say yes."

Melissa's words highlight how she employed her own strategies to deal with the temporal tactics of waiting enforced by immigration control. In her advice to her other young asylum seekers, she advocates keeping busy, which she suggests can help people forget about their asylum papers for several hours. Melissa's words link to other research with young asylum seekers, which has found that being involved in different school activities and charity projects can help mediate the effects of feeling as if time is suspended (Chase 2013). As Melissa's narrative continued, she explained how she saw no point in putting her life on hold because of the asylum system.

"H: Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish?

M: Home Office has its own way to work and everybody in the Home Office has their own way to work. It's just like individuals deciding other people's life. I think it depends on how they wake up in the morning and then they start making decisions on people's lives. Yeah, somebody can just be like – ooh that person, we will put them away. Oh I had a good night – they can stay. Home Office is Home Office. Waiting for your asylum reply is stressful, depressing process. Being there is very very hard. But to be on top of these things it's better. Being occupied. Going to school if you have a chance. Don't wait until you get your paper to start your life. You will waste a lot of time. If you wait for them to decide, you will be wasting your time. (.) I never, never dreamt I would go to uni. Never, when I was in my country, my parents we were poor. I never ever dreamt. But when I came here, I said oh my God, I can do anything! I can do it. If I can do it, everyone can do it!"

To Melissa, and many of the participants in this research, the actions of the Home Office appeared arbitrary and unpredictable, with asylum decisions being perceived to be determined by the individual whims of the staff on any given day. As previous sections of this chapter have highlighted, this unpredictability denies asylum seekers any capacity to anticipate or predict the actions of the Home Office, and therefore sustains their power. As Melissa explains, waiting for asylum decisions can be

stressful, depressing and "*very, very hard*". However, at the same time as feeling restricted by immigration control, Melissa describes the ways in which she has felt compelled to move forwards with her life, instead of *'wasting'* her time waiting for the Home Office.

Melissa describes how being *"on top of things"*, through being occupied and going to school are important ways to ensure that life under immigration control is not wasted. Her advice that people shouldn't "*wait until you get your papers to start your life"*, highlights the sense that time can be 'held back' by the asylum process and the normal experiences of moving towards the future can be disrupted. Melissa's comments about staying busy and focusing on her education, point to a way in which she can regain control over some aspects of her time, both in the present and, by equipping herself with more knowledge and skills, also in the future. This is best shown in Melissa's comment about going to university, something she would never have imagined possible before she came to the UK.

Within a context of immigration control that can serve to restrict and limit the lives of young people and their prospects for the future, Melissa demonstrates how she has been able to take measured steps towards her goals. Through this and her generally proactive attitude, she highlights how the temporal tactics of immigration control, which can work to limit and confuse young people, have been only partially successful in determining the nature of her daily life.

Melissa's experiences relate to recent studies which have shown that within the context of immigration control, young people "feel compelled to move on with their lives and not to go back", and therefore employ their own strategies to think and plan towards the futures they hope for (Allsopp et al 2014; 17). However, as Safia's and Quraish's narratives highlight, despite these agentic steps, the temporal forces of immigration control can make it difficult for young people to control and predict their futures. To bring this chapter to a close, the following section brings together the findings of this chapter in relation to these different tempos and temporalities.

7.5. Conclusion

The UK asylum system has been described as a context which enacts spatial violence through the use of certain spatial strategies which work to dominate and control (see Gill et al. 2011). These tactics might refer to locking asylum claimants up in detention

so that they are unseen and 'out of place', or dispersing them to live in places over which they have no control (Gill et al. 2011). As this chapter as shown, the strategies which help the UK state to maintain and reassert power over asylum seekers are not limited to space. Instead, through a range of temporal tactics, the precarious nature of the lives of young asylum seekers is governed and maintained.

In relation to the precarious nature of life, Judith Butler argues that precarity has become a hegemonic mode of being governed, where the precarious nature of certain lives is regulated and maintained (Butler 2015). She argues that through attempts to safeguard some people from the precarious nature of life, states work to position certain others as precarious and dangerous, thus legitimising the protection of the privileged. As Lorey proposes, these processes of othering create the conditions by which it becomes rational to police and discipline the 'abnormal' and 'alien' others who reside within and beyond the political and social community (Lorey 2015). This chapter has shown that within the asylum system, the manipulation and control of time can form a key aspect of this policing.

As the findings of this chapter have highlighted, through strategies such as the imposition of chronological age markers, the use of concurrent rhythms of stasis and frenzy and the way in which the protracted limbo of the asylum process renders the future unpredictable, the lives of young asylum seekers can be understood as being temporally governed in multiple ways.

By turning the lens onto one aspect of experience, this chapter has demonstrated how the precarious nature of life for asylum seekers is not only created by their insecure status as refugees, but also by strategies which govern and sustain this precarity. However, as this chapter has also shown, the governance of young people's precarity through time is not always fully successful, since young people can find their own ways of dealing with the strategies of the asylum system. Confirming the findings of previous research (see Allsopp et al. 2014), these strategies can range from taking steps to move forward in line with future plans or working to keep 'up' with the temporal rhythms of others. As the advice of one participant Melissa, already quoted in this chapter instructed, *"Don't wait until you get your paper to start your life"*.

To close this thesis, the next and final chapter will review the contribution it has made and discuss the ways in which its findings could feed into future research and policy related to the lives of young refugees and asylum seekers.

