

**PRACTICES OF ALLIANCE AND SOLIDARITY
WITH ASYLUM SEEKING AND REFUGEE
WOMEN – A CASE STUDY**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
Manchester Metropolitan University for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

Hannah Berry

2013

Education and Social Research Institute

Contents

List of tables	5
List of abbreviations	6
Abstract	8
Acknowledgements	9
1. Introduction	10
- What is the third sector?	11
- Choosing a research topic	12
- GAP Unit – present	17
- GAP Unit – history	18
- The Arise and Shine project	21
- Thesis structure	24
2. Questions of methodology	25
- The basic research design	26
- Action research – a quick aside	28
- Theoretical approach	30
- Interviews with Arise and Shine participants	33
- Transcription and interpretation	36
- Paulo Freire, standpoint, objectivity and the ‘new paradigm knowledge’	39
- ‘Race’ and ‘difference’	45
- Race as ‘othering’ or claimed?	46
- Nation ≠ culture	50
- Identity and terminology	52
- Research ethics	54
3. Arise and Shine - action and outcomes	58
- PHASE 1: Workshops w/ migrant women’s groups	65
- PHASE 1: Migrant women’s gathering	73
- PHASE 2: ‘The Campaign’	78
- PHASE 3: Arise, Shine and Educate!	83
- PHASE 3: Second migrant women’s gathering	88
- Empowerment through Arise and Shine	89
4. Associational activity	92
- Motivations for involvement	95
- Factors influencing associational activity	98
- Why join the Arise and Shine ‘campaign group’? ...	103
- Summary	106
5. Getting political	108
- “Our views – are they fed in?”	109
- The role of community development	111
- Focus on women	113
- Dis/empowering practice within RSIs	114
- MRSN / Manchester Refugee and Migrants Forum	118
- The SRF.....	121
- Universities and refugee empowerment	124
- Reflections on CD, advocacy and ‘participation’	125
- Other forms of politics and resistance	126
- Anti-deportation campaigns	129
- Lydia and Bernard Must Stay	131
- Summary	133

6. Theatre-based advocacy	134
- Taking to the stage	136
- The story	139
- The audience	143
- What does the play achieve?	145
- Further considerations	150
- Impact on other asylum seekers	152
- Benefits to the participants	153
- A need for caution	155
- Room for improvement	156
- Summary	159
7. Women-only working	160
- Arise and Shine as group for mutual support	163
- Telling stories	164
- Organisational ethos	166
- Multi-cultural groups	167
- Women only	173
- Gender-related pressures on women asylum seekers and refugees	176
- What women's groups can achieve	182
- So what about men?	185
- Frequency of activities, and costs	188
- Reimbursing expenses	189
- Seeking and responding to feedback	190
- Risks and challenges	192
- Continuity of involvement	193
8. Conclusions	197
- Core debates and methodologies	198
- Key findings	201
1. Benefits of awareness raising.....	201
2. Other forms of advocacy and engagement	203
3. The importance of women's multi-cultural groups	206
4. Empowering practice	208
<i>Practical considerations</i>	208
<i>Group work recommendations</i>	208
- Qualifications	209
- Enduring preoccupations.....	210
- Areas for future research	212
- Concluding remarks	213
Postscript	215
References	230
Appendix 1. Table 2.	251
Appendix 2. People who seek asylum and their trajectories of involvement	256
- Support-orientated RSIs	260
- RCOs	263
- Refugee forums and networks	265
- Solidarity groups	266
- Bringing the sector together	268
- Faith groups	269

- Volunteering	273	
Appendix 3. More about WAST		275
- The link with solidarity activism	276	
Appendix 4. More on anti-deportation campaigning and resistance		278
- Radical migration politics	280	
Appendix 5. Arise and Shine recommendations and feedback		286

List of tables

<u>Table 1.</u> Project details and timeline p.22
<u>Table 2.</u> Empowerment and disempowerment p.251
<u>Table 3.</u> Results of vote on Phase 2. campaign target p.81
<u>Table 4.</u> Associational activities of ten Arise and Shine members p.92
<u>Table 5.</u> Benefits of involvement in groups p.96
<u>Table 6.</u> Services user opinions on Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum p.123
<u>Table 7.</u> Arise and Shine women's definitions of empowerment p.188
<u>Table 8.</u> Reasons commonly given by refugees/asylum seekers for volunteering outside the refugee sector p.274

List of abbreviations

ACE Centre - Arts, Culture and Enterprise Centre	GMCVO - Greater Manchester Council for Voluntary Organisations
ALAC - Active Learning for Active Citizenship	GMI AU - Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit
APPG – All-Party Parliamentary Group	GONW – Government Office North West
ASHA - Asylum Support Housing Advice	HO – Home Office
BBC – British Broadcasting Company	ICAR - Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees
BME – Black and Minority Ethnic	IRC - Immigration Removal Centre
BTEC - Business and Technology Education Council	JCWI - Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
CAB - Citizens Advice Bureau	LCC - Liverpool City Council -
CAEC - Community Audit and Evaluation Centre	LGBTQ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning
CAN - Community Arts Northwest	LINK - Local Involvement Network
CAP - Church Action on Poverty	LISG - Lesbian Immigration Support Group
CASE - Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering	LSP - Local Strategic Partnership
CBC - Capacity Building Cluster	MAC – Migration Advisory Committee
CCC Contemporary Cultural Centre	MARIM - Multi Agency for Refugee Integration in Manchester
CD – Community development / Compact disk	MCA - Membership Categorisation Analysis
CEN - Community Empowerment Network	MCC - Manchester City Council
CoS – City of Sanctuary	MCDAS - Manchester Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers
CIC - Community Interest Company	MfJ – Movement for Justice
CN4M - Community Network for Manchester	MMU - Manchester Metropolitan University
CoE - Church of England	MP - Member of Parliament
CVS - Council for Voluntary Service	MRSN - Manchester Refugee Support Network
DCLG - Department for Communities and Local Government	MSc – Master of Science
DoS - Director of Studies	MSP - Member of the Scottish Parliament
DRC - Democratic Republic of Congo	MWN - Manchester Women’s Network
DVD - Digital Versatile Disc	NAM - New Asylum Model
EDL - English Defence League	NASS - National Asylum Support Service
EOC - Equal Opportunities Commission	NCADC - National Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers
ESF - European Social Fund	NEP - National Empowerment Partnership
ESOL - English as a Second Language	NHS - National Health Service
ESRC – Ec. & Social Research Council	NI – National Insurance // National Indicator
EU - European Union	NGO - Non-governmental organisation
(F)PAR – (Feminist) Participatory Action Research	
GED - Gender Equality Duty	
GEM - Gender and Engagement in Mcr	

NOII - No One Is Illegal
NSC – Network for Social Change
NW - North West
NWTWC - North West Together We Can
OCS - Office for Civil Society
PEN - Poets, Essayists, Novelists
PhD – Doctor of Philosophy
Q&A - Question and Answer
QUARN - Quaker Asylum and Refugee
Network
RAA - Regional Asylum Activism
RAPAR - Refugee and Asylum
Participatory Action Research
RCO - Refugee Community Organisation
RMU - Refugee Mothers United
RSI - Refugee Specific Initiative
RtS - Routes to Solidarity
RWSG - Refugee Women’s Strategy Group
SCNC - South Cameroon National
Congress
SMLC - South Manchester Law Centre
SoP - School of Participation
SRC – Scottish Refugee Council
SRF - Salford Forum for Refugees and
People Seeking Asylum
TSRC - Third Sector Research Centre
UfC - United for Change
UK - United Kingdom
UKBA - United Kingdom Border Agency
UKPP - UK Poverty Programme
UN - United Nations
USA - United States of America
VAW - Violence Against Women
VCS - Voluntary and Community Sector
WAST - Women Asylum Seekers Together
WEA - Workers Educational Association,
WISP - Women’s Integration and Support
Project
ZIWO - Zimbabwe Women’s Organisation

Abstract

This thesis is the product of four years of participation in a community project created for and with women who were at different stages of seeking a legal right to reside in the UK. It presents the elements of practice and organisational ethos which, through discussion, reflection and interviews with participants, were determined as valuable ways of countering the debilitating effects of misrecognition by the state and endemic racial prejudice. It considers, too, the problems, dilemmas and tensions which arose as we sought to be effective allies across multiple lines of difference, and to produce a research account of the experience.

Beginning in 2009, and spanning the change of government a year later, the ‘Arise and Shine’ project was funded through the National Empowerment Partnership (NEP), a New Labour initiative which facilitated ‘empowerment’ activities across nine English regions between 2007 and 2011. Drawing on popular education methodology, Arise and Shine aimed to work against the barrage of hurts which so often attend the asylum process, by creating space for mutual support and collective action (including awareness raising through applied theatre workshops, and giving talks in schools). The case study of the project was made possible by an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) programme enabling practice-based research on - and for - the third sector.

The thesis is written from my perspective as community worker, pro-migrant activist and PhD student. It foregrounds the experiences, insights and the demands of the women for an asylum system which is not stacked against them in its decision making, or in the conditions imposed on them as they wait for the outcome of their claims. While the case study of Arise and Shine occupies centre stage, the range of networks of services and ally groups and organisations which sustained the women and aided their integration, including their own self-initiated groups, are also considered. Running through the thesis are my reflections on political, ethical and theoretical issues surfaced by the work, which I interrogate using resources from a diverse literature centred on feminist, anti-oppressive approaches, as well as activist praxis.

Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to thank the ESRC and Taking Part Capacity Building Cluster for the opportunity to undertake this Studentship. Above all I am grateful to Carol Packham for her generosity and support for both me and GAP Unit since the very beginning; Carolina de Oteyza for being a great friend and mentor who has taught me all I know about popular education and participatory working and is always ‘at my back’; and Erica Burman for opening many doors into new worlds of knowledge and making me feel welcome there. I am indebted to all three of them and also to Barbara Biglia, Harriet Rowley, Ian Parker, Katja Stuerzenhofecker, Rachel Robbins and Sarah Irving for helping me get started and/or get through the finishing stages unscathed!

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the courageous, inspiring women who shared their time and thoughts with me over the course of this project: Chenai, Elinah, Lydia, M, Maria, Mavis, Naila, Rut, Sofia and Tendayi, as well as the others who took part in different ways: Agnes, Amal, Angie, Florence, Gugulethu, Kanene, Khumbalani, Naima, Megnon, Meseret, Rudo, Saba, Sandaya, Susan and Sarah, from whom I learned so much. It feels strange not to be able to put all of your surnames here, a reminder that things are still not equal.

To my friends, who cheered me up and on, especially Anna Seward, Becky Horn, Camille Warren, Cath Bann, Eleanor Bullen, Hummera Aamir, Jonathan Atkinson, Ruth Morrello, Ruth Rosselson, Salvador Pueyo, Sarah Irving and Ursula Rothe: thanks for being there throughout and waiting for me! For important conversations which truly shaped my thinking I would particularly like to thank Anat Greenstein, China Mills, Green Nyoni, Gwyneth Lonergan, Jemma Tosh, Lauren Wroe, Lorraine Pannett, Sonia Soans, Surya Nayak, Vicky Marsh and Yasmin Yaqub, and James Thorne for the chats on the move.

I want to thank Molly McClure for being the original inspiration and Alexandra Zavos, Barbara Biglia, Ilana Mountian and Jude Clark for their friendship over time and distance. Their apparent assumption that I shared a fraction of their theoretical knowledge of feminism is what gave me the incentive to try! Much gratitude, lastly, to Susanne Hofmann for all the love and shared adventures in ideas and in life ☺ and to the rest of my family: Toni and Alan, Adam and Jo, Gabriel and Shabnam for their unfailing and greatly treasured love and nurturance. I dedicate the thesis to my niece, Naima, nephew, Finn and my equally wonderful g/Godchildren Raven, Marley, Abdullah, Obaid, Olamide and Orla, in case they are ever curious to know what I was getting up to all that time.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis presents an analysis of a three-year collaboration between a community organisation and a group of women who were refugees or in the process of seeking asylum in Britain. ‘Arise and Shine’ was a self-advocacy project which ran from 2009-11, coordinated by GAP Unit, a small, not-for-profit organisation in Manchester. New Labour was in office for most of this period, its policies forming the backdrop to the work.

Asylum seekers, who had previously been concentrated in London and near the main ports of entry in the South East of England, began in 1999 to be ‘dispersed’ further afield to areas including the North West. From that date, the asylum regime also became increasingly tough on applicants, with the removal of rights to work for money, introduction of refusal targets, and the acceleration of destitution, detention and deportation for those denied refugee status in a flawed and biased assessment process. The government also contributed to the representation of asylum seekers as a burden on society, portraying asylum as a favoured route for would-be economic migrants attempting to dodge immigration restrictions. This created a mood of hostility and intolerance which translated into experiences of rejection, discrimination and danger for people in real need of a safe haven. At the same time, New Labour nurtured third sector organisations like GAP Unit which specialised in participatory methods for empowering marginalised groups to ‘have a voice’ within local democratic processes, and supported initiatives aimed at greater intercultural co-operation and understanding. The Arise and Shine project therefore occupied an ironic space between two sets of government policies, one trying to help refugees to feel integrated and engaged in society and the other trying to prevent asylum seekers from pursuing their claims by making life so difficult and precarious that they would give up and return to where they came from, their stories acting as a deterrent to others.

The role of GAP Unit is foregrounded in this study because of my location as a PhD student in a ‘research cluster’ concerned with practice-based learning for the third sector. It is the product of one of seven CASE Studentships (which typically see a student ‘embedded’ within an organisation) commissioned by the three collaborating universities of the Taking Part? Capacity Building Cluster (CBC), one of three research clusters allied to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Third Sector Research Centre

(TSRC). The cluster's coordinating academics¹ were all involved in the national Take Part Network, a New Labour initiative financed initially (as Active Learning for Active Citizenship – ALAC) by the Home Office (HO) and subsequently by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Although Take Part is no longer supported by national government, work continues under its name by local, regional and national third sector organisations which share a common aim of “strengthening civil society by promoting active citizenship, equalities and community empowerment”, with an emphasis on “enabling the voices of the most disadvantaged groups to be heard” (ESRC 2010).

What is the third sector?

The TSRC defines the third sector as “all organisations operating outside the formal state or public sphere that are not trading commercially for a profit in the market. This means charities and voluntary organisations, community groups, social enterprises, co-operatives and mutuals” (2010). Roughly synonymous with ‘voluntary and community sector’ (VCS) and ‘civic sector’, it includes organisations across all social activities, from support for the arts, sports clubs and faith organisations to housing associations and medical research charities. Despite this diversity, an ethic of care and voluntarism, derived from secular or religious beliefs, is common to much of the third sector. It was New Labour's preferred umbrella term for non-governmental organisations seen as “value driven” (TSRC, 2010), in other words “motivated to further social, environment or cultural purposes and not primarily driven to make a profit” (Kelly, 2007: 1006). Some commentators see New Labour's enthusiasm for the third sector as lying primarily in its desire to draw philanthropic organisations into the marketplace as an alternative (cheaper) means of providing public services. Others focus on the commonalities of purpose between the third sector and New Labour, many of whose ministers came of age politically through involvement in social action, had strong ties with senior figures and leaders within the sector, and were personally invested in at least the rhetoric of social justice. The current Conservative-led government, which is keen on social needs being met through unfunded, voluntaristic action, and not keen on the professionalised VCS with its infrastructure and networks, quickly rebranded the ‘Office for the Third Sector’ the ‘Office for Civil Society’ (OCS). Its continued failure to clarify whether by ‘civil society’ it understands a set of organisations or a way of relating is symptomatic of its apparent desire to leave the different subsectors and interest groups to fend for themselves (Alcock 2010). Although a

¹ From Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), Goldsmiths (London) and the University of Lincoln.

definable third sector exists, people and ideas circulate between political and social movements, the third sector, the private sector and the state, blurring the boundaries, as this thesis will show. In its capacity to circulate and blur, one ideology is pre-eminent in all its complexity: neoliberalism. As individuals we are all increasingly influenced at a subjective level by the rationalities of neoliberalism (Hall et al, 2013: 13), while neoliberal policies, in line with global trends², have been actively promoted in all social arenas by British governments for three decades. This market-focussed, professionalising, individualising ideology has thus come to pervade the third sector along with the others. A brief history of the GAP Unit will illustrate the cross-sectoral entanglements which characterised the third sector during the New Labour period, and the implications of this. However, I will first outline the context in which I embarked on this research, and describe the present configuration of the organisation.

Choosing a research topic

I had control over most parameters of my research setting. GAP Unit's co-director, Carolina de Oteyza, was my official mentor for the studentship, in what was really a continuation and formalisation of our existing working relationship. I had helped to found the organisation so I was operating within a familiar culture, albeit one in which I was continually learning from colleagues and participants and through the demands of different projects. I chose a case study of Arise and Shine from a list of possible topics relating to GAP Unit. As initially conceived, this project had been completed and the grant report submitted to the funders by the time I was awarded the studentship, but we were looking for continuation funds, since participants had expressed interest in further collaboration. Having used the first stage to identify their main concerns – top of the list being discrimination and widespread public ignorance of the asylum system - several of the women involved wanted to go out and present their demands in forums where there was a chance of them being addressed. If Arise and Shine was to continue, it appeared to offer good scope for research, as it touched on themes relevant to the CBC and linked my third sector work with the GAP Unit - for comparison – with my political engagement in activist groups such as No Borders (see p.276)

Carolina was more enthused by Arise and Shine than by any of our previous projects:

Working with a community group to influence planning policy felt like a drop in the ocean. But working with migrant communities probably fitted me better. There are real

² The UK being one of the principal global trend-setters.

injustices. And a good role for activities that are mainstream, because the situation is so bad that small changes can have a real impact. And you can rail against the wider injustices at the same time and with people who share perspectives that are beyond the nationalistic. And because meeting together as women can be of great importance to them in their lives, not just a diversion (Carolina, interview, 2010).

I momentarily resisted a migration focus because it seemed that suddenly ‘everyone was doing it’. The only other CBC studentship in Manchester was hosted by a refugee organisation, and more than half a dozen friends were starting research involving new migrants (asylum seekers in most cases). Although this says more about my social circle than anything else, I wanted to think through my reasons for choosing it.

I was aware of the phenomenon of ‘White helper syndrome’ (Ellsworth, 1997: 268); White people perceived to be enjoying rewarding work with refugees or other migrants without confronting their relative power and privilege, something which would be less avoidable - therefore less comfortable - if they engaged instead with non-White British communities. I can see how it would be possible for an easy sense of propriety and beneficence to guide and infuse, without encountering much critical challenge, one’s patronage of a small number of ‘deserving’ outsiders. A mixed race friend posted this comment on a (White) mutual friend’s Facebook page, just as I was writing this section:

I’ve had similar situations with certain activist types when I’ve attempted to talk about racism and classism. There are too many who are only non-prejudicial with (for example) poor Black people if they are refugees from the Congo; if they are called Marlon and are from Moss Side, it’s another story. Hypocrisy is convenient as it means they don’t have to think too deeply (IC, Facebook).

An activist academic and ‘People of Colour ally’ who spoke at a workshop on Queer Diasporas in Manchester in 2011, extended this critical race perspective. She recounted sarcastic vignettes about all-White asylum ally groups in Berlin, where she is based. I must have felt a sting of recognition, since I approached her afterwards to see what she thought about the solidarity scene in Manchester, and she was scathing when she heard about the Lesbian Immigration Support Group (LISG), which is led by White volunteers. In her view, I ought to seriously ask myself why there were no Black lesbians involved as non-clients. In fact (a year later) two ex-asylum seekers are involved in running it, and the reason there are not more is likely to be that when they are finally granted Leave to Remain, women tend to need to devote themselves to rebuilding their lives. This coupled with the fact that the volunteer role involves direct advocacy and providing written and oral testimonies to influence legal decisions, and thus relies to an extent on ‘insider’

knowledge, probably aided by perceived ‘social standing’. Several founders of the group are uncomfortable about this power dynamic and it is a frequent topic of debate, but the ‘supported’ women themselves tend not to be exercised by it, since their futures often hinge on this kind of assistance. I asked one volunteer if her partner, who is African-Caribbean, had ever considered volunteering with LISG, and she said she would love to if she was not trying to finish a PhD alongside a full-time job. She and another of the volunteers have a longstanding relation with anti-racist work in relation to LGBTQ people, and could not be accused of race-blind do-gooding. They also had asked similar questions of themselves:

I have thought about it a lot, also when I joined my organisation [a local human rights organisation where she is paid staff] I couldn’t believe how White it was, just two Asian staff and maybe a couple of non-White volunteers but really it was so White, I wondered if there was something wrong with the organisation. I still don’t know the answer (N, conversation in bar).

She added that because she feels that she constantly “gives from her soul”, and because she sees her colleagues being utterly attentive, dedicated and drained by their work, that kind of criticism, when it comes from someone else, can seem flippant and hard to stomach. The issue is complicated, not clear cut³ as the activist academic had wanted to paint it.

I had reattached myself to the local No Borders group not long before starting the studentship, after a break of several years. The re-launched group had taken a conscious decision to avoid solidarity work, since in its previous incarnation, individual anti-deportation campaigns had absorbed all people’s time and energy, to the point where the group fell apart. The aim was to concentrate purely on political action and education based on an anti-capitalist opposition to borders and states. Attending a Salon⁴ debate on migration, at which the speaker, a self-proclaimed libertarian, declared nationalism to be today’s central problem, given that “racism generally ceased to be an issue in the UK after World War II”, I was taken aback to discover that two of the No Borders activists shared this view. A majority of the (mainly White) No Borders activists in Manchester maintained involvement in anti-fascist action, refugee organisations, befriending projects, detainee visiting or anti-deportation campaigns, but the two were among a minority who strayed less outside academic and activist circles and were very focussed on the politics of

³ I had been pleased with my painting metaphor here: “not black and white”, until it was pointed out that this is not always an innocent phase.

⁴ A debating forum which exists in several UK cities, allied to the provocative libertarian think tank Institute of Ideas.

nationalism. Despite their advanced grasp of political theory, awareness of the lived experience of racism was missing and seemed a significant gap in their analysis. To the extent that *not* spending time with refugees and migrants (other than during isolated demonstrations or camps) had prevented well-intentioned internationalists from developing an analysis of race and racism, migrant solidarity as a first step into anti-racist work should perhaps not be viewed too scornfully. Vanessa Pupavac derides British middle class professionals who, she suggests, identify more with refugees, whose “moral status is affirmed in cultural circles” (2008: 276), than with the “mass of the population”, representations of which “have become degraded, along with the demoralized representation of Western culture itself... consider how the dominant lifestyle programmes or reality television shows consistently portray people as stupid, dirty, greedy, lazy, tasteless, abusive or inadequate, to be censured and reformed by expert management” (Pupavac 2008: 276). GAP Unit had previously run projects with people of many different demographics and drifted into working with refugee women slowly, and not exclusively. Nevertheless it is probably true that our sustained commitment to what became a major element of GAP Unit’s activity, although arising from a sense of political priority and urgency, did have a cultural element to it, although not quite as Pupavac suggests:

Maybe it started out as another ‘work with women’ which I like and we have done before, but then I was immediately touched and moved by their stories and angered by the injustice of their situations. Fighting injustice is what motivates me; it makes me ask ‘what can I do?’ Being a foreigner here and having suffered discrimination in this country, I could relate to some of the things they were going through (not denying how privileged I am). I also understood the reality of their countries: I also come from a ‘third world’ country from the South... in many ways we ‘speak the same language’. The relationship easily becomes horizontal one. I felt connected to their suffering and inspired by their strength and wisdom (Carolina, interview).

It is probably true that Carolina’s passion for the project was the driving force, at least initially, but I should not hide behind her words. Working with the Arise and Shine group gave me a strong feeling of appreciation, something I was not expecting and would not have expected of a group of British people, since (working across class or race or not), my lack of charisma rarely afforded such rewards. Working with refugees had definitely been more empowering for me than any of the group work I had done previously, and this will have positively affected my decision to make it the focus of the three year study.

However, the main motivations were in the end political. Asylum seekers, along with gypsies and travellers, attract the highest levels of prejudice in Britain (Valentine & McDonald, 2004: 8). Xenophobia in media coverage of immigration and personal contact

with people who were suffering in the asylum system had made me aware prior to Arise and Shine of the serious need for interventions in this area, both to support individuals and to contest discourse. Refusal by government agencies to listen to people seeking asylum stems from policies designed to keep down the number of refugees regardless of the strength of the ‘push factors’ which make them continue to arrive. The women we had got to know through the first phase of Arise and Shine had given accounts of the pain caused by exclusion, control, uncertainty and denial of their personhood by officials who “justify lack of care in delivering services by drawing on stereotypes of people seeking asylum... [seeing] themselves as responsible to the world of the public purse rather than to the worlds of people seeking asylum” (Pannett 2011: 229). I wanted to put the women’s experiences at the heart of the project and thereby extend the advocacy remit of Arise and Shine, taking their concerns and demands to a wider (albeit only slightly wider) audience, adding to “the polyphony of voices” (Pannett, 2011: 241) exposing injustices and calling for change.