Chapter Eight: The Journey of This Thesis: Reflections, Findings and Future Directions

This has been a thesis focused on journeys. Through these pages, I have explored accounts of journeys travelled, alongside participants' stories of journeys that are still ongoing and uncertain. This chapter brings together the multiple journeys that have been embedded in this research, reflecting on the participants' journeys and what can be learnt from their stories. Beyond this, it also focuses my own personal journey as a researcher and the journeys of research questions, data and methods used. To provide a reflexive introduction to this final chapter, the first section *'The Research Journey'* brings together a series of brief reflections from the beginning, middle and end of the journey of this thesis. Whilst I did not take formal fieldnotes during the research process, the snapshots reflected on here draw on notes that were taken on my iPhone during the process of fieldwork and analysis. Following this, the second section of the chapter is where I move to critically reflect on the conceptual and methodological approaches that I adopted to enable me to answer the research questions. I then discuss the findings of this research and the original ways in which this thesis has contributed to academic knowledge, policy and practice. The chapter closes with Warsan Shire's poem 'Home' and a final comment on the journey(s) of this research.

8.1. The Research Journey

Journey

jour|ney, /ˈdʒɜːni/
1. n. An act of travelling from one place to another.
2. n. A distance to be travelled or the time required for a trip.
3. n. A long and often difficult process of personal change and development; a passage.

To begin this concluding chapter, I am going to follow the work of other researchers who have used the concept of journeys as a metaphor for the research process (see Mackenzie and Ling 2009; Lichtman 2010; 170-172, for examples). Some scholars such as McCulloch (2013) have queried the use of journey metaphors to describe doctoral studies, arguing that they provide an overly simplified image of doctoral research by implying "a known start and a known destination" and suggesting that "the terrain to be covered can be mapped out in advance" (2013; 55). However, since the chapters of this thesis have demonstrated that journeys can in fact be far more

complex than this, being made up of multiple starting points, unknown routes and destinations, it is my view that the metaphor of research as a journey provides an appropriate way to reflect on this thesis. Indeed, as the definition of journey above alludes to, journeys need not be simple processes of travelling from A to B, but instead can be understood more subjectively, as long and complex passages of change and development. As I have come to the final stages of this thesis, this way of thinking about the research process has seemed particularly pertinent. I will now move to discuss several snapshots from the journeying process.

8.1.1. Beginnings

As the discussions of this thesis and in particular, Chapter Five, have shown, the process of beginning a journey can be complex and multilayered, making the actual 'beginning point' often difficult to define. As I have reflected on the journey of this thesis, I have realised that the 'start' of my research journey can be thought of in a similar way, being divided into several different 'beginning points' that each related to particular aspects of the research.

In a practical sense, one could argue that this thesis officially began at the start of my ESRC funding, with the starting points of both my MSc and PhD study both providing particular markers in the early development of this project. However, whilst these markers did point to an official sort of beginning, it was not then that I felt as though this research journey had properly begun. Instead, the most significant sense of this research journey beginning came when I entered the field for the first time.

As I discussed in Chapter Four, the process of conducting this research began through a series of false starts, as I tried to negotiate access to the field but was met with both practical and ethical barriers. This process of negotiating access was long and complex and led me to eventually extend my focus beyond advocacy-based research towards school settings. It is for this reason that the strongest sense that I had of this research journey 'beginning' therefore occurred in the middle of my second year, when I had set up over 40 interviews with young refugees and realised that this research would now have a chance of beginning after all. As I entered the field and began to listen to the stories of the young people that I met, hearing about the

journeys that they had been on in the past and journeys that they were still travelling on, I began to see the potential for this thesis as a way of exploring these stories.

8.1.2. The Middle

To be able to conceptualise the middle of a journey, one must have some sort of awareness of the beginning and of the end. If the journey of this thesis most clearly began for me when I started the fieldwork, I see the ending as being the time when I will complete this thesis and take its findings forward. I have therefore conceived the middle of this research journey as the period when I had completed the fieldwork stage and had begun to analyse the participants' narrative accounts. This was one of the most challenging parts of the research journey for me, and it was characterised by a significant sense of emotional labour. As I reflected on in Chapter Four, when I heard participants' stories of trauma and uncertainty within the interview setting, I was able to focus on the participants and their accounts, without experiencing a sense of emotional labour. However, when I took these accounts outside of the research context and began to listen to them and transcribe their content in the context of my own home, I began to experience a sense of emotional heaviness.

As I reflect on the 'middle' of my research journey now, I recognise that the reason behind this sense of emotional heaviness was not solely due to the emotionally traumatic nature of many of the participants' stories. Instead, it also stemmed from concerns I had in relation to what I should now do with the stories that had been told. I felt a significant responsibility to steward the stories told in this research well but I did not feel as though I had a roadmap of what this would look like. My sense of uncertainty at this point was then compounded by the increased level of attention that was being given to the global migration of refugees, particularly into Europe. As I listened to the countless news reports, many of which traced the journeys of refugees and provided accounts of their experiences, I grappled with the question of how this research and its focus on refugee journeys and their stories, would provide a different perspective to the constant stream of the news cycle.

8.1.3. Endings

As I come to the end of the journey of this thesis and reflect on the process of conducting this research I am struck by how the ending of this journey can be thought of in a similar way to the beginning, in that it is made of several concurrent aspects. There is the ending of this thesis as a piece of academic work, requiring the process of refining my arguments and ensuring consistency of style and tone. On another level, there is the question of what lies ahead for the findings and arguments of this thesis, a question that I hope in some way to answer through the later discussions of this chapter. There is also the ending of this thesis in my own life and the question of how I might take this experience forward as I move to leave academic study and begin a career in policy work. However, as I consider these questions, I find myself being confronted more with the question of what lies ahead for the young people who have participated in this research.

As I focus on closing the chapter of this research in my own life, alongside the more literal closing up and finishing off of the chapters of this thesis, I am struck by the question of where each of the participants are at this point in their lives. I think about what journeys they are on and whether they have been able to experience any sense of an 'ending' to the uncertain process of seeking asylum that many of them were navigating. When I write these reflections in mid November 2015, these concerns seem particularly pertinent. Following the terrorist attacks that were conducted in Paris on the 13th November 2015, there is widespread speculation by both politicians and news organisations about whether one of the attackers moved through Europe as refugee. As I listen to these discussions, I wonder whether it will further shift the political debate about the migration of refugees to Europe towards one of securitisation, a phenomenon that I discussed in Chapter Two.