The intention behind my case study of Arise and Shine is summarised by combining the two types of evaluation described by Abma and Schwandt (2005) in their outline of methods for ‘sponsored evaluations’. ‘*Evaluation for understanding*’ is described as “primarily a pedagogical rather than a technical undertaking... enhancing... practitioners’ grasp of issues and concerns surrounding the judgment of the quality of their practice and their understandings of the meanings they attach to their practice” (2005, 106). ‘*Evaluation for social critique and transformation*’, its “close cousin”, implies an “avowed focus on power and the reduction or elimination of exploitation, inequality and oppression in social relations... informed by the tradition of critical hermeneutics, feminist theories and social action perspectives”. The first refers to appraisal of the practical aspects of the action, with the goal of learning lessons for oneself and others, alongside a focus on the motivations and ideologies informing (and maybe constraining) the work. This merges directly into the second as it already opens the field of examination to include the operation of power in, through and around the focus of action, including issues of power which arise from the evaluation process itself. “Exploitation, inequality and oppression” are unavoidably centred in my research due to the participants being women who are experiencing racist exclusion from different types of belonging. My evaluation necessarily includes reflection on the effectiveness of projects like Arise and Shine for ameliorating, however minimally, these forms of oppression, and compares it to other possible strategies.

GAP Unit – present

As a Community Interest Company (CIC), GAP Unit is officially a social enterprise, but this is a technicality rather than core to its identity (which is probably ‘community organisation’). Nevertheless, the CIC structure was chosen because it enables directors to make decisions without deferring to a management or reference group. While this lack of accountability could be misused, for us it meant freedom to focus energy on productive tasks with minimum time lost to meetings and bureaucracy. It does not preclude either the full involvement of partners and participants in decisions when appropriate, or complete transparency and professional honesty in reporting.

CICs were brought in by New Labour in 2007, partly to make it easier for informal community organisations to convert to social enterprises. The CIC tag flags up not-for-profit status – the CIC has a compulsory ‘asset-lock’ to ensure that any profit transfers to a nominated charity when it is wound up. The structure also allows directors to work for their organisation in a freelance capacity. GAP Unit has no employees but draws on a pool of associates; freelancers who can be called on to lead on or join a team according to their expertise. As no one relies on GAP Unit for a large share of their income, it has been possible to pursue only those opportunities which appear interesting or worthwhile, and to work voluntarily at times. Some key associates only invoice for a fraction of the hours they work. Ten per cent of any funding bid is directed to organisational overheads, and this money is used to cover expenses for activities outside of official (funded) projects. This has tended recently to mean unscheduled get-togethers with the Arise and Shine members, or paying fees or fares for them to attend events.

Central to the GAP Unit’s work with groups are the principles of popular education, based on the philosophy of Paulo Freire. Carolina’s experience in Freirian work and participatory methodologies for research, project evaluation and training has led to a steady stream of opportunities because of a growing appreciation of these within the British VCS. She has also worked independently of GAP Unit, designing ‘Training the Trainer’ courses, training local people in social research skills and developing ‘Schools of Participation’(SoP) (see p.119) in partnership with other organisations. A number of facilitators and community researchers trained through these are now GAP Unit associates. Other associates are friends and acquaintances from activist and VCS networks who are self- or intermittently employed so welcome short-term contracts. As an organisation GAP Unit has been quite nimble, having a minimum of overheads, a paper trail to demonstrate reliability and

flexibility to assemble teams for different types of work. Having recently tendered for one piece of research advertised by the Local Involvement Network (LiNK) in Salford, we were asked, due to a shortage of applications, if we would consider bidding for the full list of contracts. During a recession there must be many freelance researchers who could do this kind of work, but without a base organisation to attach themselves to (with bank account, prior reputation, community contacts, insurance and accountability policies), it is more difficult. The LiNK work appealed politically to GAP Unit because the topics for research had been decided by local people through consultation; because a previous GAP Unit course meant there was a group of community researchers in Salford trained and ready to put their skills to use; and because there were associates keen to co-ordinate the research. Carolina, as the overall manager of this project, was minimally rewarded financially, revealing the GAP Unit model as not entirely commercially viable (its ideological roots lying more in activism or 'voluntarism' in the original sense of the word). GAP Unit has proved quite recession-proof, but this point is linked to the previous and may be partly an illusion, since we have not recently sought many grants and contracts. Certainly most of the bodies which funded us in the New Labour era no longer exist. The most recent project (on-going as I write) is a course funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and administered by the Workers Educational Association (WEA), which aims to boost the confidence and preparedness of refugee women for entering the UK job market, often after a long break due to the ban on asylum seekers taking paid work.

GAP Unit - history

In 2002 I was working for Manchester Women's Network (MWN), a sub-network of the city's Community Empowerment Network (CEN), known as Community Network for Manchester (CN4M). CENs had been set up in areas with sufficient levels of deprivation to warrant a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), another New Labour innovation which brought together the public, private and community and voluntary sectors to oversee Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes. My role was to encourage women's groups to take advantage of the new strategic decision making possibilities of CN4M, which amounted to attempts to influence the Council's spending priorities and strengthen its accountability to the VCS (a more common term than 'third sector' in that context). I began with little knowledge of the VCS or the workings of local government; I had got the job on the basis of skills acquired through activism and campaigning. Carolina had joined the MWN Steering Group, representing Community Pride, an off-shoot of Manchester faith-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) Church Action on Poverty (CAP). Recently arrived

from Venezuela, she brought to the city long experience of working within the Latin American tradition of popular education, from grassroots organising with poor communities to faith-related policy work with the United Nations (UN). In Community Pride, she recognised an organisation which shared her commitment to “working with communities so they would have their voice, in minoritised, underprivileged sectors; to help them develop their own skills, to listen to them” (Carolina, interview), and which supported her Freirian approach. Community Pride’s strategically-minded Policy and Research Officer Ed Cox (see footnote, p.119) was a strong proponent of the new spaces of power being opened up by New Labour, and had been instrumental in setting up CENs in Manchester and Salford. Carolina therefore became involved in the CEN process, despite initial amazement at seeing what in Venezuela would have been grassroots activism and networking being proposed and funded by the government. As chair of the relevant purse-holding LSP committee, Cox backed her suggestion that MWN audit the gender balance in Manchester’s LSP/CEN decision-making structures, which solved the problem of MWN’s strategic role within the CN4M. This had been in question (at least for me) since it had quickly become evident that few women’s groups had time for the new tier of CN4M decision-making, which gave every appearance of being dominated by procedural issues: responding to policy papers, working on ‘compacts’⁵ and constantly renegotiating its own remit and survival.

What became the Gender and Community Engagement in Manchester (GEM) Project was a classic piece of participatory research - one of Carolina’s areas of expertise. The project bore many of the hallmarks of future GAP Unit activities:

- recruitment of a team reflecting the demographics of the communities being researched
- attention to team dynamics and to making the work fun
- collective ‘learning through doing’, with continuous cycles of action and reflection
- supportive environment to help individuals develop their skills and take on new challenges
- shared decision-making
- attention not just to gender but to how it intersects with axes such as race, class and age
- data acquisition guided by the need to make a case for change
- indicative rather than statistically significant research

⁵ The ‘compacts’ between the government and voluntary sector which were launched in 1998 and codified practice in areas such as funding, consultation and volunteering, represented “an attempt by government in the cultivation of subjectivity and are a way of mobilising the voluntary sector in its own governance” (Fyfe, 2005: 243).

- community researchers issued with temporary student cards and certificates of participation by MMU

The Gender Equality Duty (GED)⁶ was about to become law (it was the era of hyperactive target- and standard-setting, aimed at improving public accountability) so the timing was good in terms of sensitising local public and voluntary sectors to the idea of gender mainstreaming, which was a mystery to most. My (informal) feminist education had been in autonomous spaces where debates were quite context specific, so I, too, came to MWN and GEM unversed in the preoccupations of state feminism – equal pay, equal representation and the need for equal attention to ‘women’s issues’ as they apply to an entire population (as opposed to a fairly homogeneous, vanguardist one). I had needed to quickly readjust my focus and appreciate that it is incumbent on democratic structures to be permanently engaged in ensuring and monitoring equality of access and outcome for women and men, given the persistent norm of the gender binary. My eyes were opened to this early on by a consultation on regeneration priorities in East Manchester which, until the neighbourhood women’s group was included, had entirely missed the fact that a launderette was an essential local amenity.

As well as by the LSP, funding for the GEM Project was provided by Oxfam UK Poverty Programme (UKPP) and the ALAC programme (via Dr Carol Packham of the Community Audit and Evaluation Centre (CAEC) at MMU, later the Director of Studies (DoS) for this research). The GEM Project finding that women often lack confidence to take part in formal meetings catalysed funding for ‘women’s empowerment’ workshops for groups including refuge residents, young mums, lesbian/bisexual and other youth and ethnic minority associations. Each course was tailored to group needs or interests, but generally promoted a ‘gender lens’ as a way of seeing the world, and created “a space where women can talk, discuss women’s issues, share experiences and explore ways to support one another”, as one course description put it. Another course title shows more explicitly how the New Labour policy agenda was acknowledged in our bids for funding for this work: “short courses to help women gain confidence and *skills* and encourage them to have a greater *involvement in civic engagement* and to take up *decision-making positions*”. As Carolina wrote to me in an email: “I feel we used ‘their language’ in order to do a process of organisation and conscientisation with groups”.

⁶ A legal requirement on all public authorities in Great Britain to have due regard to the need to “eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sex” and “promote equality of opportunity between women and men” (EOC, 2007: 3).

In 2006, I left MWN and we relocated to MMU, creating the Gender and Participation (GAP) Unit within the CAEC. We were developing our networks and, through a second part-time job with the Women's Design Service (an organisation set up with Greater London Council funding in the 1980s, which retained a strong 'second wave' feminist identity), I was acquiring a further grounding in practically-orientated, socialist feminism. Two years later, when it became difficult to slip our small grants through the MMU finance department without top-slicing by the university, we decided on independence. The moment coincided with friends and I founding a co-operatively managed, affordable workspace for freelancers, so we had a ready-made office for GAP Unit (for me, 'Gender and Participation Unit' had the ring of a New Labour quango, so we dropped it from the name). Company set-up costs came from Unltd, the social entrepreneurship awards body, on the free advice of a business advisor paid through a government scheme to assist social enterprises. The focus was still on gender awareness/empowerment training courses but we also undertook related consultancy work, including policy scrutiny and advising public bodies on gender equality issues. GAP Unit was invited onto the board of the Regional Empowerment Agency (part of the National Empowerment Partnership) North West Together We Can (NWTWC), then chaired by Ed Cox from Community Pride, and to the Equalities Parliament hosted by the local voluntary sector infrastructure organisation, the Greater Manchester Council for Voluntary Organisations (GMCVO).

The Arise and Shine project

Arise and Shine began as facilitated discussions with members of five women's organisations, encouraging participants to discuss their experiences of the UK asylum system and how it could be improved. A 'learning exchange event'⁷ then gathered the groups together to consolidate the process of identifying concerns and targets for change as well as to make connections and hear about opportunities for getting engaged politically. It also provided an opportunity for cultural exchange, as more than 80 women shared music, dance, stories and food from their countries and celebrated their collective strength as women. The idea of the project had been to increase refugee and asylum seekers' awareness of existing campaigns and other ways of taking action on the issues they had identified, but it carried on into a second phase due to a direct appeal by participants to be supported to do something together to fight back against racism and the exclusions of the asylum system.

⁷ A popular NWTWC 'buzzword' of the time.

The Arise and Shine group became both a forum for mutual support and an action group, with GAP Unit drawing on our experience of group work and on our networks and resources to make it happen. Four of those who joined were also core members of Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST), a well-respected, self-organised, Manchester-based group which was growing increasingly experienced in self-advocacy. The main activity during Phase 2. was supporting WAST to develop a play written by one of its members, called *How I Became an Asylum Seeker*; using it as a vehicle for the awareness raising they wanted to do. The play had already been staged with assistance from local arts production specialists Community Arts Northwest (CAN), but the cast wanted to add new scenes and work on it further. The Arise and Shine group organised performances to audiences of public sector decision makers and front line staff in Manchester and Liverpool, each followed by an hour-long workshop bringing audience members into dialogue with the WAST actors and other Arise and Shine members. A few months later, in October 2010, the ‘Educate!’ project (Phase 3) was initiated – visits to schools to hold awareness-raising sessions with children, young people and their teachers. Although most of the schools chosen were in areas where many refugees live, the majority of the young people knew little about refugees or the notion of asylum. A final ‘women’s gathering’ was held with the last of the money. Thereafter, the Arise and Shine group reconvened every five or six months to catch up with one another, celebrate victories, share a meal and participate in structured activities from Carolina’s popular education repertoire.

Table 1. gives an outline and timeline of the project, indicating the main activities but also referencing: GAP Unit activities which were not officially part of Arise and Shine but which resulted from the work (W); other non-Arise and Shine GAP Unit activities in which some of the same women participated (contributing to their overall experience of working with GAP Unit, as expressed in the interviews) (X); key elements of the research process, to show how this synchronized with the project trajectory (Y); and non-GAP Unit activities relevant to Arise and Shine (Z).

Table 1. Project details and timeline

DATE						
January 2009- April 2009	Series of 3 workshops with each of:					PHASE 1
	RMU	ZIWO	WISP Manchester	WISP Bolton	Refugee Action Bolton	
25/4/09	Arise and Shine 1 st Gathering		88 women from 19 countries			PHASE 1
16/11/09	Arise and Shine ‘campaign group’ 1st meeting		Tendayi Madzunu - ZIWO Fisumwork – WISP Bolton Naila Ali - WAST			PHASE 2

			Isata Kanneh - WAST Lydia Besong – WAST Rut Mergia - WISP Manchester Meseret Hayle – WISP Manchester			
3/12/09	Premier of WAST play at the Zion Centre, Manchester					Z
14/1/10	Evaluation of WAST play led by producer Yasmin Yaqub (CAN)					Z
January- March 2010	Salford Community Researchers Course 1		Attended by Tendayi, Gugulethu Sibanda, Chenai Mudzamiri			X
January - April 2010	5 fortnightly Arise and Shine group event planning meetings		Elinah Mugwagwa, Sofia Kalu, Mavis Makhaza, Amal El Sheik, Fiona Otala, Maria Lare, Tendayi, Lydia, Rut, Meseret			PHASE 2
January - March 2010	9 weeks of weekly play rehearsals - WAST actors with director Magdalen Bartlett		Florence Ndlovu, Sandaya Wimalasiri, Susan Guyo, Sarah Dambia, Mavis, Menon Silva, Khumbulani Mpofu, Saba Munir, Kanene Debele, Lydia, Sofia			PHASE 2
20/2/10	Day workshop creating multi- media textiles for theatre backdrop, with artist Sabbi Mistry Kaur		Florence, Sandaya, Lydia, Susan, Mavis, Khumbulani, Sofia, Elinah, Maria, Rut, Amal, Tendayi			PHASE 2
24/3/10	Performance of play at Zion Centre, Manchester		230 in audience, 60 attended two post- performance workshops including people working in law, housing, education, welfare advice, children’s services, police, immigration and asylum, health, employment and local government (including councillors)			PHASE 2
30/3/10	Performance of play at CCC, Liverpool		70 in audience, 30 at the workshop, attendance as above			PHASE 2
8/4/10	Film shoot for DVD of play					PHASE 2
13/5/10	WAST actors play evaluation meeting					PHASE 2
18/5/10	Arise and Shine group evaluation					PHASE 2
27/5/10	1.5 hour semi-structured interview with Carolina de Oteyza					Y
5/6/10	Taster workshop for Refugee Action Gateway women’s group (Iraqi)					W
17/6/10	NWTWC annual conference and showcase at the ACE Centre in Nelson		12 Arise and Shine and WAST actors attending			PHASE 2
2/7/10	1.5 hour recorded de-brief with Vicky Marsh					Y
September- Dec 2010	Salford Community Researchers Course 2		Tendayi, Gugulethu, Chenai and others (not all refugees)			X
September – October2010	NHS research process followed by conference presentation		Tendayi, Gugulethu, Chenai			W
18/9/10	Taster workshop for Refugee Action Gateway women’s group (Bhutanese)					W
23/9/10	Training session for Educate! Project (project co-ordinated by GAP Unit associates Jess Mock and Nicola Scott)		Tendayi, Susan, Fiona, Naila, Lydia, Gugulethu, Sofia, Rut, Rudo Kowo			PHASE 3
September – November 2010	Bury Church of England High School	Newell Green High School, Manchester	Cool UK Pupil Referral Unit, Manchester	St Margaret’s Primary School, Manchester	Holly Lodge Girls’ College, Liverpool	PHASE 3
Workshops – all preceded by plan mtg	160 (Year 9s: age13/14)	30 (Year 7s: age 11/12)	7 (age 14 -16) plus staff-only workshop	25 (Year 6s: age 10-11)	50 (Year 11s: age 15-16)	PHASE 3
October2010	1 hour semi-structured interviews with Tendayi, Maria, Lydia, Sofia, Naila, Rut					Y
16/11/10	Educate! Evaluation meeting and filming of testimonies					PHASE 3
3/11/10	Inaugural meeting of Lydia and Bernard Must Stay Campaign					X
28/11/10	<i>How I Became an Asylum Seeker</i> tours to Riverside Studios, London					Z
3/12/10	Educate! Learning and Dialogue Event		30 participants including staff from: Trafford School Improvement Service,			PHASE 3

	50 resource packs produced and distributed	ESOL Mentoring Project, Refugees into Teaching, Bury CofE High School, Traveller Education-Community, Emotional and Trauma Support at Manchester City Council (MCC), Cheshire Council Cohesion Team, Tameside City Council, Salford Children's Centre, Salford Primary Care Trust, Seymour Park Primary School	
18/12/10	Arise and Shine 2 nd Women's Gathering	65 women asylum seekers and 6 support organisations participating	PHASE 3
14/2/11	1 st self-esteem workshop for Red Cross women's drop-in, London		W
17/3/11	NWTWC Sub Regional Review	GAP Unit presentation on Educate! project	PHASE 3
21/3/11	1.5 hour semi-structure interview with Fiona		Y
14/5/11	Arise and Shine group get-together		PHASE 3
29/7/11	WAST March in Liverpool	Carolina & I accompanied in 'steward' role	Z
15/10/11	Arise and Shine group get-together	Presentation on research so far and focus group discussion, hereafter described as ' Research feedback meeting '	Y
27/10/11	First meeting held of Sofia and Johnson Kalu Defence Campaign		X
2/12/11	Bury High School Human Rights day workshop	120 Year 9 students. Fatima Ndoro, Sandhaya and Chenai	W
January 2012	South Manchester Law Centre	3 team building & self-esteem/confidence sessions with refugee women's drop-in	W
Jan-February 2012	Training the Trainer course at WAST	4 sessions for WAST members led by Carolina	X
1/2/12	2 nd self-esteem workshop for Red Cross women's drop-in, London		W
24/5/12	Arise and Shine group get-together		PHASE 3
28/9/12	Bury High School Human Rights day workshop	140 Year 9 students. Tendayi, Lydia and Elinah	W
January – March 2013	Phone/ in-person interviews with current and former refugee sector workers and activists		Y
28/2/13	Lunch data discussion	Sofia, Elinah, Chenai (Lydia on phone)	Y
13/3/13	3 rd self-esteem workshop for Red Cross women's drop-in, London		W

After an account of the methodology, theoretical and ethical approach in Chapter 2., Chapter 3. presents a brief analysis of each stage of the project, applying a conceptual framework provided by a specific liberation psychology account of migrant women's acculturative integration. Chapter 4. adds context by looking at the range of my participants' associational activity and the groups and services they frequent, considering their priorities and motivations, while Chapter 5. focusses on their activities in the public sphere and discusses the role of allies (especially community development) in promoting the political agency of women refugees and asylum seekers. Chapter 6. gives detailed attention to the theatre project collaboration and Chapter 7. to the women-only nature of the Arise and Shine group, with Chapter 8. providing final reflections, conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2. Questions of methodology

If Ariana Faris is right, “there is little actual research on the opinions of refugee women of *their* [her italics], experience of partaking in... group or community-based interventions” (2006: 33). She set out with her MSc dissertation to “shed... light on what refugee women themselves have found helpful or not about participation in a group” (2006: 34). My research had a similar purpose, but its larger scale allowed me to shift focus from women’s experience of our particular group to consider the breadth of associational activities which sustained them day-to-day and over time. In relation to Arise and Shine itself, I took seriously the proposition that dialogue and interaction with project participants matures and complexifies the perspectives and practices of an organisation. Beyond this, despite a fairly narrow evaluative framework constraining the narrative scope of the research, participants’ accounts conveyed aspects of their conceptualised and situated understandings and perspectives on the world, which, because migrant women are routinely excluded from national debate and dialogue, represent counter-discourses which need to be heard.

This apprenticeship in social research has also been useful for processing lingering questions from my ten years of participatory work in the community sector. In particular, it has allowed me to explore the conundrum (both caused by and a symptom of having one foot in the community work nexus and another in ideologically motivated activist networks) of being constantly aware of the status quo-enforcing consequences of much third sector work, as hinted at in the introduction. Feminist theory has helped me understand the fundamental inevitability and irresolvable nature of this tension in a way that is liberating for community work and not demotivating for activism.

Although the Cameron-Clegg coalition came to power less than halfway through the research period, the policy environment was largely shaped by the previous government, not least because the funding for Arise and Shine came through the National Empowerment Partnership (NEP), a classic New Labour programme. Arise and Shine unfolded according to its own logic, without much reference to what was happening elsewhere, but other activity in the third sector locally, especially refugee-specific provision, advocacy and activism, were contextually relevant, so have been given attention in the thesis. Because we were working with women, a gendered picture of asylum and refugeedom was guaranteed.

The basic research design

By my assuming participant observer status in a pre-existing project, the research structure was pre-determined to some extent. At the start of the research, some material already existed which could be included as data:

- Funding bids, reports to funders, other written materials prepared by GAP Unit including literature for the participants in the first Arise and Shine gathering
- Written feedback from Phase 1. participants and group coordinators
- Written feedback from participants in the first Arise and Shine gathering

As background reading I began exploring contemporary literature on community development (CD) and empowerment, much of which grappled with the contradictions and opportunities of the New Labour era. I also sought out recent, UK-based academic studies and campaign reports on asylum, migration, multiculturalism and racism. Over the four years of the research, academic theses critiquing the asylum system and emphasising the agency of migrants appeared sporadically in local libraries and the online British Library ETHOS archive. I felt I had a lot in common with these students and found their work invaluable for developing my own perspectives. I also absorbed work on feminist and anti-racist epistemology and methodology, getting distracted by questions about the legitimacy of research and the merits of taking either a straightforward materialist or a constructivist approach.

Meanwhile the Arise and Shine project was progressing and generating further data. Only the last two items in the following list (audio recordings of meetings and my own diary entries) would not have existed had I not been undertaking research:

- Agendas, minutes and flipchart sheets from Arise and Shine meetings
- Script of *How I Became an Asylum Seeker*
- Notes from debrief session held by CAN with the WAST actors after the first performance
- Written feedback from play audiences in Manchester and Liverpool; individual and group feedback (flip chart sheets) from those who attended the post-performance discussions; transcription of a Manchester discussion workshop
- Recording of the Phase 2. evaluation session with the Arise and Shine group, plus feedback forms from that session
- Recording of the Phase 2. evaluation session with WAST actors, plus feedback forms from that session

- Sections of interviews from the ‘Making of’ film on the DVD of *How I Became an Asylum Seeker*
- Materials prepared for the theatre workshop delegate packs
- Written feedback from the young people and teachers who took part in Phase 3.
- Written evaluations from participants in the Phase 3. workshop for education professionals
- Written feedback from participants in the second Arise and Shine gathering
- Recordings of three Arise and Shine meetings (only minimally transcribed)
- Research journal documenting thoughts, feelings, observations and questions

Arise and Shine members were aware throughout that I was making a case study of our collaboration but I did not want to impose a research remit on the process or otherwise interfere in the course of events. It was at the end of Phase 3. that I began to supplement the above with data generated solely for the purpose of research (see [Table 1.](#) for more details):

- Semi-structured recorded interview with co-director Carolina de Oteyza
- Semi-structured recorded interviews with seven members of the Arise and Shine group
- Recorded ‘debrief meeting’ with WAST volunteer Vicky Marsh
- Recording of the ‘research feedback meeting’ - the discussion which followed my presentation to the group of themes from my preliminary analysis, plus flipchart sheets from small group exercises undertaken during that session
- Notes from informal telephone and face-to-face discussions with pro-migrant activists and refugee sector workers
- Notes from conversation over lunch with Elinah, Chenai and Sofia (plus Lydia by phone)

How and what of the above information was processed and incorporated into the current thesis was the result of dialogue and experimentation. What I chose to make of the material collected was influenced by theoretical perspectives developed through reading, discussion with supervisors, participants, other practitioners and fellow students; on-going participation in migrant-related activism; and transitional texts and talks I was required to produce which forced me to get to grips with different aspects of the topic. The phrasing of the research question was deliberately open, to allow a focus to emerge. As time went on, my relationships with Arise and Shine members became more reciprocal, less formal, stronger and more complex, and this influenced how I felt about the task. Both Carolina and I were involved in Lydia and Sofia’s anti-deportation campaigns; I became Godmother to Maria’s son; Tendayi came to work with GAP Unit; Elinah joined later as bookkeeper; I made hospital visits, stood security (bail) for a husband in detention and became Facebook friends with several of the women, which for all its virtuality, increases mutual biographical insights and a sense of connection. Getting to know people better took the

edge off my angst about my ability to ‘do justice’ to the women with my writing, while increasing regret at my slow progress and resultant inability to take up social invitations from participants . My approach to analysis is captured quite well by Hanrahan:

Feelings alert the mind to what is important to attend to, provide the motivation for goal-directed persistence, create frustration that begs to be resolved, and, finally, can give great pleasure when insight is achieved which, besides being rewarding in itself, predisposes for similar experiences in the future (2003:7).

It is difficult to explain in more concrete terms, other than that I moved constantly back and forth between primary and secondary data, using other people’s work as a jumping off point, returning to the women’s words, reflecting obsessively on my political standpoint and being brought down to earth, especially by my colleague Carolina, who would remind me that the main task was to document the collective knowledge foregrounded by the members of Arise and Shine. Towards the end of the research, I started processing the list of groups and organisations the interviewees were involved in (the subject of an interview question). As I compiled a few details of each in order to assign them to different categories, I noticed certain patterns in which individuals (the same people popping up again and again), and ideologies embodied in those individuals, played a role. I realised that documenting (albeit very superficially) the evolution of refugee provision and action in the city would be a good way to surface some of the debates about different political perspectives and forms of engagement which I wanted to include.

A notion of social justice “which does not take the nation-state and its interests at face value and as a point of departure” (Però and Solomos 2010: 11-12) and which sees asylum seekers as “equally capable authors of the shape that justice should take” (McNevin 2010: 143) stakes the boundaries of the thesis.

Action research – a quick aside

My project aimed to capture the collective theorisation of a subordinated group who were taking collective action and evaluating how it went, so it was unsurprising that observers assumed I was engaged in participatory action research (PAR), a methodology closely associated with the emancipatory CD paradigm. However, I have argued that this was not the case, as the project cannot be accurately described as action research, at least as defined by Noffke and Somekh (2011: 94-102) and McNiff & Whitehead (2011: 7-18). Action research need not always be a participatory, group-led activity; the term can refer also to an

individual's reflection on their own practice (for example McNiff, 2010). However, most definitions consider it a process undertaken to affect on-going action, which was not the case here, since Arise and Shine activities were only evaluated once they had come to an end. Neither I nor the participants set out to solve a specific problem, and nor was there a cyclical process of feeding back findings into action. A more appropriate description of my research process would be 'systematisation of experiences' (Jara Holliday, 2012), a methodology explicitly linked to the Freirian popular education tradition.

Although the different steps of the Arise and Shine project (such as the Phase 1. workshops in which women listed what needed to change; the prioritisation and selection of campaign targets for Phase 2.; the action plan carried through by the Arise and Shine group, GAP Unit and WAST in collaboration; and the group evaluations of the effectiveness of our actions and decisions about 'next steps') appear close to the cycles of planning, action, reflection found in PAR, they were not carried out for the purposes of research. The participants in the Arise and Shine group were not co-researchers interested in testing a hypothesis or evaluating the success of a strategy for meeting a certain goal. Rather, they were choosing, for their own reasons, which it was part of my task to elucidate, to take an opportunity to be involved in a collective endeavour aimed at having their voices heard. That said, all three of Noffke and Somekh's dimensions of action research do pertain to some extent to the research:

- the professional: improving the offer to clients in professional settings.
- the political: concerned with social action to combat oppression.
- the personal: factors such as developing 'greater self-knowledge' and 'a deeper understanding of one's own practice' (2011: 96),

and as is customary in action research, I collected and analysed data simultaneously, discussed my writing with my colleague and intermittently shared reflections with participants in order to incorporate their criticisms, opinions and suggestions. The work is also aligned with several aspects of feminist participatory action research (FPAR), which blends participatory action research and critical feminist theory:

- identifying changes of immediate benefit to research participants, analyses of the structural determinants of social problems, and action strategies (O'Connor et al 1999: 9-20).
- a process that allows someone or a group to create or add to knowledge about an issue or situation through a collaborative and reflective process (Morris 2002: 52).

- a conceptual and methodological framework that enables a critical understanding of women's multiple perspectives and works towards inclusion, participation, and action, while confronting the underlying assumptions researchers bring into the research process (Reid 2004: 7).
- not only about trying to transform social structures 'out there' and 'the people', it is about being open to transforming ourselves and our relationship to others (Maguire 1993:175).

While I maintain that my case study was not action research, I appreciate that there are too many definitions, attached to too many disciplines, to be confident of avoiding contradiction. Some feminists have even argued that all, or nearly all, research is action research (Wadsworth, 1998), so it is more important that I situate the work in terms of the theoretical perspective adopted.

Theoretical approach

A common view is that research can be thought of as feminist when "femaleness and maleness and the differences and dominations between and within them are made a central feature of research questions, conceptualization and analysis" (Burns & Walker, 2005:66), but feminist theory has for a long time been concerned with social power in all its forms. Femaleness is obviously central to my research but it is feminism's fundamental concern with "disrupting and calling attention to dominant power relations" (Burman, 2012) which has made it its theoretical home. Fonow and Cook point out that "feminist epistemology and methodology arise from a critique of each field's biases and distortions in the study of women" (1991:2), rather than having been created anew. There are also "few who would claim there is a distinctly and uniquely feminist method of data collection and analysis" (Keevers, 2009: 60). Nevertheless, critical, reflexive thinking; participatory working; "an action orientation; attention to the affective components of the research; and the use of the situation-at-hand" (Fonow and Cook 1991:2) are typical hallmarks of research which embraces a feminist perspective, and are relevant to my own. As is the fact that feminist research is usually partisan, aiming to benefit most those with least power, who are often also the subjects of its investigation.

All theory, regardless of context, is "grounded and bounded in contradictory ways in the experiences of the theory makers" (Frisby et al, 2009: 60) so that what makes sense to one person/group may not be explanatory to another with, for example, a different history or location. It is also always partial in what it reveals and always open to refinement or contradiction. One implication of this for researchers is that we should ask ourselves whose

theory we are using, to understand how situated assumptions and perspectives have influenced what was perceived and how it was interpreted. By extension, researchers are urged to be conscious of our own positions when attempting to explain the social world. Michelle Fine, following Sandra Harding, counsels feminists to “work aggressively through their own positionality, values and predispositions, gathering as much evidence as possible, from many distinct vantage points, all in an effort *not* to be guided, unwittingly, by predispositions and the pull of biography” (2006: 89). Gayatri Spivak, a prominent feminist thinker concerned with the way dominant Western ideas marginalise those of other cultures, writes that researchers must sometimes “unlearn” their privileges (1990: 30) in order to appreciate different knowledges. Another implication of the partial nature of theory is that people’s own theories will reveal most about their world, so that feminist researchers should aim to put “the subject’s interpretation and mediation of her experiences at the centre of our inquiries” (Devaux, 1986: 233), rather than merely applying ideas worked out by others or at an abstract, philosophical level. The views and theories of subjugated groups may challenge taken-for-granted beliefs and practices and reveal “power dynamics and relationships we might otherwise miss or misread” (Frisby et al, 2009: 16), making it a form of advocacy to bring these hidden perspectives to wider attention, as I seek to do. Humphries states that what is required is:

Research which 'brings to voice' excluded and marginalised groups as subjects rather than objects of research, and which attempts to understand the world *in order to change it*. **Critical, feminist, participatory** and **anti-racist** approaches to research all have this explicit purpose as a fundamental and legitimate premise. (Humphries, 1997:2.6)

My research is informed by all four approaches highlighted in bold. Critical race theory helps me trace how actions and inactions are racialised; to grasp the effects of my Whiteness; to understand how we are mutually located and co-produced in each encounter; to interrogate my assumptions and to forge a theoretical as well as an emotional sensitivity to the power of race, ethnicity and related categories of domination and subordination. In my research I attempt to remain aware of the ‘constructedness’ of identities, and their evolving and contingent nature, taking care not to fix the women’s identities as asylum seekers or use a careless short hand which suggests homogeneity.

As Doná notes, whether or not it draws explicitly on feminist theory, the refugee/forced migration studies tradition is also characterised by commitment to social change. In most cases, “studying the experiences, causes and consequences of displacement is done with an

implicit or explicit intent to influence the development of better policies and programmes” (Doná, 2007: 210). Within this academic tradition, refugees are occasionally able to disseminate their narratives directly, but often, as with this study, researchers act as intermediaries, quoting their words “with the goal of representing their voices, adopting what is usually referred to as a refugee-centred or refugee-focussed perspective” (Doná, 2007: 218-219). How these testimonies are framed is therefore in the control of the researcher. My impression is that more and more critical work is being produced, but there still remains, according to Doná, a “propensity to represent refugees through a binary (often oppositional) logic: victim/survivor, resilient/vulnerable, bogus/genuine, regular/irregular, displacement/ emplacement, rooted/uprooted, deserving/undeserving, healthy/ ill, outside/inside, asylum seeker/citizen, problem/resource, etc., highlighting the pervasive influence of Cartesian dualism in our western mode of thinking” (2007: 221). When it comes to refugees, according to Malkki, researchers in many disciplines tend to “seize upon political or historical processes” and “inscribe aspects of those processes in the bodies and psyches of the people who are undergoing them” (1995a: 511), with an outcome of over-generalisation. Williams argues for avoiding essentialising, homogenising discourse and suggests that “portraying the detailed experiences, actions and aspirations of a small sample of individuals”, as this study seeks to do, can be a productive way of striving to go beyond the stereotypes (2006: 867).

Faced with the need to analyse and write about interviews, I became aware of the power I had to control the research account. I understood suddenly how much “levels of intimacy and trust mean that researchers who go on to ‘write up’ data wield huge power over others” (Ali, 2006: 475), and Stacey’s even starker warning that familiarity between the researcher and the researched can lead to “inauthenticity, dissimilitude, and potential, perhaps inevitable betrayal” (1988: 23). Although I felt we knew each other well, I had to acknowledge that identification remained partial and that there was a possibility that I would stray into misrepresenting their lives; over-problematizing, for example, or over-romanticising certain things. Participant verification was part of the strategy for avoiding this. In theory it is not failsafe, because participants might suppress disagreement in order to be supportive, but I do feel that there was sufficient openness and trust between us for the women to give their considered opinions of my interpretations and portrayals.

Rice (2009: 250) highlights four ethical practices advocated by feminists with regard to the researcher-participant relationship:

- *researcher advocacy* through commitment to producing knowledge with possibilities for improving marginalized people's lives
- *researcher responsibility* through immersing oneself in experiences, worldviews and challenges of communities under investigation
- *researcher accountability* through checking interpretations with informants and consequences of representations for researched groups
- *researcher reflexivity* through interrogating researcher emotions, embodiments, identities and allegiances that affect research processes.

I tried to adhere to all of these. Reflexivity should not mean centring your own experiences or a permanently confessional mode; personal revelation can be useful but “the challenge for researchers using introspection is to use personal revelation not as an end in itself but as a springboard for interpretations and more general insight” (Finlay, 2002: 215). Of course, we do not escape our cultural and historical location even as we reflect.

Interviews with Arise and Shine participants

As explained above, the seven Arise and Shine members were not the only people interviewed, but they were the main source of illustrative quotes and the structure of the thesis was largely determined by the material gathered in these interviews.

Refugees and asylum seekers are familiar with interviews. The success of an asylum claim turns on the account produced in the initial HO interrogation, which may be subject to repeated cross-examination in further legal interviews and tribunals before being finally judged sufficient or insufficient grounds for asylum to be granted. Involvement in other types of interview may be at their discretion, but some refugees and asylum seekers receive numerous calls for their participation. Academic researchers; refugee service providers needing evidence for funding bids; consultants carrying out statutory sector evaluations and campaigning journalists wanting to highlight certain issues may all come asking them to take part in a one-to-one or group conversation. I had just switched on my digital recorder when a man with a clipboard appeared at the door of Rut's flat (in a National Asylum Support Service (NASS)-contracted building) - he was from the University of Manchester and looking for asylum seekers who would speak to him for 30 minutes in return for £10. Rut said she was busy but agreed he could come back later, making me wonder whether she had felt obliged to consent, which might apply to our interview as well. However, it would take wilful self-doubt to convince myself that she was not happy to do the interview (after which we continued chatting for another half hour) and genuinely disappointed that I could not stay for lunch with her and her son.

At a conference I attended in Leeds in 2010 called ‘Journeys and justice: Forced migration, seeking asylum, and human rights’, Amna Idris, a spokesperson for Eritrean refugees living in the city, told pro-migrant activists and academics that members of her community express frustration and fatigue when bombarded with interview requests which seemingly offer nothing in return. Yet she explained that she encourages them to consent because she believes that collaboration with pro-migrant researchers is an important way for their opinions and experiences to be adopted by campaigns, or at least join the growing body of literature critical of the asylum regime. It might be that asylum seekers who are already politicised and actively engaged in advocacy are more likely to be open to such invitations. Certainly, some of my interviewees had participated in extraordinary numbers of interviews and said they were happy to be consulted, wanted their voices heard and valued the ally relationships and friendships which can result (suggesting that trust has generally been established and not betrayed).

Two of my interviewees had participated in four PhD and MSc research projects apart from this one. One was interviewed for WAST’s book *Am I Safe Yet? Stories of Women Seeking Asylum in Britain* and several had had their experiences covered in local and national newspapers or appeared in documentary films and campaign videos. Since the start of the Arise and Shine project I have met or been contacted by seven female researchers who were embarking on pro-refugee research, all of them using critical, feminist frameworks. Most intended to recruit participants through WAST, partly because of its large membership but also because the active, empowered, self-organised nature of the group suited their political message and the issues they intended to explore. Although researchers need to be persistent and may not receive a reply on their first few attempts, they have generally been welcomed by the WAST Management Group as long as they can guarantee that their involvement will not be purely extractive. There is an expectation that researchers will offer something back, which in most cases has meant joining the WAST Solidarity Group or actively supporting an individual member’s campaign. WAST gains through these relationships since the researchers are often well-connected and can be useful sources of information on things like fundraising, conferences, campaigns, relevant further research or advocacy opportunities.

Between December 2010 and March 2011, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the seven most consistently involved members of the Arise and Shine group. They lasted between forty-five and seventy minutes and were conducted in GAP Unit’s office,

the WAST office, my home or participants' homes, according to their preference. Women's voices are heard in research, according to Oakley, "when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (1981: 41). I would argue that these conditions were fulfilled. Because of our history of discussions in Arise and Shine meetings, we could assume shared perspectives on the injustices of the asylum system and it was not relevant to gather their individual stories of persecution and exile. Instead, most of my questions were designed to supplement the feedback from the Arise and Shine evaluation meetings, elucidating *why* participants felt as they did about different activities, asking for their subjective interpretations of different events and finding out how Arise and Shine had complemented their involvement in other groups. While I made no attempt to elicit detailed ethnographic accounts from the women, glimpses of their lives both in the UK and before filtered through, and our pre-existing relationships meant that brief statements sometimes conveyed more than if it had been our first encounter. I was also interested in their general strategies for resilience and asked for their definition of empowerment so that I could evaluate that aspect of the project on their own terms.

Interview schedule

1. *What are the organisations that you've been involved in that are aiming to support asylum seekers or refugees or do awareness raising or help with integration?*
2. *What would put you off being involved with a particular group or organisation?*
3. *What has been the benefit of your involvement with GAP Unit and has that been to you as an individual or to a collective you are part of?*
4. *What do you consider the main characteristics of an organisation which is in partnership with refugees and asylum seekers?*
5. *What did you like about Arise and Shine?*
6. *Has it been important that it was a women-only group?*
7. *Can you tell me about anything we could have done differently and better?*
8. *What do you see as the main outcomes and impacts of Arise and Shine?*
9. *What does the term empowerment mean to you?*
10. *What have been the most disempowering things since you've come to this country?*
11. *What are the things that have helped you to feel strong and supported, despite this?*
12. *What are the characteristics which make someone a good ally to women asylum seekers or refugees?*

The planned question on disempowerment was missed out on all but three occasions because it seemed disjunctive with the tone of the interview. On one of these occasions the respondent had already been using the interview to tell me about recent unpleasant events, so a question on disempowerment was logical and useful. The participant in my pilot interview had seen the questions in advance (before I realised this was not a good idea) and

I intended to try out the guide exactly as written, but I noticed afterwards that I had tagged on a supplementary question, one she had effectively already answered: “What have been the most disempowering things since you’ve come to this country *and what are the things that have helped you to feel strong despite them?*” in an attempt to dilute the gloomier question and offer an opportunity to skip over it. The third person I asked about “disempowering things” refused the question (“I don’t want to now”) which I had in any case left until the end and asked in a tone of apology.

Only four of the women were asked about what makes a good ally, since it was close to the question about the “characteristics of an organisation in partnership” and I realise I felt squeamish about being perceived as ‘fishing for complements’ (probably unnecessarily). The ‘characteristics’ question was not a good one since four people hesitated at or queried the word, which sounded too clinical in this context. I encouraged narrative answers subconsciously by interjecting ‘mm’, ‘yes’ and other affirmations after almost every statement, and consciously with supplementary questions. These caused each interview to develop slightly differently and to be weighted differently in terms of the time spent on each topic. The same nine core questions from my list of twelve were covered in all but the interview with Fiona, which covered seven of them, and was longer and more free-ranging. It was conducted three months after the others, so I had refined my interests and identified information gaps which it would be useful to fill.

Transcription and interpretation

Only seven women were interviewed in depth, although others contributed to recorded discussions and evaluation processes. The point of a case study is not to make available a “*sample* of cases... drawn from a larger universe of cases” from which to extrapolate, but to allow what Stake calls “‘naturalistic’ generalisation... based on the harmonious relationship between the reader's experiences and the case study itself... facilitating a greater understanding of the phenomenon” (1995:8). The task was to try to communicate the individuality of respondents’ perspectives while looking out for patterns and repetitions across the group. I read the transcripts alongside other people’s research accounts, because noticing how they echoed or deviated from views or experiences quoted in other (similar) contexts help me recognise what was interesting to highlight within mine. I also discussed each interview in detail with Carolina, who was often grabbed by different sections and would draw my attention to things I would have overlooked. A friend who shared two of my respondents, Lauren Wroe, invited me to her ‘data group’ – three hour-long discussions

with her DoS, an ethno-methodologist, to which we each brought an extract of interview text for analysis. Her analytical framework was Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA), which is concerned with how notions of self are produced and reproduced through language, and how we orientate towards and thus make relevant the socio-political categorisations which structure social life. She was interested in the way asylum seekers deal with hostility and “to what extent they are complicit in maintaining or challenging both hostile and advocacy representations of themselves” (Wroe, 2012: 2). This very specific focus did not really advance my own analysis, but it was an interesting exercise. I experimented with other forms of discourse analytical approach, but in the end scrutinising the women’s words in order to interpret shifting pronouns, diagnose degrees of emotion or identify traces of ideology did not seem appropriate. I felt I had a set of quite straightforward, intelligible answers to straightforward and intelligible questions and that they conveyed important information in overt ways.

I chose to present quoted extracts almost ‘as spoken’, but punctuated to help the reader ‘hear’ the intonation and distinctive phraseology of the speaker and with stutters, pauses and occasional repetitions deleted for simplicity and focus. I disagree with Standing that punctuation necessarily detracts from conveying emotion or meaning, or “neutralizes” a speech extract (1998: 191); in this instance I felt it made them easier to read and provided a visual guide to the voice modulations of the speakers. I left in idiosyncrasies of speech (which I felt transmitted a ‘flavour’ of each person), but occasionally added explanatory comments in square brackets where I thought there was a danger of misunderstanding or where I was aware that a particular word or phrase was being used to convey a non-standard meaning. The following conventions were used: ellipses to indicate missing text; a dash when a word or phrase was broken off prematurely; a comma to show a natural pause; and italics to mark a stress. My fear was that some or all participants would ask me to remove errors or ‘correct’ phrases to British English (they all spoke one or more other language and were used to different grammar conventions and lexicon in English). If so, I would have had to oblige, especially as I was aware of the temptation to tidy up my own grammar on the page.

I did not have to spend hours coding the transcripts since the question guide had determined the narrative themes to a great extent. Grouping them by question was enough to spot commonalities and differences among the women’s responses. Critical ethnographers such as Denzin solve the “dual crises of representation and legitimation”

(1994: 581) by presenting entire transcripts unadulterated and unpunctuated, asking the reader to make up their own mind what they mean, but I usually felt confident to interpret the women's words, and where I was unsure, checked back with them. The nature of the questions asked and collaborative spirit of the interviews meant that, in my subjective opinion, there were few ambiguities calling for active interpretation to reveal their intentions. My presence alone will have influenced what was said and how, and there will inevitably have been some self-censorship of ideas, thoughts, and reactions. People often say what they think will go down well with their audience, whether that be fellow group members – especially people you respect or love – or an interviewer. On the other hand, when people entrust their words to an interviewer knowing that s/he intends to take them out into the world, and because they want their messages to be heard, it can equally be perceived as a betrayal of trust to question what was said and unsaid, and what discourses might have been in play, and why. I did not detect inconsistencies over the course of the interviews, although subsequent conversations provided evidence, if it was needed, that acquisition of knowledge is continual and that people's goals, interpretations and opinions shift and evolve. The interviews themselves may occasionally have been part of the process of working out perspectives and establishing aspects of self-identity, a process which is always in flux and often accelerated by dialogue (or if not exactly dialogue, through the articulation of responses to questions from an external source (me)). As Charmaz summarises, "people create and maintain meaningful worlds through dialectical processes of conferring meaning on their realities and acting within them" (2000: 269).

I chose not to include the full transcripts as appendices to avoid unnecessary reader scrutiny of the individuals concerned, especially as the majority wanted me to use their real names. "The choices that researchers make about transcription enact the theories they hold and constrain the interpretations they can draw from their data", say Lapadat and Lindsay (1999: 64). This is no doubt true. However, I was content with my more superficial approach (not, as in conversation analysis, making transparent every non-verbal utterance and length of each pause) even though I acknowledge that "to ask that researchers think about ourselves in relation to our transcripts is a step toward making transcription practices visible, toward emphasizing that transcription is always partial, in every sense of that word, and toward exploring how our practices shape our knowledge" (Bucholtz 2000:1463).

Any researcher working across race, class and other difference has to consider the extent to which his or her own viewpoint acts as the point of reference against which implicit

comparisons are being made. Relevant to this study is a particular form of difference - Third World difference – which, for Mohanty, includes a paternalistic attitude toward women in or from the “Two-Thirds World” (Mohanty 2004: 228). Mohanty urges us to guard against ethnocentric universality in judging structures by Western standards, and to avoid “falling into colonizing or cultural relativist platitudes” (2004: 229). Post-colonial feminism strives to subvert the advanced North versus primitive South binary. Yet it is impossible to avoid re-inscribing the hierarchy that places the pen in the hand of the White researcher or erase from the picture whatever my particular positioning, socialisation and history make me unable to discern. As Alcoff puts it, “in both the practice of speaking for as well as the practice of speaking about others, I am engaging in the act of representing the other’s needs, goals, situation, and in fact, who they are, based on my own situated interpretation” (1991: 9). This would be the case regardless of who the participants were, but the element of ‘Third World difference’ makes this especially problematic, in particular given that some of what must be included are participants’ expressions of gratitude for the support and assistance that GAP Unit provided, mirroring traditional North-South, giver-receiver dynamics. As a researcher I have to be constantly alive to my own complicity in what I am commenting on and critiquing, as well as to the temptation to make participants’ words serve my own political agenda.

Paulo Freire, standpoint, objectivity and the ‘new paradigm knowledge’

Brazilian theologian and educator Paulo Freire’s ideas for working with people who are marginalised and suffering injustice are integral to GAP Unit, as Carolina grew up in the milieu of the Freire-inspired popular education movement in Venezuela, trained as a social worker, town planner and educator and has dedicated her life to using his participatory methodologies to support the empowerment of people who are facing poverty, injustice and marginalisation. Like all of our projects, Arise and Shine was guided by Freirian principles. Freire was inspired by Gramsci’s insights into the ‘hegemonic’ nature of domination and subordination, and the role that critical education could play in disrupting it (Ledwith & Springett 2010:159). One of his main contributions was the idea that by interrogating the sources of their problems, exploring together their needs and developing strategies for meeting them, people acquire the power to free themselves, practically and mentally, from domination. Becoming conscious, through dialogue, of the political causes of their oppression and entering a cycle of action and reflection in order to spiral towards greater freedom through demanding rights and resisting injustice, is a process Freire described as ‘praxis’, in which individual and group empowerment occur together. “As

people become aware of the conditions of their existence, they acquire the ability to intervene and change it” (Freire, 1986: 80-1). Where oppressors or systems of power become tyrannical and resist all efforts at change, gaining knowledge of their situation is nevertheless vital for subjects of that power, who can develop tactics for resistance, even if just “in the private, personal space”, Hill-Collins (2000:118) notes, of their consciousness: “Equally fundamental, this type of change is also empowering... Becoming empowered through self-knowledge, even within conditions that severely limit one's ability to act, is essential” (2000:118). Freire’s most famous work is *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), but he continued to publish throughout his life, adding race, gender and ecological perspectives into his writing. He understood that power permeates all relationships, and that we are created as subjects out of power relations. Like Foucault, he saw knowledge and power as inseparable, so that raising people’s ‘critical consciousness’ of the social order in which they are embedded would be the way to enact its transformation. What Freire called ‘conscientisation’ was taken up by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements in the USA, and feminist ‘consciousness raising’ groups began around the same time. His theories have been influential among feminist thinkers (as the quote above from Hill-Collins attests). Black American feminist bell hooks, who drew attention to the gender ‘blind spot’ in Freire’s early work, nevertheless acclaimed him for providing the conceptual tools with which she came to understand her own oppression (hooks 1993:150). Feminist Standpoint Theory is a case in point. Standpoint describes the “achieved collective identity or consciousness” (Bowell, 2011) of oppressed groups which “grows out of encountering oppositional knowledge - through readings, attending talks and workshops, reflection, and/or participating in groups” (Wood, 2009 :398). It is not the knowledge which comes automatically as the result of occupying a particular social location, but “the political achievement of those whose social location forms its starting point” (Bowell, 2011), the result of “a collective process occurring through the recognition and acknowledgment of others who occupy more or less the same standpoint as oneself” (Bowell, 2011). It is not hard to draw parallels here with Freire and ‘conscientisation’.