When I think back to the young people in this research, I wonder how the politics of security, forced migration and asylum will continue to shape the policies that impact their lives and their hope of finding sanctuary in the UK. I wonder whether as they reach the age 18, they will be able to remain in the UK or whether they will end up being deported back to the countries that they travelled from. Whilst I am unable to know how the participants' journeys will pan out, as I approach the end of this research journey, I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the ways in which the

young people shared aspects of their journeys with me, even when the endings of their journeys were and maybe still are, uncertain.

8.2. Critical Reflections: The Conceptual and Methodological Approach

In the following section of this chapter, I will discuss the contribution of this thesis and how I have addressed the research questions. However, before doing so, I will now spend some time critically reflecting on the research methods and conceptual approach which I employed to help me answer them.

8.2.1. Reflections on the Conceptual Approach

As I have discussed throughout the chapters of this thesis, this research was largely empirical in its approach and did not seek to develop or extend an existing area of theoretical concern. Despite this orientation, I worked with a range of concepts during the process of this research, weaving these through the analysis and using them to underpin my engagement with the findings. As I set out in Chapter Three, my conceptual approach was broad and eclectic, comprising sustained engagement with the central orienting concept of precarity and more specifically, the maximised precarity that young refugees can experience. Beyond this, I also engaged further with the concepts of materiality, mobility, spatiality and temporality where appropriate. Whilst an evaluation of this approach can be found at the end of Chapter Three, I want to draw again on some of these points here as part of my broader reflections on this thesis as a whole.

Stories lie at the heart of this thesis and each of the analysis chapters has sought to map out one area of the stories that the participants told about their lives, touching on their migration journeys and experiences of seeking asylum. The narrative accounts considered in Chapters Five, Six and Seven are therefore wide-ranging in their focus, touching on accounts of being uprooted, being in transit, being questioned about one's age or sexuality, being subjected to torture and experiencing dawn raids. The breadth of human experience contained in these pages has required me to bring to bear a wide range of concepts that have helped me to identify and draw out the common threads within the participants' narratives.

Whilst Chapters Five, Six and Seven are varied in their focus, they are brought together by their shared focus on maximised precarity and the ways in which they each illuminate particular aspects of the insecurity that the participants' described. In '*Frames of War*' and '*Precarious Life*', Judith Butler demonstrates how the concept of precarity can be traced through varied cases and contexts, focusing on issues such as indefinite detention of prisoners and the politics of torture photography. This thesis has worked to a similar model, by demonstrating both the overarching relevance of the concept of maximised precarity to the lives of young refugees and the specific ways in which aspects of their experiences can be particularly precarious.

Beyond my continuous engagement with precarity, my more eclectic conceptual approach has enabled me to work across the varied themes contained within the participants' narratives. This conceptual toolkit has allowed me to home in on particular aspects of participants' narratives where appropriate, allowing me to explore aspects such as their precarious mobility or the materiality of asylum letters and torture certificates. By employing this eclectic conceptual approach, I have been able to work across all of the participants' accounts and to draw attention to the multiple and varying ways in which they can experience insecurity.

The conceptual approach of this thesis has contributed to the field in several ways. Firstly, it has demonstrated the relevance of the concept of maximised precarity to the lives and journeys of young refugees and the ways in which engagement with this concept can help to illuminate the particular areas of insecurity that these young people can experience. More generally, the conceptual approach of this thesis has demonstrated that if analysis is focused on broad themes such as 'stories' and 'journeys', not employing a once-and-for-all theoretical concept across the participants' narratives can be an important way of ensuring that sensitivity to the particularity of their individual accounts is maintained. This thesis has therefore demonstrated the utility of adopting a more eclectic theoretical approach as a means to understand and home in on particular domains of participants' lives. I will now turn to critically reflect on my methodological approach.

8.2.2. Reflections on the Methodological Approach

The methodological approach of this thesis was centred on narrative, with the methodological emphasis on stories reflecting the overarching substantive focus of the thesis. In this section of the chapter, I will reflect on two areas of challenge that were related to the methodological approach to story.

8.2.2.1. The Analytical Challenge: Reflecting on 'Storied Lives'

As I discussed in Chapter Four, I used a threefold narrative framework to organise my approach to stories and the different layers of narrative in this research. This framework distinguished between the materiality of asylum stories, the use of story as a methodology and this thesis as a *'story of the stories'* concerning the ways in which the participants' narratives held a particular purchase as research data. Working across these different layers of story has posed a particular analytical challenge and one that I will briefly reflect on here.

A focus on stories has been at the heart of the research questions of this thesis, with a focus on stories told, comprising the overarching research question and a more specific focus on the functions of stories, forming the focus of one of the sub-questions. This research has therefore sought to work across multiple levels of the participants' storied lives, working with the stories told within the research context, whilst also seeking to understand something of the wider value of stories within the lives of young refugees. Through this thesis, I did not seek to provide a comprehensive study of the functions that narrative testimony plays for young people seeking asylum. Instead, I was more interested in young people's reflections on providing narrative testimony of their age or experiences, seeking to understand the ways in which they had negotiated the storied politics of asylum within their own lives.

The tension between holding an interest in the functions of stories within the asylum system, whilst only having access to participants' reflections on this context has meant that I have had to be tentative in the claims that I make surrounding the value of stories in the participants' lives. The discussions of Chapter Six have sought to achieve this balance, by engaging on one hand with the functions of both narrative and embodied testimony within the lives of the two participants, Ananjan and

Rehema, whilst also understanding that the findings of this chapter are based on *'stories told of stories told'* and can only be understood as reflections on the journeys of stories within the asylum context.