Feminists who employ ‘standpoint’ remain interested especially in promoting the standpoint knowledge of women. However, feminist theory has evolved beyond the absolutism and essentialism which once led to claims that there is such thing as a ‘women’s standpoint’ or even a unique ‘feminist standpoint’. Instead it is accepted that the forces shaping social location are multiple, intersectional and productive of multiple perspectives. Early standpoint theorists such as Harding (1993) believed that people in

subordinated situations have a more complete knowledge of the social world, because their survival depends on them understanding the practices and perspectives of their oppressors as well as their own, whereas “this epistemic bi-polarity is neither required of, nor available to, the dominant” (Bowell, 2001). This makes sense up to a point, but if a standpoint is achieved through active efforts at grasping oppositional knowledge, it should be possible, if more difficult, for members of the dominant group as well. In fact, Arise and Shine’s awareness raising with decision makers was premised on just this possibility. As Hekman outlines, the main problem with original formulations of feminist standpoint theory lay in two incompatible assumptions:

that all knowledge is located and situated, and that one location, that of the standpoint of women, is privileged because it provides a vantage point that reveals the truth of social reality. It is my thesis that the deconstruction of this second assumption is implicit in the first and that as the theory developed the problematic nature of the second assumption came to the forefront. Another way of putting this is that a new paradigm of knowledge was implicit in the first formulations of feminist standpoint theory, a definition of knowledge as situated and perspectival, but that these first formulations retained elements of the paradigm it was replacing (2004: 227).

Assister comes at both problems in a useful way, through the observation that humans hold shared knowledge about one another:

I know that I need food, liquid and shelter. I know that everyone else has needs like these as well. Each one of us knows these simple facts about each other... In this sense, our knowledge is collective, universal and reciprocal. It is also quite independent of power differentials... I know that you know that I have these needs. You have similar knowledge about me. As a material being, then, I am a genuinely universal subject that possesses knowledge that is relative only to the community of all human beings (Assiter, 2000: 335).

She calls this knowledge “epistemic empathy” (2000: 335). In her view, “any purported knowledge that arises from ‘communities’ that have treated some individuals or groups as less than human” (2000: 336) is worth less than that which arises from communities which have not. The reason is that in failing to exercise their universal knowledge, such communities are indulging in wilful ignorance. Reality is obscured, so their conclusions cannot be as valid. The ‘new paradigm’ (post-structuralist / post-modern) thinking which Hekman invokes is accused by some feminists of leaving no means by which those who are oppressed can argue for a more just, ‘better’ social arrangement, because all are relative. Assiter’s theory retains the ability to distinguish knowledge we can better trust, and shows it to be available, in theory, to all. By grounding knowledge in something as material as biological need, a metanarrative which applies across all cultures, she also

neatly by-passes the problem of relativism which can be associated with the claim that reality is socially and discursively constructed.

The debate about the social construction of reality is important, and in Hekman's view, feminist standpoint theory has played a key role in moving feminist theory to an accommodation with the insights of post-structuralism. Because of the dualistic thinking within it, it has had the effect of problematising "absolutes and universals" (Hekman 2004: 234). Some feminists feared that acknowledging that everyone has their own "partial perspective" (Hill-Collins, 2000: 247) would lead to the conclusion that "all visions are equal" (Hill-Collins, 1990: 235), undermining ambitions for a more just world. Hekman explains that while new paradigm thinkers such as Foucault would insist that "the vision of the oppressed is itself another discourse, not the apprehension of 'true' reality", he would also consider this counterhegemonic discourse as likely to be "closer to... a definition of a less repressive society" (2004: 245). Much feminist theory now accepts that politics is possible without being "grounded in absolute, universal principles and enacted by political agents defined as universal subjects" (2004: 357). Politics is, instead:

a local and situated activity undertaken by discursively constituted subjects. Political resistance, furthermore, is defined as challenging the hegemonic discourse that writes a particular script for a certain category of subjects. Resistance is effected by employing other discursive formations to oppose that script, not by appealing to universal subjectivity or absolute principles (Hekman, 2004: 357).

When refugees and asylum seekers come together to deliberate, problems with the existing 'script' are exposed and they formulate a new script to take out into the world. Freire insisted on popular education facilitators being committed to "allowing room for participants' freedom of expression, experience, diversity, culture, spontaneity and critical thinking" (Oteyza 2007), and this seems more and more crucial as I understand that the facilitator, having a different social location and possibly different values, may want to bring their own perspective to bear on the script. It may sometimes be appropriate for the facilitator to own their own perspective and offer it into the process of dialogue, but this could result in an imposition. Feminist theory teaches the importance of attending to the situated knowledge of participants, rather than assuming that there is a right way of achieving change and an obvious goal to reach for. Ferguson shows that there are two paths which feminists can adopt. The first is interpretation, which is:

usually a subject-centred project. Its search for truth privileges the self-understanding of either the individual or the collective (or some individuals or some collectives), while at the same time acknowledging that there is always more to the self than the existing self-

understanding makes available. Interpretation always has to balance the ability of power to distort the worldview of the powerless with the ability of the oppressed to comprehend and transcend their confinement (1991: 328).

The second is genealogy, which sees “subjectivity and intersubjectivity are themselves the effects of power” (1991: 328) and which:

is not an adversary of interpretation or of political affirmation as such but of those modes of interpretation and affirmation that insist on treating the subject or the community or something beyond them as a unified ground of human being (1991: 336).

Genealogy constantly points to the examples which do not fit, and opposes interpretation for expecting “understandings of the world clearly and neatly to specify values and actions” and a “deductive link between what is, what ought to be, and what must be done” (1991: 337). Ferguson’s solution is to take both interpretation and genealogy together, and embrace the irony that results. She sees this as:

a way to keep oneself within a situation that resists resolution in order to act politically without pretending that resolution has come. Irony is not a substitute for other forms of political struggle, but a vehicle for enabling political actions that resist the twin dangers of paralysis (nothing can be done because no final truth can be found) and totalization (there is one way to do things, the way reflecting the truth that has been found) (1991: 338).

She concludes that:

The tension between longing for and being wary of a secure ontological and epistemological home, if handled ironically, need not be a source of despair; it can instead produce an appropriate humility concerning theory and an ability to sustain the contrary pull of continuing to want what cannot be fully had. Rather than thinking of the tensions between the interpretive and genealogical impulses as contradictions that we must resolve, we might better approach them as riddles that we must engage, wherein affirmations are always tied to ambiguity and resolutions to endless deferral (1991: 339).

This is what Keevers means when (referencing Lather) she speaks of the need for feminists to “to be accountable to both the complexities of research and action for social justice while attending ‘to poststructural suspicions of rationality, philosophies of presence and universalising projects’ (Lather, 2007: 16)?” (2009: 62).

What were the ironies, then, within *Arise and Shine*? The main one arose from the need of asylum seekers to demand their recognition, acceptance and inclusion on the basis of a need for humanitarian protection, leaving unchallenged a policy regime which operates according to “the hierarchical differentiation and racial classification of populations from

‘the’ European perspective” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2010) and which thus contributes to the general racism to which they are exposed. In Arise and Shine, as in most advocacy and awareness-raising of this kind, the asylum identity is used to draw a moral distinction, implicitly, or explicitly, between the victim of persecution, forced against her will to seek protection under the Geneva Convention, and the opportunistic economic migrant who is merely seeking a better life. Yet the moral framework behind humanitarianism is based not on a ‘universal ethics’ or a ‘set of common values’, but on values which are situated, partial and embedded in the capitalist world order, particularly in their failure to problematise the underlying racialised hierarchies framing access to citizenship status (Millner, 2012:13-14).

Do we have to trade off what can be achieved in the here and now against the transformations necessary for a socially just world in which liveability and flourishing can be expanded? It seems that the two are definitely in tension. Freire was clear that “we have to engage with the logic of the system to be effective” (Mayo, 2003: 43). He insisted, according to Mayo, on the need to be “tactically inside and strategically outside the system” and talked of the need to “experience the tension involved in trying to move toward the ‘transformative end’ of the continuum while being pushed toward the other end by the material forces with which we contend daily” (2003: 43). Postmodernism calls into question the belief that there is “some sort of truth which can tell us how to act in the world in ways that benefit or are for the (at least ultimate) good of all” (Flax, 1992: 447), and this was a salutary lesson for me. I was conscious of the ways in which the Arise and Shine process neglected to challenge neoliberal assumptions; reinforced, occasionally, an essentialised view of womanhood; and was orientated towards ensuring inclusion for a particular social group, using liberal tactics. But this was never the point, because “resistance must be carried out in local struggles against the many forms of power exercised at the everyday level of social relations” (Sawicki, 1991: 23). As Foucault pointed out, people:

do not look for the ‘chief enemy’ but for the immediate enemy. Nor do they expect to find a solution to their problem at a future date (that is, liberations, revolutions, end of class struggle). In comparison with a theoretical scale of explanations or a revolutionary order which polarizes the historian, they are anarchistic struggles (1982: 780).

I had always struggled with the CD paradigm; its concern always to value what participants identify as their starting points for action, which will usually mean going for small victories, trying to win concessions from an oppressive system rather than to

challenge it and its insistence on a need to engage with existing institutions to win resources, recognition and rights (Newman 2012). Ferguson helped me to see that we can work within existing political norms, structures, identities and institutions while also holding out for their eventual transformation. There is nothing strange about taking one stance as an ally to an oppressed group in their struggle, and another as a member of a radical political movement, such as No Borders. It is Hekman, again, who explains, in feminist terms, why it is not futile to make radical demands such as a call to end capitalist relations and nation states:

we live in a world devoid of a normative metanarrative. But we can offer persuasive arguments in defense of our values and the politics they entail. Some of these arguments will be persuasive: in the past decades feminists have been successful in beginning to change the parameters of patriarchal economic and political institutions. Other arguments will not be persuasive. But by advancing both persuasive and unpersuasive arguments, feminists are, in the process, changing the norms of what constitutes an argument (2004: 238-239).

Post-structuralism also teaches that “We do not function independently; we are all deeply interconnected with each other... and while we undergo social construction by others, at the same time... we construct others too” (Maydell, 2010). As participant observer in the Arise and Shine group, I was also able to unlearn aspects of my identity, and to sharpen and reshape my political analysis.

‘Race’ and ‘difference’

The participants gave spontaneous answers to interview questions or took part in recorded discussions on issues they may never have reflected on (as I had not prior to the PhD) and with little sense of what in particular I would pick up on in my analysis and why. There are several things to be wary of when it comes to making public such dialogue, in which ‘othering’ and generalisation - inevitable components of everyday rhetoric - may be present. There is the danger of reinforcing stereotypes at one remove (via the words of respondents) as well as of neglecting to represent participants’ views and realities because of a desire to avoid the former. For example, if a woman speaks out about gender oppression within her community, it might be tempting to suppress this to avoid “culture-blaming” (Batsleer et al, 2001: 33). The solution usually lies in the framing; looking at the origins of stereotypes; pointing to structural causes for factors observed and the fact that the women observe them. Many Arise and Shine women have lived in the UK for years, exposed to the discourses circulating in the UK media and society along with everyone else. Their views will have been shaped by or against these, as by the equivalent (in an age

of globalisation, often similar) hegemonic ideas which surrounded them prior to migration. But personal contact is also of course a major factor in the production of 'received ideas'. If the only people an asylum seeker has met from a particular country had to flee due to persecution, her view of that society might be coloured by the knowledge, as in Sofia's comment that:

Asian and any women, they are shocked when they come here, because they couldn't believe how women could get together, especially in these countries- India countries, they are not allowed to challenge their husbands or anything because if they challenge you they will throw acid from the in-laws which is... That's why I think it's not everybody knows this [that there can be women's groups] (Sofia, interview).

Equally, when the only British people you encounter are overstretched (and/or jobsworth) public servants or underpaid employees of private security firms, your impressions might be negatively skewed, as illustrated by Florence's remark on what she learned from performing the play:

I realised there are British people- that not everyone is the same... there are British people out there who understand what the asylum system is (Florence, play evaluation session).

At the same time, there is a need to acknowledge uncomfortable differences and to draw attention to Western historical complicity or causality in oppressive cultural norms in parts of the world where several centuries of intervention have had multiple effects. For example, the women's construction of 'African men' is a stereotype which reflects their experience. Rut did not go into detail about women's groups in Ethiopia, but, maybe to avoid giving the impression that it is culturally inappropriate to have mixed groups, explained that:

In Africa when are all these boys, always they are the owners, or, if you say something they are not accepting you, say 'No, just shuddup and listen' what you have talken, so I can't answer back, that's why I am choosing [to be in groups with] only girls (Rut, interview).

Race as 'othering' or claimed?

It has already been mentioned that critical feminist theory teaches us to play down the difference between migrants and non-migrants to avoid reinstating them/us binaries and to disrupt stereotypes about non-Western women. However, I did not learn this from theory but from experience. The relationships between Carolina and myself and the Arise and Shine women, as between me and other refugees and migrants of my acquaintance, were built on something intangible best described as trust. That we have different histories,

experiences, worldviews and positions of privilege in the UK context goes without saying, yet genuine relationships based on mutual respect, shared interest and common experiences are undeniably possible. A major representational concern was therefore that the research located me and the women in fixed and opposite categories – me as White and Western, them as Black and from the Majority World. Post-colonial theory requires the researcher to ‘own’ her position and to pay attention to her representation of Third World women, yet this supposedly ethical precondition has potential consequences for the individuals concerned. We collaborated over several years on a project, came to know each other, negotiated relationships, and the participants talked openly and helped and encouraged me with this research. Should they, then, have to read about themselves framed in terms of identities they represent, not as the people they are? In terms of emphasising our racial difference, for example, my fear was that they would think that all along I had been looking through a ‘race lens’, rather than experiencing us as a united group against the immigration system. When people say they are colour-blind it often signals a denial of their own and society’s racism, but surely it is credible that among a small group of women of different backgrounds, skin colour and nationality did not determine every interaction nor prevent common bonds and connections? I was concerned that such talk might exacerbate existing sensitivities, thinking in particular of some comments by Tendayi, who emigrated to the UK to escape the worsening political situation in Zimbabwe and to further her career and her ambitions for her children. That she was a Black woman coming to a predominantly White country had, she suggested to me, not fully registered before arrival, so for her, as for many of her fellow Zimbabweans, the casual racism she encountered was unexpected and unforeseen. Her memory of being asked her ethnicity for a monitoring form early in her stay starkly shows that race was just not part of her self-definition. She was Tendayi; a woman, yes, but a Black woman? Blackness had never been relevant to her identity before, and finding it to be so came as a blow and an ominous sign that henceforth her race would *matter* a great deal:

- Tendayi:** The most disempowering (laugh) thing that has ever happened to me was being called Black (laughs). Yes! Nobody had ever referred to me like that, and at first- it’s only now, I’m just saying ‘Whatever people call me, I know who I am’. Mm.
- Hannah:** Do you just mean on a general level, that you would even be referred to as a Black community or-
- Tendayi:** No. Yes! er
- Hannah:** Or are you talking about somebody face-to-face giving you- telling you something?
- Tendayi:** No, it’s not someone telling me er face-to-face, because you are never told that face-to-face. But when you fill in those forms, or when you are asked

about your ethnicity, and so forth, they will say ‘Oh now, er, what do you consider your-’ At least these days it is different, they will just put it, they will give this thing to you, or paper, for you to say ‘Where do you think you fit there?’ But the first time it was read out to me. Yes. To say ‘What’s your ethnicity from?’, all this. Then I- my mind was saying ‘What?! What is he trying to say to, to me?’ (laughs). Right.

Other Zimbabweans I have consulted also held the view that Black identity politics is something which makes sense to people who have grown up in a White-majority, racist country, but is something new to consider when you have not. Research (e.g. Dustmann et al, 2010; Coll & Marks, 2011) indicates that this partly explains the higher educational achievement of the children of recent African migrants than that of third generation Black children, once other demographic factors are accounted for. The thesis is that growing up in communities whose aspirations have been blunted by years of denied opportunity and racism affects the expectations of Black British young people, whereas those in new migrant families, who have been exposed to other discourses, have a greater sense of entitlement and confidence. Tendayi says of her children:

I’ve groomed them to participate on a world stage, and I used to tell them, especially these two, my daughter and the older- I used to tell them that ‘You grew up in the capital city of Zimbabwe, you are not going to stay in here whether you like it or not. Look beyond’. Yes. So, if you want to go beyond and participate and commit on that, you must be prepared (Tendayi, play evaluation meeting).

She was not thinking “I want my children to participate on a world stage, although they are obviously handicapped by being Black and from a Third World country”. Living in Britain, dealing with everyday racism, such as when teachers placed one of her sons in a remedial class and refused to engage with her about the mistake, racial hierarchy has now loomed unavoidably into view. But Tendayi remains, or tries to remain, resolute. Ang finds it ironic that Black and other identities created by “the objectification of ‘others’ by White/Western subjects” have become “the necessary and inescapable points of identification from which these ‘others’ can take charge of their own destinies in a world not of their own making” (Ang, 2003: 200). But Tendayi and other (male and female) Zimbabweans I have spoken to speak of resisting, whenever possible, both their objectification as black *and* Black as a point of political identification. Ang has a stark view of global race relations. She says:

Black women like hooks operate in the certainty that they will *never* acquire the power to rule the world; they know that this world - White-dominated, Western, capitalist modernity - is quite simply not theirs, and can never be. This fundamental sense of

permanent dislocation, this feeling of always being a foreigner in a world that doesn't belong to you, is what all those who are 'othered' - racialised or ethnicised - in relation to White/Western hegemony share. (Ang, 2003: 197)

“Black women like [bel] hooks” – but is the African American woman’s certainty necessarily common to all Black women all over the globe? If it is not, is that because they haven’t realised it yet? (and is Ang, an Asian Australian, in a position to judge?). Ang continues:

It is important to emphasise, at this point, that White/Western hegemony is not a random psychological aberration but the systemic consequence of a global historical development over the last 500 years - the expansion of European capitalist modernity throughout the world, resulting in the subsumption of all 'other' peoples to its economic, political and ideological logic and mode of operation. Whiteness and Westernness are closely interconnected; they are two sides of the same coin... It is the globalisation of capitalist modernity which ensures the structural insurmountability of the White/non-White and Western/non-Western divide, as it is cast in the very infrastructure - institutional, political, economic - of the modern world (Wallerstein 1974). In other words, whether we like it or not, the contemporary world system is a *product* of White/Western hegemony, and we are all, in our differential subjectivities and positionings, implicated in it (2003: 197).

Any further commentary on this would be more valuable if provided by the participants of Arise and Shine. Alcoff has pointed out that the possibility of dialogue is often “left unexplored or inadequately pursued by more privileged persons” (2008: 128), and this was more or less the case with my study as, despite the enviable willingness of the group to co-operate, I felt increasingly behind and short of time. Eschle and Manguerra have written that “...feminists emphasise the importance of forging knowledge through a process of open-ended dialogue with others from different social and epistemic locations. It is only by means of this collective process... that a fuller, more inclusive understanding of reality can be constructed” (2010: 14). Frisby et al, too, would be in favour of reconvening the group order to thrash out some of these difficult issues:

We have and others have found that one of the best ways to theorize is to collectively ask questions to get at the underlying power dynamics contributing to patterns of domination, subordination, and oppression. It is by raising questions across many facets of social life including lived experience, identities, social structural and cultural discourses, that the gaps in existing explanatory frameworks are revealed (Frisby et al, 2009: 24-25).

There has not yet been time for such a conversation, but I intend to bring it for discussion at a future get-together. The Arise and Shine group has officially ceased to exist, but we often try to gather. GAP Unit grant applications generally include a column for core costs,

but since we don't have many there is always a bit of money to serve as a post-Arise and Shine fund, whether for contributing towards a doctor's report for an asylum appeal hearing, or for reconvening the group to share food and catch up. Most recently four of us met in a café, with GAP Unit covering the lunch and bus fares, so that I could discuss questions arising from the research with them. This was very useful (and I will see others who were unable to come, another time) but there was not enough time to discuss Ang's proposition. One of the questions discussed was whether I should recommend, in the thesis, that allies working with female migrants could instigate a process of reflecting on gender issues, as well as focussing on the explicit struggle to improve the asylum system and educate the public about refugees. I mentioned that at the Barcelona conference on feminism and migration ('FEMIGRA') which Carolina and I attended in 2012, representatives of three female migrant worker groups talked about their feminist agenda and how they saw it as their role to encourage women who joined the group "with their eyes closed" to start thinking about their socialisation as women and about their visions for citizenship not just in terms of their status as migrants but as women. They apparently deliberate collectively on questions such as "How can we self-reflect on patriarchy in order to escape it? What is it we want as women? Where are we going?" Elinah, Chenai and Sofia's unanimous opinion was that such discussions might be interesting, but it would depend on the individuals involved. They agreed that the Barcelona case was slightly different from ours, in that the women were migrant workers, not asylum seekers, and the groups led by women who were migrants themselves (true also of Carolina, but she was perceived more as part of the host society than as sharing their predicament). Their sound advice was simply to "suggest it as a topic, ask the women do we want to talk about these things?" and proceed accordingly.

Nation ≠ culture

Because the Arise and Shine participants were from many different countries, in my account of the interviews there was a temptation to use nationality as a descriptor – "Rut from Ethiopia" and so on. This is a form of methodological nationalism; reifying the nation as a natural unit of humanity. I toyed with leaving out all reference to participants' nationality given that I am writing out of an ideological commitment to a future world without states, but this would have both denied the importance of national background to the women's self-identities and homogenised them as a group from the majority world, risking erasure of what might be relevant historical and cultural differences while making a grand 'othering' move. I did briefly consider not mentioning my own nationality either,

following the edict that it is better to emphasise “the commonalities of a shared meaningful social world” between “migrants and the majority society” (Lutz, 2011: 254). But I realised that the main outcome would have been to obscure my relative privilege as a citizen vis a vis non-citizens, preventing proper analysis of the role of allies and the issues they need to reflect on. A better way to avoid playing up the differences between migrants and non-migrants is to show the constructedness of identities and their evolving and contingent nature.

When nationality is invoked in the context of explaining an aspect of culture, or even as a short hand for culture, it works to entrench and normalise assumptions. As Anne Phillips notes: “Culture is now widely employed in a discourse that denies human agency, defining individuals through their culture as the explanation of virtually everything they say or do.” (2010: 3). The trick is to prevent too much meaning from being attached to the label, since any meaning is likely to be assembled from stereotypes. Most importantly, it must be clearly signalled that while two or more individuals might broadly be described as sharing a cultural or national background, it need have no bearing on the way they respond to any aspect of life. On the scale of a qualitative study (large-scale statistical surveys might be different), I am no more likely, as an English woman, to have a particular view on, say, women-only organising, than one from France. This sounds obvious, but there is often a temptation to perceive cultures and societies (especially African societies, where merely specifying the country can make a statement seem particularised compared to the generalisation “in Africa...”) as both fundamentally different from one another and homogeneous within themselves. Such a concept of difference, which also portrays culture as transmitted intact from one generation to the next, is constructed much of the time through political discourse which underlines what separates people. The multi-cultural nature of the Arise and Shine project makes it useful for disrupting myths about ‘background’ and demonstrating the dangers of generalising and extrapolating from singular examples. It is a reminder of the need to think always in terms of particularities and specificities in both community work and research. “Attending to differences is enabling”, writes Burman, “not by talking of differences in general, but by talking of particular, but situationally constructed, specificities” (2003: 297).