Working with different layers of story in this thesis has posed several analytical challenges and has forced me to be clear about what type of stories I am working with and the analytical claims that these accounts allow me to make. However, despite this challenge, the methodological and substantive focus on storied lives has facilitated the production of a volume of rich participant narrative accounts. Throughout the processes of data collection, transcription and analysis, I have been constantly been surprised by the participants' honesty and openness when talking about their lives and the journeys that they were currently on and had been on in the past. Understanding that 'stories matter' in the lives of the participants and that many of them had been previously called on to provide a storied account of their lives within the asylum system, only worked to deepen my sense of gratitude towards the ways in which the young people have also shared their stories in this research.

As a researcher, I have found that the methodological process of conducting 'storied research' with young refugees has particularly enabled me to be sensitive to the importance of stories in the participants' lives. Whilst previous research (Kohli 2009; Crawley 2009) has pointed to the storied politics of their lives, this thesis has been able to take this forward by attuning to the ways in which 'stories matter' to young people seeking asylum as they seek to prove their ages or need for protection.

8.2.2.2. *Limitations of the Methodological Approach and Future Directions*

When I first began this thesis, I envisaged that it would follow closely on from my Master's research, where I had used a range of participatory methods to research the experiences of a small group of young refugees. In seeking to extend my Master's research, I hoped to conduct a series of workshop sessions with a small group of young people seeking asylum, developing a wide range of creative ways to capture their stories. However, as I discussed in Chapter Four and earlier on in this chapter, the beginning of this research was marked with a significant amount of uncertainty over whether I would be able to gain access to conduct research with young people seeking asylum at all. In light of these concerns, I was forced to significantly alter my

planned research approach and to instead develop an interview-based approach that would be better suited to conducting research in a school based context. Since I had originally aimed to conduct more participatory and longitudinal research with young people, throughout the process of this research, I have been mindful of some of the limitations that have surrounded the single interview approach that I adopted.

Whilst I have spoken about some of the benefits of conducting single interviews, there are clearly limitations to this approach. Firstly, the process of only meeting and speaking to the young people on a single occasion restricts the level of trust that can be built up and therefore might have impacted the stories that were shared. Secondly, since English was the second or third language of all of the participants, the use of talk-based methods may have restricted the stories that the young people were able to communicate. Thirdly, since the subject matter of this research concerned significant and sprawling experiences in the young people's lives, such as their migration journeys or experiences seeking asylum, it could be argued that the richness and depth of these experiences may have been better captured through a multi-method and more longitudinal approach.

In light of these points, I would like to briefly suggest some future directions for research in this field, which would offer alternative ways to approach the journeys and stories of young refugees. One such possibility would be to set up a research project similar to my initial intended approach and to work closely with a smaller group of young people over several weeks and months. If access could be secured through a charity project, youth group or after-school club, such an approach might present a way to more fully explore what journeys mean to young refugees.

A further option for future research would be to employ digital storytelling methods, which may offer a different ways of accessing the stories of young people seeking asylum and their journey accounts. Since the current context of global displacement means that millions of young people, who are often unaccompanied, are on the move around the world, digital storytelling might represent an innovative way of mapping out the journeys of young refugees as they are experiencing them. Whilst such a research approach would carry significant ethical complexities, examples from the media, such the Guardian's award winning coverage of one refugee's migration journey (Guardian 2015) has shown that such an approach can be an interesting way to capture stories.

I will now turn to consider the ethical challenges posed by the methodological approach that I adopted in this research.

8.2.2.3. The Ethical Challenge: Reflecting on Boundaries

Beyond ethical considerations such as consent, anonymity and preventing harm, two further specific areas of ethical challenge have shaped this thesis.

One of the most important ethical considerations in this thesis has been the question of how to avoid the research interview mirroring the context of asylum interviews. As I touched on in Chapter Four, the research interview and interviews with caseworkers or social workers within the asylum context share certain similarities, since both are meetings with a stranger, who is interested in finding out more about a young person's experiences of becoming a refugee. However, the key difference between these two contexts lies in the nature of the sort of stories that they focus on.

Whilst the asylum context places the emphasis on garnering objective facts about young refugees' experiences, this thesis was less concerned with the objective reality of the participants' experiences, being instead oriented towards the subjective truth of how they saw, understood and communicated their own reality. This meant that when participants shared their experiences of being a particular age or travelling on a migration journey, I did not probe into the validity of their claims. It is not possible to know whether the participants related the experiences of sharing stories within the research context to occasions where they had been interviewed in the asylum context, however, their openness within the interview context, as demonstrated through their narrative accounts presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, suggests that they were comfortable at discussing aspects of their lives within this context.

Beyond the question of how to avoid mirroring the asylum context, one of the further ethical challenges of this thesis related to my concerns about conducting single interviews with young people, as discussed in Chapter Four. Within ethical discussions about conducting research with refugees, academics have written about the issue of 'stolen stories' and data grabbing, where refugees have participated in single interviews with a researcher and have felt as if their stories were 'stolen' as data (see Pittaway et al. 2010). Such discussions have particularly marked out

situations in which researchers only met participants once, listened to their stories and never met the participants again, as examples of ethically questionable practice. For this reason, as I embarked on this research and realised that it was only feasible to conduct single interviews with young people, I became anxious about the ethically sound nature of doing so.

Despite my concerns, as I entered the field and began conducting single interviews with participants, I began to see that conducting research in this way may not be ethically compromising and that it may even carry ethical benefits. For example, in the school-based interviews, I found that the restrictions of the school timetable were often useful in providing clear edges and temporal boundaries to the research conversation. Upon reflection, it seemed that rooting the research encounter in a specific and boundaried space and time may have carried benefits for the both the participants and myself as a researcher. The single nature of the research encounter appeared to create a space for a particularly open conversation, since participants were aware from the outset that they would only be meeting me once and that they could share whatever they wished within this single encounter. After the research interviews were completed, several young people remarked that they had appreciated to have the chance to share their thoughts with a complete stranger in this one-off encounter.