Identity and terminology

Refugees were once commonly constructed as heroic, political and enterprising, the term ‘refugee’ “a marker of socio-cultural identity, shared past or common vision for a future”

(Doná 2007: 217). Over time, however, it has become primarily a legal definition and administrative label, much like 'asylum seeker', which came to prominence as a separate category in the 1990s. However, 'asylum seeker' refers to the limbo state which, if prolonged, quickly becomes associated with negative lived experiences, and has more pejorative connotations than refugee in the public imagination. Many allies and academics therefore use the more affirmative 'refugee' inclusively to encompass people at any stage of the asylum process. Others, especially those who advocate free movement, use only 'migrant' so as not to reinforce state-imposed distinctions which suggest different degrees of legitimacy. Some of those who differentiate asylum seekers from refugees prefer it in its adjectival form: 'asylum seeking women' instead of 'women asylum seekers', for example. This avoids imposing the legal category 'asylum seeker' as a person's primary (official) identity; the main identity category is the more universal one denoted by the noun, which is sub-defined by depicting them as active, future-orientated agents. I have not consistently avoided the former construction because in everyday life the Arise and Shine women have acquiesced to or appropriated the term 'asylum seeker' as their political identity in this and other contexts.

One of her research participants, Sarah, told Faris, "it is very difficult being an asylum seeker or a failed asylum seeker – you get the feeling there must be something wrong with you and you feel bad inside" (quoted in Faris, 2006: 51). However, in her exploration of the phenomenon of 'asylum identity', Hunt saw asylum seekers as an example of a group who are often able to resist the fixing operation of the identity category and to draw upon it, especially collectively, as something enabling (Hunt 2005). My perception is that many people recognise it to be merely descriptive of their citizenship status, with personal experience telling them whether and in what situations it is expedient to reveal it to others, thereby exercising agency as "pragmatic chameleons" (Malkki, 1995b: 169). For example, I spoke to a man on a train who had learned to introduce himself as an overseas student rather than a refugee, to avoid triggering intrusive questions⁸, and Stuart cites an interviewee who told her "I pretend to be a student, otherwise if you tell them that I'm, asylum seeker then ah, it's, they go away from me... they'll have a prejudgement" (Dr Fabian, M, 30s, asylum seeker) (2005: 509).

⁸ It seems he trusted me with the true story of his arrival - unconscious under a lorry driven from Calais

Others prefer to self-identify as asylum seekers in order not to be taken for economic migrants, or to reveal their refugee identity rather than be assumed to be asylum seekers. They may also seek out and join groups for/of asylum seekers, or strategically inhabit the identity for political purposes, without it having particular relevance to them on a personal level. For example Lydia, an Arise and Shine member, considered herself a refugee - someone who had left home in need of refuge - throughout her six years as an asylum seeker. Nevertheless, she wrote a play called *How I Became an Asylum Seeker* and happily declared her membership of Women Asylum Seekers Together. Feminist sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis theorised this using the concept of positionality to clarify the distinction between identity and social location:

When it is said that people belong to a particular sex, race, class or nation, that they belong to a particular age group, kinship group or a certain profession, we are talking about people's social and economic locations, which at each historical moment would tend to carry with them particular weights in the grids of power relations operating in their society (2011: 12).

People are not only located in multiple categories, but the categories are positioned along axes of power relative to one another, their 'positionality' being different in different contexts and also often "fluid and contested" (2011: 13). Because they are constructed over multiple power vectors of difference, social locations must therefore always be considered intersectionally. Additionally, in identity-making, the (fluctuating) boundaries between the 'me' and the 'not me', and between 'us' and 'them' need not be symmetrical and mutual. Constructions of identity can, therefore, be forced on people by more powerful others, by institutional power and by hegemonic discourses which suppress the availability of other narratives and close down opportunities for people to come together and dialogically forge other identities (Yuval-Davis, 2011: 18). In such cases people's social locations and positionings can become internalised and inhabited as personal identities. But because identity and social location are different things, it is possible to struggle against imposed identity. This is the basis of Freire's method of conscientisation and is Fanon's (1967) reason for arguing, as paraphrased by Yuval-Davis that "politics of resistance need to be directed not only towards oppressed people's social and economic locations, but also against their internalizations of forced constructions of self and identity" (2011: 18). Such a process need not mean rejecting the identity itself; it could instead involve people deciding for themselves which roles and traits typically associated with their group they are willing to accept or refuse, and how they wish to be seen and treated by others. Another feminist, Jamieson, writes that when a categorisation of humans has "profound social

consequences for those labeled” (2005:7) it is “likely to be consequential for the self-identity of the categorised” (2005:8). However, she emphasises that this “does not necessarily mean that those attributed with membership experience themselves as being this category in any profound sense” (2005:7) and also that “people who have taken on badges of group identity nevertheless may choose to selectively resist identity attribution, using a range of strategies to reject being categorised as group members, challenging aspects of culturally available stereotypes of their group” (2005:8). So imposed identities such as refugee/asylum seeker can be resisted, ignored, adopted tactically or internalised, depending on the individual and the situation. They may also be adopted without the person understanding the connotations of particular words for others, due to lack of language fluency.

Most research in the field of refugee/forced migration studies looks at either asylum seekers or refugees, especially policy or practice-relevant research which aims to identify issues connected with a particular aspect of the immigration ‘journey’. The Arise and Shine group, and hence this study, includes not just both, but women who were neither according to the usual definitions; so the range of concerns and experiences recounted is broader. Some of what was shared would be common to the migrant experience in general, but refugees raise different topics from those still dealing with the asylum process, and someone who has previously worked in the UK but overstayed a visa will have a different perspective again. While this lack of specificity might make the research less useful for certain readers, the advantage is that it shows legal categories being made subservient to a richer reality of connection and solidarity. It fits with feminism’s affinity for “alliances across difference” and its concern to disrupt rather than reify discursively constructed groupings (Burman, 2012).

Research ethics

As this chapter has shown, both the Arise and Shine project and the research process were founded on a commitment to challenging injustice, demonstrating care and taking responsibility for power arising in relationships due to differences in positioning (on multiple axes) and access to discursive and material resources. Consistent with both Freirian practice and a critical feminist research ethic, the intention was to empower and do good, rather than to avoid causing harm. Stanley and Wise write that “one strand of what is ethically important for feminist researchers is the quality of research relationships and the preservation of trust within them” (1993: 201), alongside which go epistemological

concerns: “*whose* knowledge, seen in *what* terms, around *whose* definitions and standards, and judged by *whose* as well as *what* criteria, should count as ‘knowledge’ itself” (1993: 202). This aspect of the feminist research ethic, the “commitment to inquiry about how we inquire” (Ackerly & True, 2008: 695), was discussed above in relation to the need for reflexivity. What is defined as ‘good’ and by and for whom in any particular context is far from straightforward. While feminist researchers should attempt to ensure the “moral adequacy” (Stanley & Wise 1993: 203) of our actions at every stage, it will not necessarily make the research ethical, since we “cannot be aware of all our insensibilities”(White & Bailey, 2004: 138) and thus will “fall hopelessly short of any sense of ethical enlightenment” (2004: 138). Alldred cautions that “ethical research is simply not possible in an unjust world... Taking up a position as one who knows, in relation to those who are oppressed, is fraught with ethical problems which are not assuaged by good intentions” (1999: 214). All we can do is exercise judgment informed by conscience and “make explicit both the nature of the dilemmas we face, and the losses, as well as gains, that result from our decisions” (Alldred, 1999: 206).

Formally, I was required to complete an ‘Ethics Check Form’ with my PhD proposal. If I had said ‘yes’ to one question it would have triggered the need to complete a full Ethical Approval Form, for assessment by the university’s Ethics Committee. Fortunately I was able to honestly answer no to all of them, as I was not keen to get caught up in a potentially complicating and delaying process when I was confident that I could rely on my supervisors for guidance regarding ethical practice. One of the questions was:

Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities, your own students)?

I answered ‘no’, but this is an example of where the tick box approach to ethics falls short of the realities of research, since it suggests it is possible for researcher and participant to know what it is they are being asked to consent to at the outset. This is why some critics argue that codes of ethical practice “may have the effect of forestalling rather than initiating researchers’ reflexive and continuing engagement with ethical research practice” (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002: 18). ‘Ethical approval’ implies that adherence to formalistic principles means ethical issues have been taken care of before the project has begun. In practice, goals shift, investigations develop in unexpected directions and time pressures compromise good intentions. My resolve to involve my participants in every stage of the

analysis, for example, gradually broke down as opportunities came and went and the work was still not ready to be shared.

It was at the first Arise and Shine group meeting (Phase 2) that I announced my plan to make their ‘campaign’ the focus of a PhD studentship; mentioned that it was a way of financing my work with GAP Unit; and requested permission to record future meetings. The women seemed unconcerned, but thinking back to who was there, two probably did not understand what I was asking, and it was unfeasible to have expected anyone to voice an objection in such circumstances, had they had one. This underlines the foggy nature of ‘consent’ and partly explains why (even though I am fairly sure all the members were either happy about or indifferent to what I was doing) I always felt awkward placing the voice recorder on the table at the start of meetings and reluctant to restate, at intervals, that I was a researcher as well as facilitator. This resistance manifested itself in me forgetting several times to bring the recorder. In the end I only transcribed those meetings designated as project evaluations and the one set up explicitly for me to feedback and engage the women in discussing my research questions.

As well as ensuring informed consent, university ethics protocols aim to protect “those being researched, the researcher, and the institution” (Birch et al, 2002: 4) by ensuring “confidentiality, anonymity, reliability and validity” (2002: 5). I assume ethics panels negotiate the details and nuances of each case, as the list is quite simplistic. Anonymity would have been hard to achieve for some of my participants, in particular those with a public profile such as Lydia and Sofia, and it would have been almost impossible to present a case study and to comment meaningfully on the local refugee sector if every organisation had been disguised (if some were not, others would have been identifiable from them). When asked at the interview, the seven women I spoke to in depth all gave permission for me to use their own names. They did not foresee any problems in owning their opinions and wanted to be acknowledged for their contribution to knowledge production. Aware that this might change when they reflected hard on the final report and my analysis, I sent each a list of the quotes of theirs which I had used for them to check they were happy with them. This method was not ideal because of the absence of framing context to the quotes – both because it would have meant seeing unapproved passages from other people and because I did not want them to have to wade through an off-putting volume of text. Nevertheless, most were happy with no change, while three provided alternative first or surnames. I was no longer in contact with one interviewee and so took

the decision to alter both her name and details of her organisational affiliations. In doing so I contravened her own preference, two years earlier, for full disclosure. I went through the same verification process with everyone (other Arise and Shine and WAST members, activists, academics and practitioners) who had been a source of attributed or anonymised information, to check I had accurately quoted or represented them. This led to a number of amendments and the omission of disputed material. I had ticked 'no' to use of participants' images on the Check Form, but four years later felt encouraged to illustrate parts of the thesis, so I sought clearance from those visible or named in the photographs I selected.

As researchers we have a duty of care to our participants not to misrepresent or expose them. There are also moral and ethical obligations, especially in engaged feminist research, not to reveal information which might put greater knowledge, and thus power, in the hands of already dominant forces. Research on migration topics is constantly commissioned by governments and agencies which want to limit international migration. Those who accept these contracts and interview migrants about, for example, their escape trajectories, are not conducting innocent research and are likely to be aware that their findings may be used to extend border controls and inform prevention operations. However, agencies are equally likely to scour pro-migrant literature, campaign websites and so on for similar information. This sets up a dilemma for committed researchers, one which is particularly problematic for ethnographers who want give their readers thorough and detailed 'thick descriptions'. The dilemma lies in wanting to demonstrate the positive agency and resourcefulness of migrants and/or deconstruct stereotypes and categories (for example breaking the myth that all refugees fear to tread ever again on home soil by speaking of the journeys people undertake once granted a British passport), and revealing information which could either fuel public hostility if twisted by the press, or assist the authorities in closing loopholes or understanding how to thwart people's survival strategies or tactics. De Certeau sees tactics as the "art of the weak" (1984: 37) and, points out that "the relative powerlessness of an individual differentiates their 'tactics' from the 'strategies' used by individuals able to act within the dominant system. In this respect, refugees and migrants are tactical actors, as they are systematically excluded from accessing the strategic possibilities of official systems" (Williams, 2006: 867). Information which helped break through stereotypes for me and increased my respect for participants' cleverness, boldness and persistence in pursuing justice for themselves and their families, has unfortunately mostly had to remain in my notes and my head, rather than risking them finding their way into a HO publication or the Daily Mail.

Chapter 3. Arise and Shine - action and outcomes

“Paulo Freire’s work (1972, 1973, 1990) is the starting point for many liberationist and participatory approaches to empowerment, especially in the areas of community work and collaborative research” (Adams, 2003: 29). Freirian methods have been taken up into different disciplines and developed in new directions: into the Black Consciousness Movement by Steve Biko in South Africa; sociology by Orlando Fals Borda in Colombia; community theatre by Augusto Boal in Brazil and psychology by Ignacio Martín-Baró in El Salvador, to mention just some famous examples. His insights have been influential in Britain since the 1960s, informing social work, adult education and community practice as well as action research perspectives and overseas development strategies: most group work explicitly aimed at ‘empowerment’ could be said to owe its methods to Freire.

For Waddington, community work should be “about the experience of personal liberation through collective activity... its particular mission is with the empowerment of dispossessed and excluded groups” (1994: 5). Maritza Montero, a Venezuelan liberation psychologist working in the tradition of Martín-Baró, states that “Community psychology has embraced empowerment as one of its main values and goals” (Montero, 2009: 159). Interesting, then, that the Spanish equivalent of the term ‘empowerment’ (‘empoderamiento’) was barely in Carolina’s vocabulary before coming to the UK. ‘La fortalecimiento de la mujer’ – ‘strengthening women’ was the phrase commonly used during her interventions in Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba⁹ and she continues to have doubts about ‘empowerment’:

Myself, am I 'empowered'? What does that mean? I do not want to be powerful, I would like to be strong and also accept my weaknesses, which make me human. Empowerment in relation to what? So many aspects in one's life anyway... (Carolina, email).

However, ‘disempowered’ was a word she could more easily embrace, finding it “closer to the word 'oppressed' we used to use in Latin America – when people are made to feel they are worthless, they cannot do anything, their lives are controlled by others.” The

⁹ In Latin America, according to Cecilia Sardenburg, there has been “a certain discomfort, if not mistrust” associated with the term ‘empowerment’, despite the fact that Freire-inspired liberatory work with women has been present in the region since at least the 1970s, when the first ‘action and reflection’ women’s groups were created and coalitions of social movements began to advocate for change in favour of women” (2008: 25) .

equivalence of disempowerment and oppression, and the notion that empowerment necessarily starts from a position of oppression, is reinforced by Allen when she says “just as domination and oppression are understood in terms of social, cultural, economic, and political relations that impede self-determination and self-development, empowerment must be understood in terms of social, cultural, economic, and political relations that foster and promote these same capacities” (Allen, 2008: 165). Something else Carolina was unfamiliar with was the concept of ‘community development’ as a profession, which has a complicated history in the UK context. It is often used interchangeably with ‘community work’ but can carry different connotations which have to be surmised from the context. As Taylor succinctly frames it, CD has over the years been engaged in “making [the state] work better and seeking to extend its provision, attacking it, defending it, and now either acting as its agent or seeking to find the cracks in the system through which empowerment can be drawn” (1995: 109). These have “reflected different analyses of power and the state: from consensus and system failure, to conflict and class interest, to a recognition of conflicts of interest within both state and community” (1995: 109).

When CD came to prominence in the UK in the 1970s it was as part of a wave of creative opposition to the post-war consensus. During the 1960s, many long-established ways in which power was held within society were exposed and undermined, and community workers, their practice inspired by newly translated Gramsci and Freire, were among those who rose against what was seen as the social control function of the welfare state (in which traditional social work was implicated). In Manchester, from the late sixties, networks of activists built autonomous, alternative institutions and physical infrastructure – including free presses, housing associations and the first advice centres and homeless shelters (in squatted buildings), as well as taking direct action to expose and challenge oppression (Graham, 2004). According to Ledwith, then a community worker:

Campaigning and activism were part of everyday life; we marched the streets carrying banners to say who we represented - Quakers, gay groups, civil rights activists – all joining together as one... We joined with the anti-deportation campaigns of the civil rights workers... It was a time of inspiration and hope (Ledwith 2011: 7-8).

However, by the late 1970s, “there was less optimism about achieving transformation through the alternative society” (Graham, 2004: 11). State sponsorship became seen by activists as a way to embed some of the social and political gains, and the attraction of paid jobs complemented their desire to challenge the classism, racism and sexism of public

institutions from within. In Ledwith's view, "after the election of the Thatcher government in 1979, the anti-state approach of radical community workers became an increasingly ineffective mechanism with which to challenge the declining social democratic consensus and the reactionary ideology of the New Right" (Ledwith 2011: 17). Through professionalisation and bureaucratisation, radical projects were recuperated for capitalism¹⁰, the activist base demobilised and spaces outside of capitalism, already narrow, began to diminish. By the end of the New Labour period in 2010, CD (other than where given the 'radical' tag by its instigators) had been mainstreamed and aligned with governmental strategies – helping groups becoming constituted, or facilitating their participation in engagement processes - as opposed to supporting mobilisation against capitalist forces or creating alternative structures independent of state funding. Not being keen on the connotations of state capture, but not being involved in anything especially radical either, GAP Unit generally avoids the term CD, preferring Freirian terminology such as 'group processes linked to action'. However, in the context of empowerment work with refugees the term is in widespread use, so is used where appropriate throughout this thesis.

Those who write about empowerment from a community work perspective generally emphasise two things. One is the centrality of relational processes which occur within groups: co-learning, development of collective conscience, feelings of well-being arising from solidarity or commonality. For example:

Social practices that are co-constructed, mutual, collaborative, and inclusive are key components of empowerment work (Chang-Muy, 2008: 88).

Empowerment... connects mental health and well-being to mutual help and to the creation of a responsive community (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995: 569).

The other is that empowerment involves engagement with the realm of politics. According to Hamburger et al, "Empowerment is a concept that links the individual and his or her well-being to the wider social and political environment in which he or she functions" (2008: 1776). For Johnson: "Although women can empower themselves by obtaining some control over different aspects of their daily lives, empowerment also suggests the need to gain some control over power structures, or change them" (1992: 148). Montero agrees

¹⁰ As Holloway points out, the capitalist attack - neoliberalism – "flows from the logic of capital, not from the policy options of governments, so that the very existence of the state is the problem, since the state is a form of capital" (Holloway, 2011).

that empowerment has to link to the political sphere, which she defines as “that of the production of words, symbols, meanings, and actions, which should be known by everyone because they affect the lives of the citizenry and the collective space they share” (2009: 150).

The Arise and Shine project had many elements of a classic ‘liberating empowerment’ project in the anti-oppressive practice community work tradition which draws on Freire. It proceeded according to certain values and principles, including recognition that well-being and oppression both have *political* and *psychological* dimensions (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002: 13) and that emancipatory work must combine critique – the recognition and naming of injustice – with collective visioning and the practice of hope and engagement in action to “bridge the gap between the ideal and the actual state of affairs” (2002: 160). It will be clear by now that empowerment is a ‘broad church’ term (my interviewees’ definitions can be found in [Table 7.](#), p.188) but not an easy one to avoid using in the context of a project like Arise and Shine. The literature around empowerment is extensive, so for the purposes of this study I limited my focus to authors who recognised A. the entwined nature of psychological and political dis/empowerment and B. that gaining power over one’s circumstances is achieved most easily in collectivity, with others who are facing marginalisation and/or with allies who are able to facilitate access to resources, contacts and information which is otherwise restricted. One research account I came across, a reflection on the acculturation of female Moroccan migrants in southern Spain, used a framework of analysis which I realised could be applied to Arise and Shine to generate useful comparisons. The article, *A Liberation Psychology Approach to Acculturative Integration of Migrant Populations* by García-Ramírez et al (2011), describes a process of empowerment following three levels or stages (empowerment being both a process and a state): intrapersonal, interpersonal and citizenship. These correspond to the personal, relational and societal levels familiar from Freirian popular education workshops, which always aim to ‘touch’ all three¹¹ (with a fourth dimension, ‘local community’, often added if the group emerges from a particular geographical location). The research looked at how migrant women in Andalusia had created a sense of home and belonging, overcoming many aspects of social exclusion. They had done so through their own efforts, without any

¹¹ Space is given for personal reflection and individuals’ ideas respected and valued, avoiding the monopolising of discussion by more articulate or dominant personalities. Other exercises are designed to foster mutual respect and appreciation of commonality among the group. Thirdly, connections are made between life experiences and the economic, social and political factors which determine them, motivating participants to perceive social injustice as it affects them or others, and to be aware of strategies for confronting them.

particular collaboration with allies in the host society, but the authors were interested in lessons their achievements might have for community psychologists, social workers or activists wanting to assist in the “psycho-political empowerment” (2011: 86) and integration of migrants.

García-Ramírez et al restate Berry’s influential model of acculturation, which sets out societies’ options vis a vis immigrants:

- melting pot, when assimilation of newcomers is preferred;
- segregation, when separation is forced by the dominant group;
- exclusion, when marginalisation is imposed by the dominant group; and
- multiculturalism¹², when cultural diversity is an accepted and valued feature of the society (2011: 87)

The model also predicts that whichever of the above is expressed in a society will influence the acculturation strategies adopted by migrants, namely:

- assimilation, “when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures” (Berry 2005: 705);
- separation, “when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others” (2005: 705);
- marginalization, “when there is little possibility or interest in heritage cultural maintenance, and little interest in having relations with others” (2005: 705); or
- integration, “an interest in both maintaining one’s heritage culture while in daily interactions with other groups” and “to participate as an integral part of the larger social network” (2005: 705)

García-Ramírez et al note that despite the official rhetoric around integration in Spain and elsewhere, segregation and exclusion have been the reality for non-Western immigrants in most European states (although official UK policy is a communitarian model of citizenship rights and obligations which relies on restricting the supply of new migrants while assimilating existing populations to the ‘British way’ (Jones, 2013)). In most European countries, too, “native groups gain and maintain privileges over newcomers, restricting their access to resources and limiting their capacity to respond” (García-Ramírez et al, 2011: 88). If they are not to remain marginalised, migrants must undergo a process of ‘acculturative integration’. García-Ramírez et al bring in understandings from liberation

¹² ‘Multiculturalism’ has taken on a variety of meanings and been multiply promoted and contested in the UK context in recent decades, so it is important here to focus on the authors’ intended meaning (when “cultural diversity is an accepted and valued feature of the society”) than on the word itself.

psychology, which, they say, “posits that every human group has the capacity to resist and repel the asymmetries of power” (2011: 89) and emphasises “the capacity of newcomers to reconstruct themselves in new contexts according to their interests, values and needs” (2011: 89). Consequently, their view of acculturative integration implies a self-construction process linked to the capacity of human beings to:

- create meaning and sense, and to act with intentionality;
- show reflexivity, or the capacity of thinking of oneself and society as a whole; and
- maintain one’s culture, which provides a symbolic system necessary to make sense of new encounters (2011: 88).

Such a process involves:

- acquisition, development and mutual transmission of knowledge and abilities for the adjustment to new situations and environments;
- access to the resources needed to achieve wellbeing;
- development of diverse and solid social networks; and
- acquisition of feelings and behaviours of belonging to the new society (2011: 88).

This sounds more applicable to refugees or migrants who have citizenship rights or who can enter an informal economy and networks which are able to sustain them than to asylum seekers who are both subject to legal exclusion yet officially ‘above the radar’. Acquiring “feelings and behaviours of belonging” will not help against a denied asylum claim if detention is imminent. Nevertheless there are many forms of political action at the citizenship level which can benefit non-citizens, as the Arise and Shine project showed. Like the women in the García-Ramírez study, through Arise and Shine and their other activities, my interviewees participated daily in “an ongoing ecological process of self-construction and psycho-political empowerment, which includes the acquisition of critical thinking, the gaining of capacity to respond and involvement in transformative civic actions” (2011: 93). Some had come to Arise and Shine well aware of the structural causes of their problems, but their narratives showed that others benefited from the opportunity to reflect critically on their situation. The research also provides evidence of participants starting to redefine their own stories and acquire new symbolic and cultural resources for thinking about aspects of their lives beyond just the insecurity of asylum and the consequences of migration into a hostile environment.

García-Ramírez et al's model of the 'before' and 'after' of integration sees people moving from hopelessness to psychological well-being at the intrapersonal level; from isolation to participation at the interpersonal level; and from exclusion to belonging at the citizenship level. The process of building strengths occurs through "associating with other women and engaging in mutual learning and social visualization" and "taking advantage of the multiple influences emerging from other domains which compose the self, such as gender, religion, social class, political position, etc." (2011: 93). Relating to other people in the same situation is "an incentive to reflect on the injustices suffered as a collective, and to feel a sense of commitment with others. Peer contact encouraged the creation of active agents who fight for gaining individual and collective rights" (2011: 92). The authors stress that it is "necessary to take actions against specific oppressive situations for true empowerment to occur" (2011: 91), even if that action is something as simple as filing an official complaint¹³, which "enables the participant to position her/himself, as a real citizen" (2011: 91). Here the word 'citizen' is used to mean something beyond formal, legal entitlement. There is a growing body of literature on the contradictory / complementary meanings of citizenship in contemporary Western states, a point I take up briefly again in Chapter 7. Coll, working with groups of migrant women in the USA, found for example that the process of reflecting on and critically evaluating their political situation produced a capacity for agency and a perception of citizenship that was grounded in their own principles of social justice (Coll 2004: 193). Meanwhile, in relation to work with young people in a UK context, Batsleer writes:

The experience of association and membership, of belonging, the experience of debate and of discussion and the development of shared purpose is what supports 'citizenship' rather than formal voting rights or patterns of representation. The ideal is of an informal self-organising self-help group based on trust and co-operative effort. Citizenship, in these terms, is concerned with participation in civil society as a good in itself (2008: 147).