Furthermore, since many of the research conversations covered topics of trauma, loss and uncertainty, it seemed as though having clean boundaries to the research conversation was helpful. Many of the young people would discuss traumatic experiences within the research conversation, and whilst these discussions would be emotionally charged, when the school bell would ring, indicating the temporal boundary of our conversation, it seemed as though they were able to move on from the conversation almost instantaneously and carry on with the demands of the school day. As I later reflected on this, it seemed that whilst the research conversations were often spaces for a flow of emotional disclosures, by having clear temporal boundaries to the research conversation, the young people were able to develop a sense of 'containing' their emotive reflections within the temporally confined interview. It is not possible to know whether the young people were affected in the hours or days that followed are encounter and whether their emotions 'leaked' out beyond the confines of our conversation. However, the experience of this research suggests that the

process of conducting single interviews might not necessarily be ethically problematic and that there may even be benefits in doing so.

Discussions of the benefits of the boundaries of single interview are not new and have been a feature of sociological research on sensitive topics. Within this field, researchers such as Brannen (1988; 559) have advocated the benefits of conducting single interviews when researching potentially traumatic topics. Brannen argues that it is precisely the one-off nature of these interviews that enables the participant to build trust and facilitate disclosure with the interviewer, since there is little chance that their paths will cross again. Beyond this benefit, I think that conducting research through single interviews can also contribute to an ethics of care for researchers, since it can ensure that the boundaries of the research relationship are clearly defined and can also limit the sense of emotional responsibility that they may feel towards what participants share.

The ethical approach of this thesis has contributed to the field by extending knowledge about what ethics in practice might look like, both in terms of preventing harm to participants and protecting researchers' own wellbeing. This thesis has shown that single interviews do not have to be ethically problematic and may even carry ethical benefits for both researchers and participants. The fact that this conclusion provides a different and almost contradictory perspective to other researchers' warnings about conducting single interviews (see Pittaway et al. 2010) works to underline its significance and the importance of future research engagement with this issue.

I will now move to discuss the findings of this research in relation to the research questions.

8.3. What Did I Find Out?

In this section of the chapter, I will restate the research questions and provide a brief recap of the gaps in the literature that I sought to address. I will then move to discuss the findings of this thesis in relation to the three main components of the research questions: stories, journeys and time.

As stated at the end of Chapter Two, the research questions that formed the focus of this thesis were as follows:

What subjective accounts do young people narrate about their experiences of seeking asylum?

    a) How do migration journeys feature in the stories that young people tell?

    b) How does time feature in the stories that young people tell?

    c) What are the functions of stories for young people as they seek asylum?

Before moving to present the findings of this thesis, I will briefly discuss the rationale behind the research questions and their storied approach to young refugees' lives. As discussed in Chapters Two and Six in particular, stories matter in the lives of all refugees who seek asylum, with narrative testimony often being the basis on which asylum decisions are made. Refugees can be called upon to provide accounts of their lives that testify of the threats posed to them and the trauma and the violence that they might have experienced in the past. For some, these stories are stories of political persecution or war on a large scale. For others, they are more personal accounts of experiencing risk because of an element of their identity, such as their sexuality or religious belief.

      Whilst academics have previously discussed the storied politics of asylum processes and the central role that narrative plays in this context (see Sigona 2014; Shuman 2004 and Eastmond 2007), little attention has been paid to how refugees negotiate the landscape of storied politics. In terms of research with young refugees, scholars such as Heaven Crawley have explored how young refugees are called on to provide narrative accounts of their age within asylum systems. Ravi Kohli has also examined the storied politics of asylum systems from the perspective of social workers who work with the silences and stories of young refugees. However, despite these examples, there is a gap regarding research exploring how young refugees negotiate the functionality of narrative within their lives as they provide accounts of their age and experiences. This thesis has sought to fill this gap by providing a detailed and substantial study of the stories that young refugees tell about their lives, particularly in relation to the under-researched aspects of the functionality of their narrative testimony, their journeys and their experiences of time.

      Beyond a focus on story, the further themes of journeys and time were also chosen in relation to specific gaps in the literature. Whilst in many ways, the process of undertaking a journey is central to the experience of being a refugee, research with

refugees has generally focused on either end of the migration process, engaging with the reasons that lie behind an individual's exile or their experiences of settlement in a new host country. The little research that has been conducted on refugee journeys as a topic in its own right (see BenEzer 2005 for an example and BenEzer and Zetter 2015 for a review) has demonstrated that refugee journeys can be highly significant and powerful experiences for refugees, often remaining so throughout their lives. For these reasons, a focus on journeys was incorporated into the research questions of this thesis, creating space to engage with the stories that young people told about their migration journeys and their wider experiences of migrating and seeking asylum.

The final theme of time was also incorporated into the research questions in response to a specific gap in the literature. Within sociological research, migration has been generally understood as a spatial process, where time is only implicit. However, in recent years, researchers such as Melanie Griffiths (2013; 2014) and Saulo Cwerner (2001) have called for refugee research that recognises the temporal aspects of migration, paying attention to the concurrent rhythms that shape refugee journeys and the experience of seeking asylum. The few studies that have adopted a temporal perspective towards the study of being a young refugee have demonstrated the importance of developing an understanding of the role of time in young people's migration experiences, particularly in relation to how these young people think about and relate to their futures (see Allsopp et al. 2014). As I discuss below, this thesis developed this strand of emerging refugee research by exploring how time features in the stories that young refugees tell about their refugee journeys and their experiences of seeking asylum.

I will now move to explore the findings of this thesis, dividing these into three sections that relate to the focus of the research questions above.

8.3.1. Journeys Matter

This research and in particular, the discussions of Chapter Five, has demonstrated that journeys matter to young refugees and can be highly significant experiences in their lives. Furthermore, these discussions have demonstrated that if we are to better understand the experiences of young refugees, we must engage with their journey experiences. This general finding supports BenEzer and Zetter's claim that refugee journeys are often powerful experiences for refugees and that these journeys should

therefore be the focus of greater research attention. Beyond providing this support to BenEzer and Zetter's claims, this research has extended the field in several specific ways.

Firstly, the analysis has pointed to the ways in which young refugees can experience their journeys differently from adults. This distinction was particularly clear in relation to the young people's accounts of beginning their refugee journeys. As the participants' narratives demonstrated, whilst their older siblings, parents or other adults seemed to have time to anticipate and prepare for their journeys, the young people generally had very little warning or preparation time. The young people often described the process of beginning a refugee journey as a sudden and shocking experience of being uprooted. This distinction between how adults and young people experience refugee journeys and in particular the process of embarking on one, provides a clear rationale for studying young people's journey experiences as a research topic in its own right.

The discussions of Chapter Five pointed to the ways in which the journeys of young refugees can often be precarious, with their transit occurring in the shadows. The participants' accounts of their journeys and their dependence on migration smugglers or border agents demonstrates how risky refugee transit can be and raises questions of how the safe transit of young people might be better secured. The further findings of Chapter Five, in relation to the longer-term impact of refugee journeys on young people and how a sense of trauma can be carried from their journeys and into their experiences of seeking asylum through experiences such as dawn raids, further demonstrates the precarity that they experience. In addition, building on previous research by refugee researchers such as Allsopp et al. (2014), this thesis has also pointed to the multiple ways in which young refugees can seek to secure themselves in contexts of migration and seeking asylum by anchoring themselves with their religious faith or hopes for the future.

By focusing on the journeys of young refugees, this thesis has contributed to a significant gap in the field regarding how refugees experience their journeys and relate to these experiences later in their lives. Beyond this general contribution, this thesis has also shed light on the precarious nature of transit for young people as they migrate and the different ways in which they might seek to anchor themselves whilst being on the move.

8.3.2. Stories Matter: Narrating Mission Impossible

In his research interview, Ananjan described the power of stories within the asylum system, saying,

"Home Office people, they think they're, they're God. They like stories like Mission Impossible – Tom Cruise film, that kind of story they like. They want stories like of breaking prison and coming to this country and swimming. You know, like Mission Impossible? They like that kind of story for asylum, not like me, sad story. They don't like sad stories. (.) They like Tom Cruise stories. They want Mission Impossible. That kind of story like. They don't like stories like mine. Sad stories, they're like, no, no we need like action story"

Ananjan's words provide a sense of his perspective on the storied politics of the asylum process and the ways in which certain stories are seen to be more legitimate or appropriate to the wider narrative of seeking asylum than others. The discussions of Chapter Six pointed to this storied politics and through the reflections of Ananjan and a further participant, Rehema, they made clear how young people can experience the process of giving an account of themselves within the asylum context.

There are two key findings that I would like to draw from Chapter Six. The first point relates to the materiality of stories, and the ways in which both narrated or embodied stories can take on the status of objects, which can move out of the control of the young people themselves and become spoken for and assessed by others. The material nature of asylum testimony could also be seen in the ways in which the wounds of refugees, like Ananjan, become legitimised through papers and forms that are signed by expert witnesses such as doctors. In the case of Rehema, her narrative described how her sexuality was legitimised through the words of her previous sexual partners and their testimonies of their relationships with her.

Beyond the materiality of stories told, Chapter Six also pointed to the ways in which particular social and political frames can shape how the stories of young asylum seekers are viewed. As Judith Butler writes in *Frames of War*, "The point, however, will be to ask how such norms operate to produce certain subjects as 'recognisable' persons and to make others decidedly more difficult to recognise" (2010; 6) If we take this point and relate it to the findings of this thesis, we see how

certain norms can make it difficult for some young people to be recognised as legitimate refugees or indeed, as legitimate children. Whether these norms relate to the construction of childhood or to the ways in which certain groups are constructed as 'terrorists', this thesis has demonstrated the various ways through which norms around aspects of identity such as childhood and sexuality shape which stories are believed and which are seen to be illegitimate.

8.3.3. Time Matters

The findings of this thesis have demonstrated that migration is not only a spatial process but can be experienced and related to through time. This point supports the arguments and findings of previous research such as Griffiths (2013), Cwerner (2001) and Allsopp et al. (2014) and extends the field in various ways. Firstly, the discussions of Chapter Five have pointed to the centrality of time in how journeys are made sense of and experienced. Time featured heavily within the participants' journey accounts of being uprooted and in transit, as they described experiences of time slowing down or speeding up.

Beyond the participants' journeys, the centrality of time in relation to young people's experiences of migration and seeking asylum can also be seen in Chapter Seven, where the precarity of young refugees was demonstrated through a variety of temporal aspects. Through the participants' narrative accounts, we have seen how they can be exposed to a variety of different rhythms, such as stasis or acceleration as they seek asylum. The participants' stories also told of the process of having their ages disputed, a process that worked to place them outside of the temporality of childhood and led them to be defined as adults. The findings of Chapter Seven extend previous work with young asylum seekers (see Allsopp et al. 2014; Chase 2013), by demonstrating the ways in which young refugees can help to secure themselves by looking towards the future and resisting some of the temporal stagnancy of the asylum process.

I will now move to discuss why the findings of this thesis matter and one of the key ways through which they can be used to inform policy and practice relating to the lives of young refugees.

8.4. Moving Forwards: Why the Findings of this Thesis Matter

During the three-year period of working on this thesis, the experiences of refugees as they migrate has risen up the political agenda, with refugee journeys becoming the focus of countless television news reports and newspaper editorials. By providing an in-depth and detailed examination of the stories that young refugees tell about their experiences of migration and seeking asylum, this thesis has sought to provide a different perspective on the refugee stories, which have become a recurring feature within the news cycle. One of the key ways in which this thesis has sought to achieve this has been by not only focusing on the migration journeys of refugees, but by also paying close attention to their longer-term experiences as they seek asylum.