The message of the García-Ramírez paper is not that integration into the host society is the responsibility of migrants, merely that it is "something that individuals do in collaboration with others - creating, deciding, and struggling - in their daily practices, for wellbeing and legitimacy" (2011: 94). It also expresses the urgent need for receiving societies to end marginalising norms and promote positive attitudes towards cultural plurality. One aspect they stress is the importance of migrants' participation in institutions and lobbies and being

¹³ On p. 105 Tendayi discusses the "life-changing" effects of being asked to write a letter of complaint to a Government Minister following her decision to withdraw a funding programme in which GAP Unit was involved.

a “force for political transformation... contributing to the design of culturally sensitive services and fair laws” (2011:94). The Arise and Shine women’s strong views on this topic are discussed in Chapter 4.. García-Ramírez et al strongly endorse collaboration between community psychologists and grassroots immigrant groups. Carolina may have called herself a ‘community psychologist’ in the distant past, but it is not a term ever used in connection with the GAP Unit. However, the role outlined for such allies fully captures the purpose of Arise and Shine:

- (1) as facilitators and instigators of change, based on the development of critical thinking and awareness about opportunities, rights and resources available for resisting oppression and achieving wellbeing;
- (2) as mediators, through the promotion of social participation and positive relations between immigrant populations and other community groups, allowing them to gain capacities to respond;
- (3) as advocates, supporting immigrants in their collective actions oriented to gain citizenship rights and encourage social justice (García-Ramírez 2011: 94).

The final thing to notice about the García-Ramírez study is its focus on immigrants’ narratives. They are considered “a key resource for identity construction in the acculturation processes. Community narratives are shared stories that people tell about themselves—who they are, who they have been, and who they could become. These are tools for personal and social transformation” (2011: 94). This link between storytelling and empowerment was foregrounded strongly by those I interviewed about Arise and Shine (Table 7.).

The rest of the chapter looks at each stage of the Arise and Shine project in the light of the ideas outlined by García-Ramírez et al., examining the women’s narratives in relation to aspects of the self-construction process of acculturative integration: acquisition of knowledge; access to resources for wellbeing; development of social networks; and feelings of belonging. I consider what was happening at the intra- and inter- personal and ‘citizenship’ levels and the role played by GAP Unit associates as facilitators / mediators / advocates in the process.

PHASE 1: Workshops with migrant women’s groups

GAP Unit ran workshops with women asylum seekers in 2007 and 2008 and I had been volunteering with WAST for a few years. So when NWTWC announced it had some ‘overspend’ money which it wanted to use to boost the number of BME women among its

2009 beneficiaries, we decided to try and work again with this demographic. According to our proposal:

The project aims to promote an educational and empowerment process with women's community groups based in the North West of England whose members are first generation migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. It is a participatory learning process in which participants gain skills to identify and prioritise problems and issues and seek solutions. Shared learning activities between different groups are facilitated to promote networking, the sharing of experiences and ideas and the exploration of joint strategies for improvement and change (From funding application to NWTWC).

GAP Unit chooses when possible to offer training to existing groups rather than recruiting individuals to a temporary group, so that the learning can influence on-going practice. Following this pattern, we looked for groups which might be receptive to us running some sessions with their members. We were happy to accommodate specific needs or requests regarding the content of the workshops (Zimbabwe Women's Organisation (ZIWO), for example, wanted help with its constitution) but otherwise intended to facilitate a process which would encourage members to "reflect on their personal experience and organisational practice, locate and articulate the changes they want to make, and explore strategies to do so and improve their work" (extract from the NWTWC bid). The bid also said we aimed to find out "what enables minority women to empower themselves, sustain changes and become actively involved in their communities", which makes it sound like a research exercise. My studentship was not yet on the horizon at that point; it just reflects GAP Unit and NWTWC's focus on learning and sharing good practice. Some of the intended 'outcomes' were:

- Better understanding and knowledge of barriers and empowerment needs of refugees, migrant and minority women: identification of key issues;
- Women's community self-help groups engaged in collective reflection on their experiences and practice and exploring ways forward to improve their work;
- Shared learning and links between refugee, migrant and minority women's groups;
- Increased capacity and skills of minority women's groups and individuals to identify and prioritise problems, seek solutions and mobilise;
- Greater knowledge among individuals and groups of the resources and networks they can link into;
- Groups of women feeling more confident and better prepared for involvement in their communities or at a strategic level (From funding application to NWTWC).

Freirian principles are identifiable from the start. The focus was on nurturing a sense of community; encouraging participants to reflect on their own and learn from each others'

experiences; drawing out what they knew about their shared situation to discover common problems; and gathering suggestions for commitments and actions: ‘What needs to change?’ ‘What can we do?’ A range of popular education techniques were used to create variety and active participation, chosen in consideration of size of group, levels of literacy and spoken English, restrictions on mobility and other particularities.¹⁴ Around twenty possible partners in towns and cities from Blackpool to Accrington were approached, and the five which signed up were based in Preston, Bolton and Manchester. The workshop design was simple, concentrating on getting people talking and getting to know one another, which was not necessarily part of the organisations’ usual practice. The **Bolton Refugee Action** project was for ‘Gateway’ refugees, women who had recently arrived via a United Nations (UN) programme and had been able to bypass the asylum process. The majority were the wives and daughters of interpreters for the British Army in Iraq, but only a few younger women spoke English themselves. Some of the families were unhappy about the housing they had been assigned in Salford, especially since a spate of stone-throwing and threats from local youths. Refugee Action was unsure whether they would commit to coming to meetings, but they did. Refugee Action, which only had a remit to support the women during their first months, was hoping that they might want to form a women’s group which would develop independently. The two **Women’s Integration and Support Project (WISP)** groups were very ethnically diverse and all of their members were asylum seekers, quite a few of them newly arrived. The British Red Cross’s WISP projects ran English classes, activities and outings as well as providing one-to-one advice and support. The women attended with their babies and young children, which affected group dynamics. Red Cross is careful to remain politically neutral, and thus the groups were not a space, for example, for discussing the inadequacies of government asylum policy. **Refugee Mothers United (RMU)** was based in a church hall in Preston, set up by a former nurse who saw the need for emotional and practical support for asylum-seeker mums-to-be and those with new babies and toddlers, but later extended this to all asylum seeking women. The venue acted as a mother and baby group, with access to donated clothes and toys, and free lunches of discarded sandwiches provided by local supermarkets. The pattern was for women to sit around and chat with friends, drinking coffee and caring

¹⁴ A GAP Unit associate recently shadowed Carolina’s facilitation of a workshop in preparation for running a session at the invitation of the Red Cross in London. She was worried that due to lack of experience, she would not have Carolina’s ability to make the workshop come alive. Afterwards she said that it had run itself – the techniques (selected with Carolina’s advice to create a mix of ice-breakers, ‘energisers’, individual, small group and large group work, different media, vocal and silent activities, breaks for refreshment, closing activities and evaluation) had created the atmosphere and the positive reactions she was hoping for.

for their children, and to book appointments with the organiser or counsellor whenever they needed help or advice. GAP Unit's sessions with each group focussed on helping women get to know one another better, identify personal strengths, reflect on their hopes for the future and name obstacles currently facing them and possible solutions, thinking of actions for their own or other women's groups, and actions for others – the government, local authority or society – both practicable and utopian. Each of the groups participated in discussion exercises around these questions:

- What are the issues, problems and barriers we face living in the UK?
- What are our strengths? What keeps us going?
- What are our hopes and dreams for the future?

Another typical exercise looked at :

- Things we like about our countries
- Things we like about being in England
- Our needs

The programme was adapted slightly for each group, but common to most was a discussion on dis/empowerment. The answers ranged widely: the women rarely needed the term to be explained and were immediately able to list what empowered or disempowered them. Essentially, anything positive and linked with well-being was equated to empowerment, and the reverse meant disempowerment. The overlap between their answers to 'What are the issues, problems and barriers we face living in the UK?' and 'What makes us feel disempowered?' and between their answers to questions about their strengths and hopes for the future and 'What makes us feel empowered?', meant it was best to amalgamate the two exercises in Table 2, given in Appendix 1.

Table 2 collates the answers given to these questions in the Bolton and Manchester workshops, and at the 'Women's Gathering' which rounded off the first phase of the project (where the questions were re-opened as part of a 'shared learning' process). In the 'disempowering' category were conditions arising from the circumstances of exile – missing friends and family, painful memories, uncertainty about the future, lack of English – but the longest lists of worries related to experiences of exclusion: lack of care, lack of information, racist discrimination. Asylum seekers' sense of rejection centred on denial of their asylum claims and difficulties arising from their lack of legal status, while refugees' concerns were focussed on problems accessing employment. On the 'empowering' side we

see the importance of cultural continuity, social networks, the sense of belonging provided by groups, particularly women's groups, and of religious faith, which contributes to their ability to retain hope and resilience. Most of these are collective forms of empowerment in which the women themselves were the agents; personal qualities and positive attitude are important but, as my interviewee Tendayi explains below, these too rely on the encouragement and nurturing of others if they are to be sustained. By coming together they can challenge specific injustices being done to them, even if the ultimate empowerment which comes from a just assessment of their asylum claims falls outside their control. The four groups of newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees appreciated GAP Unit's contribution despite some chaotic aspects to the organisation and a lack of suitable translators sometimes adding complications. A paid or volunteer support worker from each group completed an evaluation form at the end of the project, and extracts here suggest some of the limitations as well as the positive outcomes which, as hoped, related mostly to the strengthening of bonds within the groups:

WISP, Manchester

Certainly engendered a good group dynamic, but would need more regular sessions for this to last.

RMU, Preston

They are more likely to voice their opinion about things. They want things changed in their lives and are more likely to let you know what is wrong for them as individuals. It gave them a group feeling and the spirit to communicate with each other.

WISP, Bolton

I think certain members have benefited individually more than others and those with a higher level of English and those who already had a sense of what ideas like empowerment and self-esteem mean were able to gain more individually from the GAP Unit, though I think all the women found the sessions helpful to some extent.

I think the sessions have helped the women to see themselves more as members of a women's group, as opposed to isolated individuals, or members of certain friendship groups (usually based on ethnicity) within the group.

Refugee Action, Bolton

In a group that felt little unity with each other, the work that the GAP Unit did successfully united the group as they shared their common experiences and hopes for the future. Each member of the group has benefited from sharing and this has lessened feelings of isolation and disorientation of being new to the UK... allowed the group to develop into a group and given the women a sense of common experience.

It is extremely worthwhile work and this sort of support is desperately needed in the refugee and asylum seeking community in Greater Manchester.

Feedback from **ZIWO** was done individually by participants. The group had been experiencing a hiatus and Arise and Shine had provided a useful excuse to resume meetings. The fact that all of the women spoke good English was an advantage, alongside other commonalities they shared despite being a mixture of Shona and Ndebele speakers. Sample quotes from the written feedback:

- *I have learnt some very important ways of dealing with difficulties*
- *Members have been encouraged by meeting other women and sharing experiences. This has been an opportunity for women to air their views and sit down and draw up a plan of action*
- *Have learnt through communication you can restore your faith and restore the faith in other people*
- *These meetings were really helpful, I wish we could go on and on*
- *I have learned that no matter what, there is no barrier that cannot be overcome*
- *I want to help people from other countries to rebuild their life and share their culture*
- *These sessions were soul soothing!*

Three years later Tendayi (the only ZIWO member interviewed in depth) told Carolina that a friend, Eppy, who took part in the three sessions, still talked about how important they had been for her. During the second meeting, when she mentioned people trying to discourage her from applying to study radiography at Salford University, the group had cheered and praised her for having overcome this and institutional obstacles to join the course. She also shared that she was struggling with the course, and apparently the encouragement she received had helped her feel the determination she needed to persevere and graduate. Tendayi herself said of that meeting:

Someone asked me ‘What are your aspirations? What are your fears? What are your hopes?’ It makes you to realise ‘Ah! There are some people who are still, still want to hear something about me. So, let me tell them.’ Even if you are not going to give me anything, but just to say ‘Let me tell them, because they have asked me’. Having that space to say that, and seeing other women who are saying ‘No, you can actually be who you want to be’. There are places where you don’t even say your name, you are already rubbish (Tendayi, interview).

She said of the ZIWO women:

Up to now they are saying ‘You know what? What we did with Carolina and Hannah, can we do it on weekends?’ It was so uplifting. Very uplifting. The women... they were inspired, it was a platform showing us, first to say ‘Ok, we have given you this space, just to say what you want’. And the reassurance to say ‘No, you can still be who you are’ (Tendayi, interview).

What was important for Tendayi, and perhaps Eppy too, was the opportunity to rearticulate hopes and dreams, after a long process of gradual demoralisation and “depletion of psychic resources” (Pannett 2011: 235). That this validation¹⁵ occurred in front of, and alongside, other ZIWO members, allowed them to remember and demonstrate to one another who they felt themselves to be:

From the activities which we were doing, I realised ‘No, no, no, I have something more than what I am thinking about me’. So it was kind of reassuring me and reminding me that ‘No, you are still Tendayi, you are still capable of doing the things which you were capable of doing, whether ten years ago, you are still capable of doing those things’ (Tendayi, interview).

This was the one ZIWO session I was able to attend. I was feeling quite ill but I remember feeling waves of positive energy coming from the ten or so women who were there, and feeling very humble as they talked about the racism they had experienced. I was surprised at their unpreparedness for encountering racial prejudice in the UK, having assumed that (from what I knew of Zimbabwe’s colonial history) they would be all too familiar with White self-perceived superiority. I have since been corrected on this point.¹⁶ The meeting – held in GAP Unit’s office on a Saturday – was filled with heartfelt discussion, laughter and praise giving. Tendayi said of it:

The atmosphere which you created, it was very warm, a warm atmosphere. Welcoming. And instantly that’s where the familiar relationship came from (Tendayi, interview).

This amused me, because from my perspective it was they who created atmosphere - we just set out the chairs and structured the meeting. I missed the next session because I was attending a No Borders protest at a new immigration removal centre.¹⁷ I heard, though, that a newcomer to the group who arrived late had explained that she had nearly not made it because her morale had reached rock bottom. According to Carolina, the group instantly erupted into prayers and ululations, gathering and dancing round the woman (who they had not previously met) to make her feel safe and loved. Her comment on the evaluation form was:

¹⁵ For Pannett, the asylum seekers she spoke to had “strong self-recognition”, and therefore did not need that recognition, but “validation of their self-recognition by others” (Pannett 2011: 226).

¹⁶ They had not anticipated the covert nature of UK racism, while the Zimbabwean Whites do not play a major role in most people’s lives.

¹⁷ I was told that the group, who were not linked into UK activism and campaigning at that time, were cheered by the fact that I was out fighting their cause, when it was explained why I was missing.

This has been helpful in the sense that I was on the verge of killing myself, had lost all confidence – but have been given encouragement, education, perseverance, communication. This has been wonderful and I am not lost at all (ZIWO session 3 feedback form).

During her interview Tendayi described one of the benefits of the sessions as the chance to let off steam about all the petty as well as the serious blocks they face as migrants. At the second ZIWO meeting, a member mentioned the hostile and violent reaction of an elderly woman who thought she was being mugged when she came to help her with her heavy bags, an act of common courtesy in Zimbabwe. Tendayi spoke of the sense of rejection she, an experienced teacher, had felt when she visited her local primary school to enquire about work experience as a teaching assistant, and was told not to bother since she was not familiar with the National Curriculum. Both are examples of misrecognition; the women's self-recognition as a good and caring person, and as someone with useful skills to share, were denied outright by the other, who made no obvious pause for reflection. The groups and organisations which sustain asylum seekers and refugees are often important to them primarily because they provide a place to grieve and to give and receive attentive and responsive listening, "reflecting back people's self-recognition" (Pannett 2011: 226), something so often lacking in everyday contexts.

GAP Unit has been my own outlet where I've let out my, my anger and they will just take it in. So, it has provided me a soothing, really. So that is the impact it has made. Not only to myself, even to my community (Tendayi, interview).

It was initially hard for me to accept that the Arise and Shine¹⁸ workshops had been so significant, given that the ZIWO members already seemed so proficient at supporting one another, sharing their problems and finding solutions. They had set up their group and individuals had already surmounted many barriers, found work, and been through courses of study in the UK. NWTWC commissioned a short film on each of the projects it financed in 2009, and Tendayi and Elinah volunteered to speak about Arise and Shine. Watching the videos I was taken aback at their glowing appraisal of the project, wondering if it was perhaps a 'cultural thing' for Zimbabwean people to show extravagant appreciation. I wondered if the project really deserved such accolades. But I came to realise that this resulted from my lack of understanding of the damage done by persistent misrecognition and lack of care, and the relief when people can vent their frustration and reaffirm their strength. The majority of the ZIWO members were only involved in three short sessions, yet Tendayi says:

¹⁸ The original, uninspired title was 'Refugee & migrant women's groups: key issues and needs for empowerment' – Arise and Shine became the project name after the first session with the Bolton WISP group, after a participant used the phrase during discussion and Carolina sought her permission to use it.

The impact is measured by the progress of the people or, of the- our members, what they've achieved as a result of coming in contact with GAP, holding those sessions, confidence-building sessions, we didn't know they were confidence-building sessions. But we really liked it (Tendayi, interview).

The fact that we contacted ZIWO out of the blue at a time when it had been losing momentum as an organisation also endeared GAP Unit to them:

I came into contact with GAP in 2008... they were going out to look for those 'rejected of the community'. If I may say so! And so the approach which GAP took, I really fell for it...GAP took it upon themselves, to say 'We need to go. We know they are there, but we need to go and find them'. It is an excellent approach, according to me and on behalf of ZIWO members as well... From the day we met you, when I was with Angela, afterwards, Angela said 'Do you know what? In the time of the Israelites, God actually spoke with the- God has visited us'. That is the conversation we had! (Tendayi, interview).

PHASE 1: Migrant women's gathering

The gathering was attended by at least ten women from the five organisations above and members of other invited groups, including a young mothers' groups from the Wai Yin Chinese Women's Centre, Migrants Supporting Migrants, WAST and the Asian women's SoP which Carolina had been running in a freelance capacity for Community Pride. The programme was designed with a few aims in mind. One was to bring women together in an atmosphere of mutual appreciation and celebration of their different cultures. Everyone was asked to place a sticker on their country on a world map, in order to have a visual representation of the rich diversity in the room. The CD compilation of 'world music' played during arrival had been created to include a song from each guest's country of origin (gathered from the booking forms). Many women chose to wear national dress, and food was prepared (by selected attendees) to ensure the majority of participants would recognise something from their traditional cuisine. The two djembe drums we had brought along were incorporated into African, Arabic and Bangladeshi dances and songs. Another aim had been to share the discussions from Phase 1. workshops with women who had not attended. In popular education, group reflection is an essential part of any group process, to the extent that the potential of any learning is felt to be partly lost or less profound unless careful reflection is enabled. It reinforces the identity of the group/s . They divided into smaller groups for the discussion on what needs and desires for change they had in common, and what and who should be responsible for creating that change – again, linking learning to action. Also, throughout the day, speakers addressed the delegates with news of campaigns, lobbies and self-help groups and initiatives going on around Greater

Manchester, and attendees each received a folder of information and resources in case they wished to follow any of these up. The packs also contained a poem which Amal, from the Bolton WISP group, sent to Carolina after a workshop. Amal also read it out to the assembled gathering, just after the ‘welcome’ address. This poem took on a powerful significance for the Arise and Shine group which was to evolve over the next two years, recurring in many conversations and written correspondence as a shared motif of women’s strength, as the comments below (from four different women) illustrate:

**Strong
Like A Wind**

I am writing about a woman
strong like a wind.
Lonely and sad like an old tree,
a woman with no friend,
but still as strong as a wind,
her eyes bright;
her days with no light.
She is a woman with no-one,
but she is still stronger than anyone.
I am writing about a woman
strong like a wind.

Amal Elsheikh

“Lovely women, strong as the wind. To keep a-knocking, asking and seeking” (Comment in answer to ‘What have I learned today? - oral evaluation of second campaign meeting - January 2010)

“What a wonderful day that was indeed! I too was so very happy to meet with you all beautiful strong women and to share laughter, songs and stories. Stay STRONG AS A WIND! God bless you all.” (Emailed thanks following Arise and Shine meeting - October 2011)

“A big thank you for your support today, it was very much appreciated by us, we keep praying until the result come out, as strong as we are, ‘Strong as a wind’. Once more thank you and have a wonderful weekend.” (Email thanking Arise and Shine members for attending her asylum appeal hearing - April 2012)

“Dear all, Strong like the wind, This is good news and they deserve their permanent right to stay sooner. God is good all the time !!!” (Email in response to positive decision by the judge - May 2012)

The poem’s layout in the shape of a tree was echoed by the ‘evaluation tree’ whose bare branches were populated with leaves on which the participants wrote their thoughts about the day.

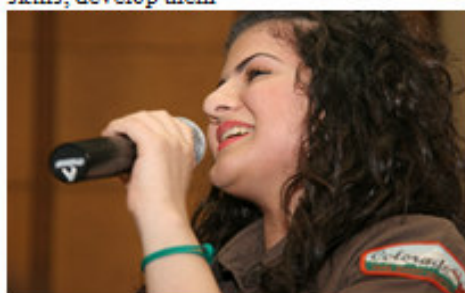
At the first meeting of the Arise and Shine campaign group six months later, those present were asked to choose two from around 30 photographs of the gathering which depicted or symbolised something they had found significant about the day. The following pages show their selections and comments, which were recorded by hand.

Memories of the Arise and Shine gathering

"Women have the skill of public speaking, which is an important weapon for campaigning. Need to share experiences, to stand up and be heard."



"Skills like singing and poetry - encourage people's skills, develop them"



"Shows someone talking and doing, not just sitting at home worrying; the importance of coming together"



"When we are together we are happy. The photos show us united as a group - we felt united - it gave us strength. I am still taking something from the memory of this - the feeling that I am not alone"



"Unity - we are from different parts of the world, we are still united. Happy despite what you miss, despite your stress. Celebrating, nice to be together"



"Shows that we need more info, to know what is happening"



"Excited to have drums"



"A warm welcome. All are my sisters, it's not only my problem - we can discuss and get support"



"Importance of speaking out loud, promoting people, discovering their skills"



"Thinking about where you're from, you miss it more. We shouldn't forget our homes"



"The need for people in the UK to know more about the rest of the world, to learn about different culture and realities, to be less closed-minded. We don't want to lose or deny our heritage"



"Talking about rights, the right to meet and discuss, to be a family - one big family with all the relations represented (aunt, sister, mother, daughter, cousin, grandmother). Talking about problems affecting women. Where we came from. How we want to see ourselves in the future"



"Importance of doing things for others too"



"Tree full of inspiration – a shelter, bringing different cultures together under its branches, it is possible to share and to keep our different cultures. Reminds us of the fact or danger that we are also losing our identities"



A few of the comments on the leaves:

"We came to this beautiful party. I benefited a lot. I wish to repeat it again to enhance our relationships with other migrants. Thanks and our respect. God Bless."