By focusing on the experiences of young refugees as they have left their homes, travelled on migration journeys and sought asylum in the UK, this thesis has been able to demonstrate the multiple aspects of sustained precarity that young refugees can become exposed to. From the analysis of this thesis, it is clear that the maximised precarity of young refugees' lives can be experienced across multiple scales, spanning the broad scales of the nation right down to the intimate spaces of the family. For some young people, such as Meraj, whose experiences of rupture were discussed in Chapter Five, experiences of everyday violence and insecurity can be so familiar that they become normalised as a routine and inescapable part of their daily experiences.

This thesis has shown how young refugees can experience considerable trauma within their country of origin, being exposed to personal violence and terror during their migration journeys as they travel to seek protection elsewhere. In addition, it is clear that the trauma and uncertainty that young refugees experience can be compounded by their experiences of seeking asylum, where they might find their age to be disputed or their story disbelieved, or they can be exposed to traumatic and sudden events such as dawn immigration raids. These experiences can cause significant anxiety for young refugees and as several of the participants' in this research described, they can experience isolation and prolonged anxiety as they seek to deal with these experiences of everyday violence and precarity on their own.

Experiences of maximised precarity formed the focus of the majority of participant narratives in this research, and participants described how they often found it difficult to confide in their peers, teachers or family members. However, many of

these same participants who described some of the most extreme experiences of insecurity, also mentioned the significance and impact of being supported by an independent advocate. As I set out in Chapter Four, six young people in this research were receiving the support of an independent advocate through a local charity, who provided them with guidance and support as they negotiated their asylum claim. Half of these young people were seeking asylum alone and half were doing so with their parents. For all of these six young people, their independent advocates were described to play a powerful role in helping to mitigate some of the anxiety and insecurity that the young people experienced. These advocates were described as offering both pastoral support and also practical help, often accompanying the young people to meetings with teachers, solicitors, social workers and GPs and ensuring that their views were heard in these contexts.

The young people who received this advocacy support spoke highly of the support they received. One participant, Safia, spoke about the support of her advocate, mentioning how they had helped her with some problems that she was having at school, speaking to teachers on her behalf. Another participant, Meraj, said,

"She (the advocate) help me with many things. From the beginning. She make me to feel safe. Like she try to help me, to take me outside and like, to talk to me. To make me just feel safe. Like nobody will hit me."

Melissa, echoed Meraj's views, saying,

"She is an advocate. She helps me to solve my problems if I have one. With my education, paper, with everything. She speak on my behalf. If I want something, I just tell her."

As I heard participants like Safia, Meraj and Melissa describe the important role that their advocate played in their lives, helping them to solve problems and acting as a liaison between the young person and their teachers, social workers or foster parents, I began to recognise the significant role that independent advocates can play in the lives of young people seeking asylum. Currently, separated young refugees are entitled to the independent advocacy provision that is available to all children in care. Beyond this, the UK government is currently trialling the role of specialist advocates for

trafficked children (Home Office 2014). However, despite these specialist circumstances, young people who are seeking asylum with their families or a guardian are not currently entitled to similar provision. As the Children's Commissioner for England has found, children only have an entitlement to advocacy in very limited circumstances that depend on their health and their care status. In addition to this, studies have found that even for those children who are entitled to advocacy provision, a postcode lottery determines both the access to and quality of provision available (Children's Commissioner for England 2011; Migrant Children's Project 2012).

The findings of this research demonstrate the multiple layers of maximised precarity that young refugees can experience. After fleeing traumatic experiences in their home countries and embarking on risky journeys, these young people can become exposed to an asylum system that can serve to render their daily lives unpredictable and their futures uncertain. It is clear that for young people like Safia, Melissa and Meraj, whose experiences of anxiety, trauma, loss and violence have been detailed in this thesis, the support of an independent advocate can provide guidance and support as they negotiate their asylum claims, ensuring that their voices are heard by teachers, social workers and other professionals.

As I have mentioned, in this research it was not only those young people who were seeking asylum alone who received the support of an independent advocate. Instead, for young people who were seeking asylum with their families, such as Meraj, Safia and Adam, the important role that an independent advocate played in their lives was also clear. The findings of this research therefore suggest that the support of an independent advocate can provide an anchoring to *all* young people seeking asylum, helping them to experience a sense of security and support within the uncertain context of waiting for the outcome of their own or their families' claim. It is therefore the recommendation of this thesis that statutory independent advocacy support should be extended and provided to all young people-seeking asylum in the UK. Whilst a climate of spending cuts makes any extension of this provision unlikely, this thesis echoes the findings of other reports (such as Children's Society 2012; Migrant Children's Project 2012) by demonstrating the value of advocacy to young people seeking asylum and makes a case for considering how all the young people who navigate this complex and often hostile system might be better supported.

8.5. Closing Comment

As I commented when I opened this chapter, this thesis has been one that has focused on journeys, tracing the passage of both journeys travelled and journeys that are currently ongoing. As I close this thesis, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the young people involved in this research for the ways in which they have shared their stories and their journeys with me. It is my hope that whatever journeys they currently find themselves on, that they will be able to experience some sense of safety, security and rootedness now and in the future.

I want to close this chapter and thesis as a whole with Warsan Shire's poem, Home. Shire's poem provides an appropriate end to this thesis by describing similar experiences to those of the participants' accounts that have filled these pages. Across the verses of her poem, Shire describes the process of fleeing one's home, embarking on a long and dangerous journey and meeting a hostile reception as an asylum seeker. In closing this thesis, Shire's poem provides a stark reminder of the desperation and urgency that can surround the process of becoming a refugee and seeking asylum, explaining how "no one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark".