"Today has been an inspiring, soul soothing day. I feel more positive about the future"

"The day was very inspiring and empowering. I felt belonging and loved"

"One of the best days I have had since I came to England"

The comments triggered by the photographs and made on the day indicate that the gathering helped replenish women's resources for coping with the hardships of exile. The cumulative effect of little details which demonstrated care in the preparation of the event created an atmosphere of welcome and celebration, which encouraged women to feel they could 'be themselves', lose inhibitions, express aspects of familiar culture and feel

nourished in the company of other non-western women. In descriptions of this nature it is easy to generalise; every individual will have had a different experience of the event. Each group had its own table at the start of the event (different methods were used to mix people up later) and most of the young Chinese women were with small babies, who had not settled well in the crèche. They were interacting with the children and talking to one another all the way through the speakers, distracting other groups, so were eventually asked to be a bit quieter. They decided to leave as we broke for lunch, which was when I discovered that the disruptive conversation had actually been group translation. With the exception of two women who went on to have further contact with Arise and Shine, the RMU group from Preston were also quite subdued. A ‘leaf’ might not seem an appropriate place for stating criticism, and such occasions might work against a willingness to focus on what was less appreciated. Nevertheless, the feedback comments received were unreservedly positive. Forced migration was the reason for each woman being in a room with 80 others from all over the world, but unlike their day-to-day experience of immersion in foreign culture, this one was not laden with threat. The ease with which such an experience can be inhabited potentially expands people’s capacity to embrace newness and difference. The openness of and interest of women asylum seekers in one another’s culture also perhaps demonstrates a gravitation towards an idea of a global culture, a space which goes beyond the logic of any nation state, inhabited by a family of women. It enriches the ‘limbo’ state in which asylum seekers are forced to exist, an alternative to integration into the host culture which is blocked. Steps which García-Ramírez et al consider vital to the immigrant’s creation of a home away from home, moving her towards active participation in building a pluralist society, can be identified among the women’s comments above. For example:

The importance of shared stories about the past, present and future as a resource for transformation

“share experiences”, “Talking about... where we came from. How we want to see ourselves in the future”

Creating meaning

“Talking about problems affecting women”, “The need for people in the UK to know more about the rest of the world, to learn about different culture and realities, to be less closed-minded”

Acting with intentionality

Public speaking as a “weapon for campaigning”, “Talking and doing, not just sitting at home worrying”, “Stand up and be heard”

Reflexivity

“Happy despite what you miss”, “Importance of doing things for others”

Maintenance of own culture

“It is possible to share and to keep our different cultures”, “We shouldn’t forget our homes“, “We don’t want to lose or deny our heritage”

Acquisition of knowledge for adjustment to new situations

“We need more info, to know what is happening”, “It’s not only my problem – we can discuss and get support”

Access to resources for wellbeing

“Promoting people, discovering their skills”; “Encourage people’s skills, develop them”

Development of diverse social networks

“We are from different parts of the world, we are still united”, “We felt united – it gave us strength”, “I wish to repeat it again to enhance our relationships with other migrants”

Acquisition of feelings of belonging to the new society

“I felt belonging and loved”, “I feel more positive about the future”

PHASE 2: ‘The Campaign’

GMCVO was asked to nominate candidates for the Campaigning Research Programme, a Government fund administered through the now-defunct quango Capacitybuilders. GAP Unit, a GMCVO partner in other projects, was asked if we had a campaign idea. Until the gathering we had not considered starting an action process as GAP Unit; the thinking behind Arise and Shine had been that the best use of our limited resources was to give women a space to share and discuss their issues and concerns, to link them with others and to provide signposts to relevant campaigns and networks. This was either ambitious, premature or not relevant in terms of most of the groups *as groups*, but individual women among their members were keen for us to co-ordinate some of the actions identified during the gathering and workshops. We outlined an idea for an Arise and Shine ‘campaign’, which was selected by GMCVO to go forward to the next round. Two ZIWO members then collaborated with GAP Unit on the bid, attended two interviews with Capacitybuilders, and emerged successful. GAP Unit was among 32 organisations funded to campaign and participate in seminars designed to “identify and promote innovative ways for the third sector to act as a strong voice for the most disadvantaged people in society” (Capacitybuilders 2010). The five women’s groups which had been partners in Phase 1., along with WAST, whose Management Group was already active in awareness-raising, were contacted and invited to send representatives to join the campaign team. However, the entire Campaigning Research Programme was cancelled by the Minister for the Third Sector the day before our first meeting, a perfect example of the intersection of neoliberal governance and the VCS under New Labour. On the one hand, the good intentions of those

trying to further social justice from within the system by directing resources to marginalised groups – yet simultaneously contributing to the re-routing of oppositional agendas and incorporation of dissent into mainstream structures (only a certain kind of (reformist, non-radical) ‘campaign’ had any hope of being funded). On the other hand, the power of a Minister to sweep all of this away in the interests of image control, breaking both letter and spirit of her own department’s much-trumpeted VCS ‘compact’ rather than risk tabloid headlines about abetting unpopular groups in the year before an election.

The meeting went ahead anyway, attended by three women from WAST, one from ZIWO, two from Manchester WISP and one from WISP from Bolton, with two young women from RMU and others from ZIWO and WISP Bolton sending apologies. Hearing that the funding had been withdrawn just redoubled their resolve to get active as a group. In addition to the photo-reflection on the gathering (above), the meeting focussed on what they might achieve through a campaign, if we could find a new way to fund it. Notes from the meeting indicate that the group was interested in several areas of action touched on in the Phase 1. discussions. The full list of suggestions was:

- Produce, or get public bodies to produce, information about services, entitlements and contacts for local groups, in different languages, to give out to new arrivals.
- Migrant women’s groups in North West coming together to explore and voice our concerns with people you have things in common with – liaising about how to solve problems, sharing experiences, giving support.
- Promoting and defending ESOL from Government attacks
- Working with the media to improve the image of migrants and refugees.
- Signposting women to training providers.
- Lobbying for parenting classes tailored to the needs of migrants.
- Raising cultural awareness through community cohesion activities e.g. using churches, libraries, public speaking at festivals, international food festival – to counteract negative media.
- Making asylum decision makers aware that behind the files are real people in need – humanising the process.
- Working with the education system to find out what goes on and explain to them that they need to learn to interact with parents with different needs, e.g. if they are from non-democratic countries and not used to the way the state operates.
- Support individuals’ anti-deportation campaigns – e.g. all sign petitions as a group.
- Get more solidarity from other British people.
- Well-being activities for women, such as walking, swimming and yoga (several of the women had been enjoying some of these activities at Refugee Action, but funding for them was cyclical and insecure).

The meeting ended with expressions of hope:

- My hope is that we could get some training and skills to improve and establish our lives.
- That the network will continue to progress and be united.
- That all asylum seeker and refugee women will be together to be united and confident and happy.
- For success and continuation of togetherness to strengthen the image of migrants
- I like this group so my hope is that we have a fun and good result what we think, and we continue.
- My hope with such a group is that our voice will bring change and improve our lives and that of our children here in England.
- I am happy for everything.

The lists from that first meeting, especially the ‘hopes’ list, indicate that from the beginning the women appreciated the importance of collaboration and mutual support as a goal in its own right. The list of aims centres a combination of their own personal needs (e.g. for training, well-being courses) and more political issues which they wanted to take up through local awareness raising, contributing to existing national campaigns or targeting the media. We discovered at this first meeting that Lydia had written a play to raise awareness of the lives of asylum seekers, which WAST were working with CAN to stage the following month. After watching the play, and hearing that the CAN collaboration was at an end but that the WAST group were keen to develop the play further (the first performance had been a ‘work in progress’), Carolina, Tendayi and I - simultaneously and independently of one another - realised that the play would be an ideal vehicle for the Arise and Shine group’s campaign. WAST were happy to collaborate in this way with GAP Unit, and NWTWC agreed to fund further rehearsals with the director - to refine and add new scenes and further develop the actors’ talents - plus two performances for public sector audiences, followed by workshops, which the campaign steering group would meet monthly to organise and plan. NWTWC also paid for the production of a DVD which WAST could use to raise funds and to substitute for the live play in their own awareness raising workshops. This phase of the project, during which the Arise and Shine group met every two weeks, is covered in depth in Chapter 7. In January 2010 the Arise and Shine group met to plan the workshops after the play, to decide who to target and with what message. A group ‘ideas storm’ produced the following suggestions:

Housing - bad conditions

Dispersal - frequent movement, lack of stability, disruption of services

Early years childcare - every child is equally important

Raising awareness - who we are, people with rights

Higher education for asylum seekers - not charged as foreign nationals

Open opportunities for work and education

Support and guidance during transition from Asylum to Refugee e.g. housing - don't rush and close door too soon

Information for new arrivals - contacts of local organisations, where HO is, names of community groups which can help etc

These were then voted on (everyone had 5 'sticky dots' with which to indicate their preferences)

Table 3. Results of vote on Phase 2. campaign target

No of votes	Issue	Target
11	Housing	NASS/ NW Housing providers
5	Childcare	Early Years providers/UKBA/ Home Office
11	Education & work	Home Office/ Ministry of Education
2	Transition from AS to refugee	NASS/UKBA/Health/Education/Housing
2	Information for new arrivals	MARIM/ Refugee Action/ Local Authorities
17	Raising awareness of who we are	Service providers, power holders, general public

'Raising awareness of who we are' came top. This was fortunate, as it made sense not to narrow down either issues or audience but to build on the general messages of the play. Remarks made by the Arise and Shine group during the evaluation at the end of the theatre work show that a sense of identity and shared purpose had been cultivated in the core group during this phase¹⁹:

Lydia: It was successful - the whole project, especially targeting the policy makers. We may not realise now but it has made a difference what we have done, so we should keep focussed on that, exploring any other avenues so that we can keep the message going.

Sofia: Well, I hope that we stay a team to do things like that, and not only because of the play but if you think of other ways we can have women together.... I'm thinking of more activities like this. Once there is an activity then many women come together because of the activity. For me it's good if people can get together more, sit round the table.... If GAP Unit has any other project they should always know the steering group is there to give any support or help.

Tendayi: It was very successful beyond expectations. When we prioritised our strategy, remember when we were deciding what we were going to campaign on and so forth? - there was a sense of 'Can we achieve this?' I still remember you and me saying 'This is too massive, are we going to do it Tendayi? Do you think this is going to happen?'

¹⁹ A separate evaluation session was conducted with the WAST actors (who included four of the same women).

Right. But with determination and commitment we managed to do it. The whole project from the start it was like getting into the unknown. But it demonstrated that women are very resilient and determined to influence change. How the steering committee came together from different backgrounds to work for one common cause was really amazing. We just clicked, we just gelled together. So we need to take it further.

Tendayi: I think for the sake of continuity - it's another area - we don't know how you go about your funding but I think you could source funding on the basis of what came out of the whole project, for us to go for instance to schools to raise awareness. There might be other women, but we would still be working with GAP, not that GAP is going to wean us off. We want to still be suckled from you.

By this stage in the project, GAP Unit had played all three of the ally roles which García-Ramírez et al propose for those working with migrant groups. In the first phase, particularly through the gathering, we had added to women's "awareness about opportunities, rights and resources available for resisting oppression and achieving wellbeing" (2011: 95). In organising workshops following the play, we had acted as mediators, using our contacts and resources to create encounters between migrants and host society, promoting "positive relations". In promoting their self-advocacy we were able to support the women in their "collective actions oriented to gain[ing] citizenship rights and encourage social justice" (2011: 95). A few weeks after the play was shown in Manchester, an NHS manager who had been in the audience invited GAP Unit to contribute to an Equality and Diversity conference being run by their Foundation Trust. Carolina had recently led a 'Community Researchers' course in Salford, attended by asylum seekers and local Salford people, so asked two graduates, Chenai and Gugu, to use their new research skills to gather data for a presentation on asylum seekers' health needs, which they, Tendayi and I then delivered to around 100 NHS staff and managers. The everyday experiences recorded from male and female asylum seekers included doctors making incorrect assumptions about patients' histories or failing to put them at ease. One interviewee lamented that "some staff can be so numb and straightforward and you feel really not so loved, when they can be so warm and nice to someone you are sitting next to." Another concurred: "Here treatment is so cold! Like we are not human beings...They don't try to reassure you that you will soon get better... They give you a prescription but hardly ever mention what is wrong." The three women ended the presentation with a verse of the southern African anthem *Nkosi Sikelel'*, an act of assertiveness and creativity which worked against perceptions of victim status and was well-received by delegates unaccustomed to a musical keynote address. The song made a statement, in my view, that pride and retention of their cultural identity by asylum seekers is in no way compromised

by or incompatible with demanding the same level of care and respect in services as given to UK-born citizens.

Central Manchester University Hospitals **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust



Equality and Diversity Event
Friday 8th October 2010
'STRANGERS TO THE NHS: asylum seeker and refugee experiences of healthcare'

'The talk from the asylum seekers was very insightful'
'Thought-provoking presentation'
'Moving and informative'

- quotes from conference delegates

PHASE 3: Arise, Shine and Educate!

As the comments from the Phase 2. evaluation show, the Arise and Shine group were keen to continue working together. GAP Unit applied again to NWTWC six months later, this time for a series of workshops in the education sector. This idea came from the group, some of whom had been into schools previously (with WAST), and was also a common suggestion for future action in the theatre audience feedback. When pre-16 citizenship education was first introduced to the English National Curriculum in 2002, critics questioned whether the new lessons were properly “preparing young people for citizenship in the context of globalisation, including the impact of globalisation on Britain, in terms of migration flows, including the flows of refugees and asylum seekers” (Mayo & Rooke, 2006: 15). Craig et al (2004) were among those calling for more experiential learning to address questions of social and moral responsibility and develop skills of reflection, enquiry and debate, and the enthusiasm of the primary and secondary teachers we approached for an invitation reflected this. The Arise and Shine group was reconvened and opened to a few new members: Chenai, Gugu and three others from WAST, which, due to its size and our existing links, was always the easiest place to recruit from. After a briefing session exploring possible strategies for engaging young people, volunteers signed up to visit specific schools and attend a pre-meeting to plan their workshop with GAP Unit associates, teachers hired for their relevant experience. The women’s main input was to relate their experiences of migration, speaking for around fifteen minutes each and taking questions. Following the school visits (to one primary, three high schools and one ‘pupil

referral unit') the full group assembled for an evaluation and shared lunch, and for each to record their story (on camera) for the teaching pack which would be the legacy of the project. Two of the stories from the DVD were screened at the final event of this phase: A day workshop was designed for teachers and other education professionals to meet asylum seekers and increase their capacity for working with young migrants and their families, through sharing good practice and reflecting on different scenarios. The feedback from the 30 participants satisfied us that the workshop had achieved its aims. For example:

I have learned so much today about the issues facing asylum seekers and feel inspired to go back to my school and share what I have learned, to enable greater awareness within both teaching staff and pupils.

I'll be pinching a few of the activities for school. Learned much new information to adapt lessons.

It has greatly enhanced my awareness and understanding of refugees and asylum seekers' experiences.

I have gained lots of knowledge around asylum seekers and their families. I have made links which I will use in the future to support my families within the area

(from the evaluation forms from our day workshop at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation, 2010).

The experience of going into schools had also been valuable to members of the Arise and Shine group, in several different ways. Two of the young women had felt nervous in anticipation - Rut worried about her spoken English and Fiona about the reaction of the young people. Both felt their fears melt away as the nine year olds, in Rut's case, and teenagers, in Fiona's, listened intently and connected with their stories, asking intelligent questions and accepting the responses without pre-judgement:

When I speak my history they listen and they ask so many questions, all of, all of the children they was having a lot of question in there. After that they got the idea what's asylum seeker and they start- they start saying they are beside you and they say they would help for asylum seeker and they give respect. I remember one boy, he say 'This Government help asylum seeker too much, because he gives them house. Other England people they sleep outside, they don't have house'... When they explained to him what the meaning - not all asylum seeker have house, most of asylum seeker is living in charity house, like Boaz Trust - then he understand, he say 'Yeah'. Really understand. I like! (Rut, interview).

Rut was encouraged to see the impact of her intervention on the children, who she discovered "don't have any, any idea about us". This was reinforced when she received

letters and pictures they made for her in subsequent lessons. As well as giving her confidence, Fiona felt her visits to schools had changed her preconceptions about young people in the UK:

It really filled in the gap between the youth and me... Because at first I thought, these youth have grown in Europe... since they are not from suffering situations, how will they be able to listen? But they were very, very calm, and eager to listen more what I had to say. And I was like 'Eh! Even I can talk to the youth and the youth can listen to me!' I went there with all this thing in my heart, thinking like, 'They won't be able to listen to you, they don't want to know what you're going to talk about'... I went with a different perspective and at the end of the project I came out with a different one. It also pulled up my self-esteem more because you had to talk in front of a gathering of children and teachers (Fiona, interview).



In the interviews several women expressed the belief that raising awareness among children is very important for educating the next generation:

School children normally they're innocent people, but if they know from starting their life what is asylum seeker... if we, like, explain why we are here, maybe next time, further in future, asylum seeker will be like- like one kind of support from the next generation, because they will know the main, real story (Naila, interview),

but also, quite optimistically, as a way of reaching the current generation of adults through their children:

Children are very inquisitive... if it touches this child she won't let the parents rest, she will always tell the parents 'This is happening, this is happening' (Lydia, interview).

I think when you start with the young ones they take the message back to the parents, because it's always children who teach the parents. They will say 'No, that is not true, Mum or Dad, what you say about an asylum seeker. This is what I hear today out of the mouth of an asylum seeker' (Sofia, interview).²⁰

Schools workshops are becoming popular with refugee and asylum seeker groups in Manchester – the materials developed by GAP Unit are, at the time of writing, being used by two further groups. Children's tendency for uncomplicated recognition of shared

²⁰

A friend who assisted in a series of lessons based around Benjamin Zephania's story 'Asylum Boy' had a different experience: Having been initially sympathetic to the migrant characters, some children returned to school having evidently discussed the issue with their parents, prejudice newly installed.

humanity makes them welcoming and receptive, and there is a satisfaction from knowing that you have made an important intervention which will have a legacy. There are other rewards as well. Story telling has different functions in relation to the acculturative process: as a way of creating continuity and affirming the self, of identifying shared experiences through their articulation and as a way of opening up the past to new ways of being in the world. It can also be part of a healing process, and many of the women in the group professed strong belief in the therapeutic value of speaking about painful issues, in the sense of ‘a problem shared is a problem halved’. Sharing publicly can be particularly powerful, as Fiona and Sofia experienced during one of the school visits, when students’ questions homed in on an aspect of their stories about which they generally kept silent, even to themselves – the fact that they left children behind when they fled their countries:

The most important thing I got in the schools project was to talk about my daughter. Every time I never wanted to talk about my daughter, I would hide everything about my daughter. The schools project opened up for me to talk about my daughter. I feel my daughter is part of me now, because I don’t fear talking about her, it doesn’t bring any inconveniences if I’m telling eh! any person about her...Children asked ‘Why did you have to leave her, back home?’ And I was like, ‘I didn’t have enough money to bring her on board... It was through desperation that you needed to move out from your country to another one. You didn’t know how much longer you will be even there’. Yeah? So it was very good, and a very nice experience. I will never forget about it, honestly (Fiona, interview).

They ask me questions about my children, and that is the most painful part that I don’t like to talk about because as a mum, I always blame myself, it is my fault, that I have left my children... I have to explain to them, and it was a little bit emotional, but I said to myself, well, I’m used to talking about my own life, but I never- I will say I have three children, but I don’t like to talk about it because I will cry, er from a mother’s point of view. But I think it is *good* for me to explain to people about my children... the more you talk about your story the more comfortable you will come out of your comfort zone, because you will feel pain, but afterwards you will know as long as someone out there knows now, why I’m here in the UK, and they will understand. But if you are not going to talk about it, then that will affect your life (Sofia, interview).



People seeking asylum are positioned by the state as lacking credibility; as Tendayi put it, “If you are refused your claim and they tell you, ‘You are a liar!’, you know, at the end of it, if you are not very careful, you will begin even to doubt your very existence” (Tendayi,

interview). Narrative is at the heart of the power asymmetry of the asylum process, in that a person's ability to stay in the country depends on their story being believed, in a quota system which requires the majority of claims to be dismissed. When a person's history is officially ruled incredible, the result is damage not only to their chance of safety but to their sense of self. Being heard and believed by an audience, feeling recognised and appreciated as an individual rather than as just another asylum 'case', is therefore restorative. It explains the positive reaction of the women to the support and warmth showed by many of the children, who wanted to know what they could do to help, sometimes spontaneously coming forward to hug the speakers.

We had a glorious day today when we went to the school in Bury. After our testimonies there were tears of solidarity and unity. The school children's engagement and participation surpassed our expectation (Tendayi, email to Carolina).

It is a principle of popular education that people should represent themselves as experts on their own lives. One of the outcomes of the workshops, with both children and adults, was that the women came to realise how little most people know about asylum and migration, and that they themselves possess expert knowledge about aspects of the legal system and of what abuses are being perpetrated by state-affiliated agencies in the shadowy margins of British society:

It showed me when we went to Kool UK [pupil referral unit] that lots of adults from UK they don't know what is going on with asylum seekers. They don't know anything about refugees. They was very astonished! I'm telling you, they didn't know anything! (Fiona, interview).

Sofia, too, was surprised by the ignorance they encountered among young people, having expected them to have been indoctrinated by their parents. She mentioned an exercise they did with one class, asking the teenagers to position themselves in the room according to whether they knew what it meant to be an asylum seeker, were not sure, or had no idea:

And you know - the confusion! ... there was a lot in the middle, because no one was sure what is an asylum seeker. They don't know. Because they was asking questions to each other 'What is an asylum seeker?' and I was amazed (Sofia, interview).

In terms of "acquisition... of knowledge and abilities for the adjustment to new situations and environments" (García-Ramírez et al, 2011: 88), the project also provided the mothers of pre-schoolers with insights of a more practical nature:

...as you're an asylum seeker, tomorrow you get your Leave to Remain, you've got to know how the system runs, and if you have children by all means they will go to school. You've got to know how that things go on here, in the UK where you are, you know already how- what it was in your own country, but need to know even where you're settling, and you're children they will find it very helpful if you already know, than *them* to teach *you* what happens in the school. Yeah it was really helpful (Fiona, interview).

PHASE 3: Second migrant women's gathering

By popular request, a second gathering was squeezed out of the Educate! budget just before Christmas in 2010. During the year GAP Unit had facilitated welcome sessions with further groups of Gateway refugees, from Bhutan and Iraq, so these groups were invited along, as were women from the WAST drop-in. In her interview Lydia had made a suggestion:



Alright, I may propose that - but we are already doing a lot I can't lie - what I may propose is that, like what we had in Friends Meeting House, the gathering. If people can really come in their numbers... Like we had it sometime, I think in another organisation, where people can come with their national flags, even something you make from your country, it will be very nice... maybe there's somebody from your country or maybe no, but if you come she say 'Oh! Where did this person come with this flag?' Or 'This thing is coming from my country.' From there you'll know that person (Lydia, interview).

This inspired an activity in which participants used coloured paper or pens to create a flag or another symbol of their home country. The programme (as always) was flexible, so



Presenting the Bangladeshi flag

Many pro-migration researchers strive not to unthinkingly reproduce nationalism as a taken for granted reality, rather than as a questionable construction which serves the interests of the powerful and of capital. Freirian work starts from the 'reality' of the participants, and national allegiance is often fundamental to the personal history and political identity of refugees and asylum seekers. While a longer process than Arise and Shine might have presented the opportunity to explore the issue of nationalism in a critical way, we took the cue from the women that depiction of national flags, or other objects (flowers, fruit, animals etc) as an alternative, would be a positive and appropriate group activity.

when it turned out that most women wanted to come to the front and present their artwork individually, sometimes singing a song or saying a prayer at the same time, other planned activities were skipped or shortened. The day was also a chance for Arise and Shine participants to report back on the year's activities, and a space for updates on other campaigns and projects. Other elements were the same as the previous year, including the buffet, drums, music and dancing. The event ended with the distribution of presents collected by pupils at one of the schools involved in the Arise and Shine education project.

Empowerment through Arise and Shine

The Arise and Shine project comprised the three distinct phases described, each the product of a separate grant from NWTWC. At each stage the intention was to contribute, in some small way, to the “complex process [which] involves the dialogical and dual reconstruction of selfhood and settings: at the citizenship level, from exclusion to belonging; at the interpersonal level, from isolation to participation; and at the intrapersonal level, from hopelessness to psychological wellbeing” (García-Ramírez 2011:89). Interpersonal development occurred within the Arise and Shine group, which evolved beyond the funded work and continued to meet sporadically, roughly every six months, over the years that followed. Several of the members were already friends or had known each other well from other arenas, but new connections were formed. The group evaluations throughout the project added to a sense of shared purpose and unity, and to an increasing sense of intimacy:

We are all friendly and together with each one. Like women coming from Preston; if not the GAP Unit, I shouldn't have known them, and now we keep that communication, we ri- I ring them sometimes, they also ring me, not only because of GAP Unit. But GAP Unit has made me to be connected to them (Lydia, interview).

For García-Ramírez et al, quoting Gaza & Gallegos (1985:377), the three-pronged empowerment process of acculturative integration is “a liberating journey to citizenship... the emergence of multicultural people, who are ‘characterized by a view of the world as a dynamically moving process and remain constantly open to the myriad of stimuli encountered...[and are] fluid in their conceptualizations and free to react in whatever manner is deemed most productive in a particular situation’” (2011: 89). While the work cited provided some conceptual tools for thinking about Arise and Shine, the parallels with Moroccan migrants in Spain only go so far. The empowered and positive stance of the article is encouraging in its optimism about the fate of migrants who engineer their own integration (although the only evidence presented is two brief participant quotes). Refugees

in the UK (who are allowed to work) are in a roughly equivalent position to economic migrants to Spain (who are - or were until the financial collapse - often able to find work and have been known to fight for and win legal rights), in that neither country is free of hostility towards those perceived as outsiders. Long term persistence is required in the face of racist discrimination, but as rights, recognition and social resources are demanded and gained by increment, a sense of integration does become a possibility for refugees. However, this does not transfer easily to the situation facing asylum seekers in the UK. The Spain-based authors speak of “an empowerment process based on the acquisition of rights and responsibilities to be politically active members contributing to the development of the new society” (2011: 89), but asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their claim are expected to bide their time, and are denied rights while they do. ‘Failed’ asylum seekers can launch legal appeals and muster public support for their right to stay, but again, citizenship of a formal, secure kind is not something they can seize for themselves. The paper engages with the circumstances of poor migrants who are initially disadvantaged by a language barrier, but does not capture in equivalent breadth the factors which threaten the well-being of the UK’s asylum seekers, whose “‘unity’ with the rest of society not a desired policy outcome” (Mulvey 2010: 454).²¹ Nevertheless, asylum seekers can and do participate in the public sphere, despite their imposed conditions of existence, with important consequences for their acculturation and integration. Pannett, who interviewed two of the same women as me for her thesis *Making a livable life in Manchester: Doing justice to people seeking asylum*, writes that:

many of my participants both analyze and interpret the conditions of existence of asylum and also become involved in forms of praxis - caring and campaigning activities, for example - that work towards changing not only their individual situation but also some of the restrictions that shape the lives of people seeking asylum as a group (Pannett 2011: 19).