Home
By Warsan Shire (2011)

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark

you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well
your neighbors running faster than you
breath bloody in their throats
the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory
is holding a gun bigger than his body
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you
fire under feet
hot blood in your belly

it's not something you ever thought of doing
until the blade burnt threats into
your neck
and even then you carried the anthem under
your breath
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilets
sobbing as each mouthful of paper
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.

you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land

no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.

no one crawls under fences
no one wants to be beaten
pitied

no one chooses refugee camps
or strip searches where your
body is left aching
or prison,
because prison is safer
than a city of fire
and one prison guard
in the night
is better than a truckload
of men who look like your father

no one could take it

no one could stomach it
no one skin would be tough enough

the
go home blacks
refugees
dirty immigrants
asylum seekers
sucking our country dry
niggers with their hands out
they smell strange
savage
messed up their country and now they want
to mess ours up
how do the words
the dirty looks
roll off your backs
maybe because the blow is softer
than a limb torn off

or the words are more tender
than fourteen men between
your legs
or the insults are easier
to swallow
than rubble
than bone
than your child body
in pieces.
i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you
to quicken your legs
leave your clothes behind
crawl through the desert

wade through the oceans
drown
save
be hunger
beg
forget pride
your survival is more important

no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear
saying-
leave,
run away from me now
i dont know what i've become
but i know that anywhere
is safer than here

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Whilst I did not conduct structured interviews, I used the following pointers and open questions as a question bank to start the research interviews and guide conversation where necessary.

- **About You:**
- Name,
- Age,
- Family
- Favourite things.
- Where you're from
- How long in this school/country
- Spare time? Hobbies

- **Journeys (Transition to the UK):**
- Could you tell me a bit about where you are from? What was it like to live there?
- Favourite bits, difficult bits. Same or different to here?
- Can you describe an important holiday/festival?
- How old were you when you came to the UK? Could you tell me what happened when you first arrived here?
- Can you tell me a bit about your journey to the UK? Who did you come with? How did you feel?
- What was it like when you arrived here?

- **School (Transition to School)**
- Could you tell me about a typical day at school?
- How long have you been in this school?
- What are your favourite parts? Worst parts/subjects?
- What is it like to be a pupil here?
- Can you tell me about how you made friends?
- What is it like to move here?
- Could you tell me about what it is like to come this school for the first time?

- **Transition to Adulthood**
- Could you tell me how you feel about becoming an adult? When do you think you become an adult and stop being a child?
- What is the difference between being an adult/child?
- How do you define yourself?

- **Home & Belonging**
- When I say 'home' what place do you think of?
- What places are important to you? Where do you like to be?
- Could you tell me about living in Cardiff? What is it like to live here? Is it the same or different to where you lived before?
- Feel Welsh/Somali etc

- How do you define yourself?
- What makes you feel safe?

Past
- Do you think about the past much?
- How have you changed from the past?

Present
- Could you tell me about some the best things in your life now?
- What would you like to change, be different, stay the same?
- Favourite things to do? Places to go?
- Could you tell me about some of the challenges?
- What is important to you?

Future
- Could you tell me about your hopes for the future?
- What do you hope to be/do/live/see?
- How do you feel about the future? Excited? Worried?

- **Favourite Things**
- What are some of your favourite things to do?
- Do you do the same things here as back in…?

- **Favourite Places**
- Where do you like to go?
- If you could travel anywhere where would you go and why?
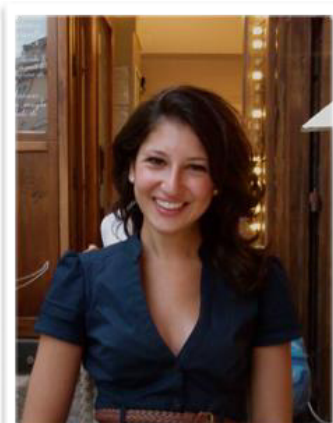- Is there anywhere you don't like to go?

Appendix 2: Information Sheet and Consent Form

Please note: The full information sheet and consent form are on the following two pages.
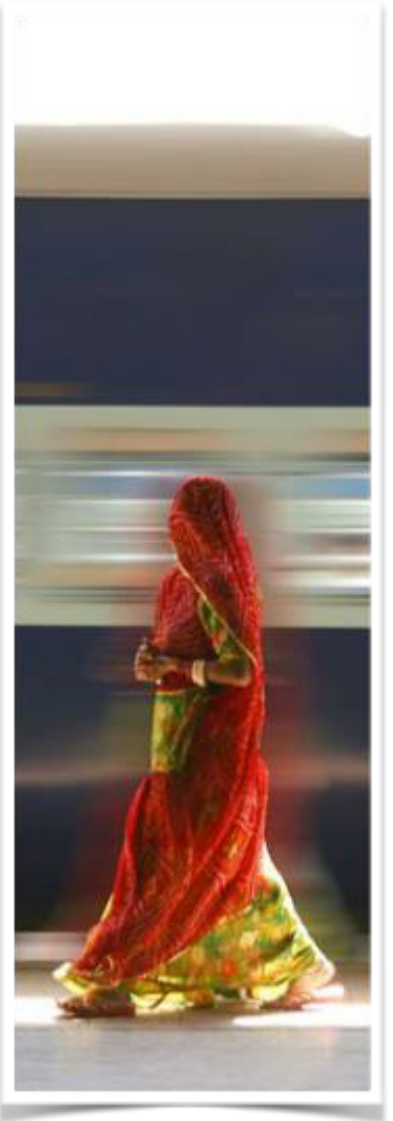
CROSSING BORDERS

Research Project with Cardiff University

Research Activity Project with Hannah Iqbal from Cardiff University. A place to share your views and experiences and take part in a range of activities such as writing, drawing and photography. Speak to your teacher or someone from EMTAS if you would like to be involved.

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CROSSING BORDERS

Research Project with Cardiff University

What is your name?

....

How old are you?

....

What do you like to be called?

....

I agree to take part in the 'Crossing Borders' Project

I have read and understood the information leaflet and know what the project is about and how I can be involved

I know that some of the activities will let Hannah know more about my life.

I know that I do not have to be part of all or any of the activities mentioned.

I will decide what I want to share with others and what I want to be recorded.

I can decide to stop the project at any time.

I know that if I say something that suggests either myself or someone is in danger then my teacher may have to be t

Signed ....

Date..

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