She highlights women’s multiple agency in the civic sphere, and on one another’s behalf, discussion of which is the main focus of Chapter 5. Pannett also provides a powerful metaphor to describe the precariousness of the asylum wait:

A web is constructed of many supporting and interwoven threads, just as people spoke of many components of livability. If part of a web breaks, the rest can hold until the break is repaired. If there are few threads, or if there is nowhere for them to attach

²¹ A fact spelled out by this HO quote: “Integration in the full sense of the word can only take place when a person has been confirmed as a refugee and can make plans on the basis of a long-term future in the UK” (Home Office 2005: 10).

themselves, there is no web. If there is some thread of continuity between the old life and the new, people seeking asylum can begin to weave new lives. When there is nothing to attach to, as when work is denied, or when attachments are constantly broken, as when people are moved repeatedly, attempts to weave new lives are thwarted. For some people the possibility of livability fails completely (2011: 238).

She sees the groups people seek out as spaces of hope, as places where the web can attach in order to effect bits of repair, especially when they afford stability and continuity. My focus with this chapter has been on the Arise and Shine project and its contribution to participants' accultural integration. The next sets it in context by considering the other groups, services and activities that the women belonged to, made use of or participated in.

Chapter 4. Associational activity

My opening question to the interviewees asked about organisations they were or had been involved in “which are aiming to support asylum seekers or refugees, or doing advocacy or campaigning”. The picture of local ‘refugee provision’ which emerged from their responses (Table 4.) included:

1. Support-orientated refugee-specific initiatives (RSIs) – offering advice and assistance of various kinds
2. Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs)
3. Refugee and Migrant forums/ networks
4. Other solidarity, advocacy and campaigning groups

For space reasons, the detailed typology occurs in Appendix 2, along with an outline of the UK asylum system focussing on the role of the third sector. In summary, it maps the types of groups and services available to asylum seekers and refugees *as* asylum seekers and refugees: those catering to basic humanitarian need and those enabling the beginnings of accultural integration by providing opportunities to build social ties, acquire the knowledge and abilities required for navigating the new environment and in some cases exercise political agency as citizens or citizens-in-waiting. If made destitute, people come to rely more heavily on basic services; if granted Leave to Remain the issue of integration becomes more pressing. As Table 4. shows, the interviewees also mentioned activities not directly related to their status as migrants: college courses, churches, mother and baby groups, volunteer work in non-refugee sectors and, for the refugees, paid work. All are essential to a holistic understanding of how individuals remake their lives in exile, but two areas – faith groups and voluntary work – merited particular attention and are discussed in Appendix 2.

Table 4. Associational activities of ten Arise and Shine members [Green = RSI/RCO]

Participant	Status at start of Arise & Shine	Current status (Nov 2012)	Groups and networks	Type of involvement	Other activities during Arise and Shine
TENDAYI	Refugee	Refugee	ZIWO	Founder member	BA in criminology (started)
Country Zimbabwe					
Year arrived in UK 2003	Active in faith group Yes – Zimbabwean Methodist church		MRSN's Refugee & Migrants Forum	Committee member	Set up a Saturday club for Zimbabwean girls

Prior occupation Primary teacher			Informal mutual aid/discussion groups	Initiator	Mother and grandmother to school age and pre-school children
			Oxfam Routes to Solidarity (RTS) project	Participant	Paid work for GAP Unit projects
			BME Women’s Solidarity Forum (grew out of RTS)	Member	Community leader
MARIA	Visa overstayer	Waiting– in receipt of Section 95	<i>Refugee Action</i>	<i>Advocate with Refugee Integration Service</i>	Single mother to pre-school/school age child
Country Nigeria					
Year arrived in UK 2006	Active in faith group Yes – C of E church		<i>'With Women'</i>	<i>Founder & secretary of group attached to Nigerian church</i>	Access and BTEC courses
Prior occupation Embassy official in Greece, NHS administrator			<i>‘Amazing’</i>	<i>Customer services in church charity shop</i>	
			<i>Citizens Advice Bureau</i>	<i>Welfare advisor</i>	
			<i>Various women’s/ toddler groups</i>	<i>Attender, volunteer</i>	
			Sure Start children’s centre	Volunteer	
			<i>Labour Party</i>	Branch activist (until status discovered)	
			Strengthening Community, Strengthening Family	Group member	
LYDIA	Asylum seeker	Refugee	<i>New Shamwari</i>	Training and practice in welfare advice	Writing plays, giving talks around the country
Country Cameroon					
Year arrived in UK 2006	Active in faith group Yes - C of E church		WAST	Management Group, choir, playwright etc.	Ongoing medical treatment for health problems
Prior occupation English teacher			<i>RAPAR</i>	Interviewer for book project	Job hunting
			Own anti-deportation campaign group		Two periods in detention
			<i>Southern Cameroon National Congress (SCNC)</i>	Campaigning in exile	
SOFIA	Asylum seeker	Asylum seeker – mostly destitute	<i>Medical Justice</i>	Asylum seeker committee delegate	Running own anti-deportation campaign with husband
Country Zimbabwe/South Africa					
Year arrived in UK 2006	Active in faith group Yes – African-led evangelical		<i>Manchester Changemakers</i>	Involvement in community	Caring for husband, trying to

Prior occupation Business woman, general manager	church			organising project	trace her 3 children
			Citizens Advice Bureau	Volunteering, learning advice skills	Detained three times, husband more often in detention than not
			Befriending project	Cheering up lonely elderly people	
			MRSN	Training, campaigning	
			WAST	Management Group, choir, play	
			Train 2000	Volunteer receptionist	
			Refugee Action wellbeing project	Physical exercise	
			Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum	Founder member	
			Salford Apprentice	Accredited course on influencing and local decision-making	
			Revive	Volunteer helping newly arrived asylum seekers	
			Boaz Trust	Resident and volunteer	
NAILA	Refugee (only just)	Refugee	Rainbow Haven	Volunteer helping newly arrived asylum seekers	Caring for 3 children, fighting for family reunion (successful)
Country Bangladesh Year arrived in UK 2004 Prior occupation Health worker	Active in faith group Yes – practicing Muslim		MCDAS	Meeting people, getting to know Manchester	Caring for friends and friends' daughter
			WAST	Management Group member, cooking, choir, play	
RUT	Asylum seeker	Refugee	WISP Manchester	Attending activities, learning English	Single mother of small son
Country Ethiopia Prior occupation Student			WAST	Drop-in attender	Involvement in Ethiopian community
	Asylum seeker	Refugee	RMU	Drop-in attender	English and maths courses, driving course
FIONA	Asylum seeker	Refugee	RMU	Drop-in attender	English and maths courses, driving course
Country Uganda Year arrived in UK 2004 Prior occupation Student	Active in faith group Yes – evangelical church		Mental health charity	Volunteer with view to training	Caring for young son and husband with mental health problems
			NW Com. Activists Network		
CHENAI	Asylum seeker	Asylum seeker – destitute	Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum	Founder member, following School of Participation	Ongoing medical treatment for back problems
Country Zimbabwe Year arrived					

in UK 2008 Prior occupation Bookkeeper	Active in faith group Yes – South Manchester Family Church		Salford Apprentice	Accredited course on influencing and local decision-making	Volunteer receptionist at Revive
			GAP Unit community researchers	Volunteer researcher	
ELINAH	Refugee	Refugee	MRSN	Paid development worker	Community leader
Country Zimbabwe Year arrived in UK 2003 Prior occupation Accountant	Active in faith group Yes – Stockport Christian Fellowship		ZIWO	Founder member	Working for GAP Unit as book keeper
			Informal Zimbabwean groups	Many community roles	
AMAL	Asylum seeker	Refugee	WISP Bolton	Attender	Fighting for family reunion (successful)
Country Sudan Year arrived in UK?	Active in faith group Yes – practicing Muslim		Refugee Action Bolton	Volunteer co-ordinator for Gateway arrivals	Mother to teenage children

Motivations for involvement

“For me, I can say every organisation have a different impact on me”, said Lydia. [Table 5.](#) draws on interviews and group discussions to illustrate some of the different ways in which the women felt they benefited from groups listed in [Table 4.](#) They are not easy to summarise analytically because of the way they overlap. Antoni (2009: 360-4) categorises motivations as ‘intrinsic’ or ‘extrinsic’; an example of the former would be a desire to feel useful to others, while the latter is concerned with personal benefit, for example acquiring skills or “acceptance from the middle classes... where refugees come from a more privileged class background and anticipate resuming such a position in the future” (Vickers, 2010: 250). This separation is rather artificial and unhelpful, however. Feeling good about oneself as a result of altruism is presumably a form of personal benefit, while a desire for career advancement may be driven less by personal fulfilment than by a desire to provide for one’s family, in the UK or abroad (which may bring personal satisfaction or enhanced social standing). For example, when we last saw her, Fiona had a step-by-step plan for establishing her new life post-asylum: receive an National Insurance (NI) number, open a bank account, enrol on an Access course, investigate voluntary work, apply for a passport, learn to drive, sort out benefits, think about schools - all of it in preparation for sending for her daughter from Uganda, which she intended to do as soon as she felt economically stable. Intrinsic/extrinsic does not really cover this. Similarly, a priority for Tendayi and Elinah was getting to grips with the UK political landscape; partly, as ‘political people’, to feel a sense of personal fulfilment, but equally out of a desire to be influential on others’ behalf. Countries like the UK have structures and channels which

allow altruistic action in principle to be compatible with individual career paths, whereas in countries with less stability and fewer economic resources voluntary action might be more often restricted to informal and emergency responses to human need and carried out at personal cost, financial or otherwise. Elinah, for example, spoke at interview of her “work with street children, which was started by mothers in the community and sometimes it wasn't easy... the police thought we were a political party so that's how we got into trouble”. In the UK, Tendayi had discovered that ‘volunteer co-ordinator’ might be a valid alternative career given the obstacles in her way to resuming teaching . All her informal organising within the Zimbabwean diaspora and accumulated experience with GAP Unit and other voluntary sector organisations in Manchester were pointing towards paid work in this area. The number of such posts is on the decline, of course, as the current government tries to engineer a society more like Zimbabwe’s where, in the absence of state welfare it falls to unfunded individuals, philanthropy to support the weakest in society.

Table 5. Benefits of involvement in groups

What the group provides	Examples
1. Practical information, material assistance, emotional and physical support and care	<p>“When I was pregnant, RMU really supported me to give birth to my son ... I wasn't really well, that time when I was soon due ...it was so helpful” (Fiona).</p> <p>“I was with Greater Manchester Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, they did my campaign and I went their community, I was involved with them, and it was in Friends Meeting House, every month, Saturday, they give solidarity. I got also help and support from those groups, because I have campaign, so those people helping me for my asylum claim, how can I settle in this country. And I have immigration problem or- and support like money or housing so when I have this kind of problem those groups they contact with immigration and solicitor and NASS - they sort out my problem” (Naila).</p>
2. New social networks, collectives and friendships; a sense of belonging	<p>When we go there, that time when you think those people supporting or like befriending, or like er pray for us, or like 'Come straightway!' like 'Hold my hand!' then that time we get like strength, like “Oh I’m not like poor, like helpless”, that time we think yeah, we have somebody to help, somebody hold my hand, somebody picking me up. You know? So what organisation do is this, the organisation make us like giving more strength” (Naila).</p> <p>“I’ve found friends in WAST, there are friends who can never stay without calling, they are friends who can call- even like now we are together, we are social, but by the time I get home maybe they will call two or three times before the day, before the night. Before I come, I know we are going to meet, but we will still have to call. Those like the others, Mavis and the rest” (Lydia).</p> <p>“Just drop your child [in the crèche] and be yourself you know you, chat with other girls, other ladies. Just, bring it out, bring it out for fresh air. You know, you sit down, we chat, blah blah and everybody goes away, that helps a lot, it’s a therapy on its own” (Maria).</p>
3. Restoring confidence and agency	<p>“When we went to MMU, with our Community Leadership team, and then we were discussing some issues and then after that we went out</p>

	<p>for lunch, and the lecturer came to me and she said ‘Oh, where did you get all this knowledge? Do you have a degree in something or did you graduate in your country?’ I was saying to myself ‘They don’t really know where I got all this!’ (laughs). Yes, it was from the groups that I go to. Anyway, when we were talking I was seeing Carolina with her popular education, these things. She was really honest: ‘Oh, I’m so impressed, where did you get all this?’ And I think to myself ‘Oh, it’s from this group’ (Chenai).</p> <p>“It’s because of WAST that I wrote the play. When I came to WAST I saw that they are doing awareness raising and campaigns, and they wrote a book. So I thought if we do it in the form of acting, it will be better also. So they said ok, you can write it, you can. So, I started writing. So all this I made, because of WAST” (Lydia).</p>
4. Opportunities for physical exercise or creative expression	“Refugee Action give like cycling, and swimming, activities which I can participate in. So, to keep my mind focussed and to stay healthy (Sofia).
5. A way to fill time for those excluded from work and study	“So what keeps me positive is doing what I love, I love- it’s, it’s, it’s a shame for people to sit down in the house... That’s why- now at least I’ve got something when I wake up in the morning I say ‘Oh, I’m going to college’ blah blah. Yeah, so that is what I love. I don’t want to be incapacitated. I don’t want to feel used up, you know?” (Maria).
6. A way to keep occupied in order to keep their minds off their troubles	“When there is all kind of stuff around the North West, I always go to participate. I always find that is where my strength is. If I sit at home that is when I’m going to think, and I don’t give myself chance to think. So I go into different organisations - I’m glad that there is a lot of organisations - that is actually what gives me strength” (Sofia).
7. Continuity with activities they were engaged in before coming to the UK	<p>“From back home I’m the secretary to a very big church... we have a group also, it’s called Good Women group, so we still have that, I was still the secretary in Liverpool also, I brought it from Nigeria and I became the secretary in Liverpool” (Maria).</p> <p>The women-only gathering...we have always known it at different levels. Mm hm. So it is important to keep it on... Women’s groups in Zimbabwe generally they are so strong. They are like societies, we have a different name for the groups, societies or clubs. In the workplace you can have a study group or like a women’s staff organisation, where you are challenging policies” (Tendayi).</p>
8. Maintaining, celebrating or promoting community culture	“We tend to tell them this is the way to go about things... how to go out, buy your Nigerian food, to be meticulous, we do lots of budgeting, loads of advice for women to encourage them to fit into the society... we tend to encourage them with our children we shouldn’t lose touch with our culture, we shouldn’t lose our personality... To take two cultures together and get some goodness out of us and out of our family” (Maria).
9. The ability to be and feel useful to others	<p>“Because I’m a giver, I tend to empathise with people a lot and, I love to serve people, meet people, and in that capacity you tend to give your best, because if you are dealing with a client you try to go as much as possible to help them solve their immediate problem. Because they’ve come into a new country, they are overwhelmed with different problems” (Maria).</p> <p>“The same advice that I will give for asylum seeker women I will give to any other women, irrespective of your nationality. Because we need to help each other. Because we are the same, we think the same and we go through the same things. It’s just our status is different. But our core, this is the same, we are woman, we think the same and, but one is stronger maybe than the other one. So that’s why it is very important to integrate and talk with other people, and that depression will go away” (Sofia).</p> <p>“I mean you come across different backgrounds, different cultures...</p>

	you have that empathy, you want to give something to other people, to make them go away with a smile or go away with feeling a lift of their problem” (Maria)
10. Campaigning, advocating for their rights, raising awareness, resisting deportation, defending their interests	<p>“When I know more about asylum seekers’ problem and because when we meet with people we talk about our life, and I have to, I’m saying I can, I have to help, I have to do this one, I have to do- I must do something! ” (Rut).</p> <p>“Through RAPAR I came to know another group, Commonword...I was one of the persons who- they wrote a book called Small Rocks. Which the idea was how they can end destitution. So I did the interviews with people who are destitute, to see their experiences, what they really go through as destitute”(Lydia).</p> <p>“We have done a lot of training with MRSN. And they are also doing campaigns, like I am involved in the present campaign they are doing, the Let Them Work Campaign, for asylum seekers” (Lydia).</p>
11. A way to meet or work with British people, linked to insights into how things work in the UK, practically, socially, politically	<p>“I’m voluntary with two organisations outside of refugees, that is the befriending, where I befriend with old people...and then I also volunteer with Citizens Advice Bureau in Longsight where I do admin... what I actually learned, say like with Citizens Advice Bureau, I want to be a welfare rights officer... Train 2000, also volunteer for them, which I also do admin” (Sofia).</p> <p>“We’re able to meet with different organisations, we’re able to listen to what the Big Society is all about... the enterprise, different groups... Because I quite love topic the Big Society, knowing more about political developments, it’s quite interesting” (Maria).</p>
12. Opportunities for gaining or maintaining skills and education, often with a view to future employability but also for general personal or family benefit (e.g. understanding English) or for that of a community or organization	<p>“I was just thinking, well, I would like to not waste my years because I have already wasted like four years here, so for the four years that I’m here I’m doing other things, so now actually what I find out is I like to work with people and help people...so I was asking myself why wasting my time while I can go and do shadowing in organisations or do an apprenticeship where I can learn more about benefits and by the time when I’ve got my status, there is my direction” (Sofia).</p> <p>“Shamwari send us for the training, advice work training... after I did the training with Shamwari when I came back, I was always, we were volunteering in WAST. So some women when they are granted, when they come we need to help them, maybe fill their community care grant” (Lydia).</p> <p>“Now I go English and maths at school [adult education centre]. These teachers are empowering me to help like my son with homework, because I have gone to school, do how they do it here” (Fiona).</p> <p>“MRSN, I went for about two, two meetings. The lady she was explaining about... when we do a woman's group, what we have to do, what we have to complete to make women's organization, like, if I am a chairman what do I have to do, if I am secretary what I have to, she's learning us this” (Rut).</p>

Factors influencing associational activity

Among the factors influencing the type and extent of refugee and asylum seekers’ involvement in associational activities in the UK is their previous experience of organising and their membership of societies, faith groups and so on in their countries of origin. This

depends on many factors including prevailing norms and age, social and economic status and education. For some participation in groups is a new concept, while for others it is a chance for continuity with a previous way of life, where membership of groups and networks may have been associated with material struggle (creating a need for collective co-operation), or with relative material comfort (having the necessary skills, education, spare time or financial resources for voluntary activity). Vickers notes that:

Refugees from professional or other middle or upper class backgrounds in their country of origin are disproportionately represented, both amongst those making it to Britain...and even more so among those who undertake voluntary activity (2010: 247).

When they meet new arrivals at the reporting centre and elsewhere, WAST members told me that they spread the word about their Friday drop-in and try to persuade them to attend. Some invitees never appear and some take months to muster the courage. Others do not wait to be asked, seeking out such forums and diving straight in. Lydia, for example, became active in WAST as soon she found it on the internet, because “As a person, before I came here I’m always active”.

In societies where many people experience severe material poverty, giving and receiving may be more commonplace than in the UK, because solidarity and gifts are a necessary part of an economy of survival. Carolina felt that this was the reason for a noticeable generosity of spirit within the group, citing the way the women “rejoice for the other” (Carolina, email) when someone is granted Leave to Remain, even though it may painfully highlight their own unresolved troubles. However, over-romanticised portraits are unhelpful. Jealousy and uncooperative behaviours also featured, as is inevitable when people are living under uncertainty and stress. Some refugees are from elite families, potentially insulated from poverty and no more part of a culture of reciprocity than the average middle class Briton - although the experience of being an asylum seeker may cultivate this sensibility. Alternatively they may have always had a strong philanthropic role as a result of their social standing or, as in the case of Naila’s family in Bangladesh, economic wealth. Whatever generalisations are appropriate regarding refugee women’s propensity towards altruism, if any, the fact is that the whole Arise and Shine group agreed with and endorsed the following three statements, which I presented to them as summing up what I felt I had learned from their interviews:

“Giving and receiving makes us feel good”

Giving to others is fulfilling; the knowledge of having done your best for someone is satisfying and may work to restore a sense of agency when one is on the receiving end of handouts and repeatedly devalued in encounters with officials. Asked what helps her keep strong, Maria answered “Ok, being able to go out and volunteer, number one.” Until lack of childcare prevented her continuing, she worked as a welfare rights advisor through Refugee Action’s One Stop Shop service, her favourite voluntary role because:

We try as much as possible to help... you have to show empathy, you have to show your emotion, you have to bring out everything in you and to try and solve the problem as much as you can (Maria, interview).

Sofia had a project:

Where I befriend with old people, and then I go maybe for one or two hours of my time, and just go there and talk with them,

showing that such a desire to help others and show empathy need not be reserved for people sharing similar characteristics, predicament or background. The act of inspiring and energising others through your own example is for Sofia also cathartic, a way of ameliorating her own suffering, as she mentions in relation to interactions with British people during her voluntary work:

I’m more encouraging for them, because when they listen to my stories they are like ‘Wow’, then they said ‘You have empower me, you have uplift my spirit, you have made my day’. (Sofia, interview).

When she came to Liverpool, Maria instigated a group like one she had been involved with in Nigeria. It was focussed on helping women to adjust to life in the UK but also on creating a cross-cultural ‘contact zone’, bringing Nigerian culture into the wider community and helping people in need within the ‘host community’ too:

It’s not only a Nigerian church; White people comes there. So we cook every Sunday... basically Nigerian food, then the White people too they bring in- Scousers, they bring in their own thing. I tend to dress traditional... We talk about it, we do different things, so. Then you have the people that doesn't come in but they only come for the lunch... it’s a deprived area, so it’s full of junkies, all this stuff, but they are always welcome, they know they want chicken, they want coloured rice, so they’re always having it hot. It’s only women that help and do that... the men they are there, they do their thing, but the women are holding this aspect of food and giving people food, inviting them in, blah blah, like that (Maria, interview).

“We give from our heart and soul, not in order to get something back”

Lorraine Pannett wrote of her participants (who included Lydia and Sofia) that they go:

beyond the analytical and take part in activities that put their knowledge to work. Many volunteer within their communities or with refugee organizations, providing information and advice - giving other people the care they would have liked. Others organise campaigns in pursuit of their claims to remain or are active in broader campaigns such as ‘Let Them Work’. Many are active in all three areas. (2011: 142).

Just as she did not feel that the organisations which had helped her (Manchester Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers (MCDAS), her own anti-deportation group and WAST) were looking for reward, Naila was clear that her voluntary work was :

From my heart and soul, like I think I need to do something as a human being, how much I can I did it, it's not for like getting something. Even they also didn't do something for me, like they getting something from me, it's not this. They helping every human being. And I also like giving my time, how much I can do, make friends, talk each other, share each other, like this (Naila, interview).

Like some of Tom Vickers’ participants, some of the Arise and Shine group (those with less previous experience of public involvement) linked their motivation for helping others directly to the experience of being helped themselves. He writes that “A common form of non-material incentive reported by participants was the inspiration gained from witnessing the support provided by the organisation, both to themselves and to others”, citing a participant who told him “they are very helpful and they care about people, so that’s why they gave me too much motivation” (2010: 204). Rut said something similar:

I’m thinking, because you people are helping us, so why not we don't help each other? You know? There is a lot of people with us, helping us, so we have to help each other (Rut, interview).

The women’s experiences had given them motivation, practical knowledge and empathy with others in the asylum system and a lot of their volunteering was about using insider knowledge to support and advise others. As well as Maria, Sofia and Lydia had sought out training and work experience to increase their capacity to offer professional advice to fellow asylum seekers and refugees. Lydia had volunteered with an organisation called New Shamwari in order to learn skills useful for other women (“clients”) at WAST, so that:

If a client's come with a problem, then we say- maybe concerning this benefit things, you know what benefit entitlement they have. If they are asylum seeker to know whether it's Section 4 or it's Section 95... (Lydia, interview).

For Vickers, "such instances may be considered a form of 'bounded solidarity', representing social capital formations in which actions are not performed on an instrumental basis, but motivated by an identification with a group based on a perceived 'common fate'" (2010: 233). As mentioned, it can also be an avenue for developing paid work in the future, demonstrating the simultaneous nature of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Lydia, who recently received Leave to Remain, is currently seeking work as an advocate, and Sofia said her time with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) had prompted her to consider becoming a welfare rights officer once she gets her status. From their own experience they know it to be meaningful work and that they are well equipped to do it. The 'public service ethos' (Mayo, 2012 7), the degree of attention paid to equality issues and the kind of autonomy possible in the voluntary sector appealed to them. However, an important contributory factor is that they are denied access to other fields. Two of the wider group were engineers whose qualifications were not recognized in the UK and could not afford to retrain or face having to start again from scratch.

"We only enjoy volunteering with organisations which genuinely care about their clients"

Common to all seven interviewees was a desire to work exclusively for organisations which were 'genuine', by which they meant ones which demonstrably cared about their service users. They had little patience for organisations which went through the motions or did the contractual minimum rather than being willing to "go the extra mile" for people. Organisations and staff were judged on their ability to show empathy. Sofia named Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN), WAST, Boaz Trust and Refugee Action as:

Organisations that I can say they really work with asylum seekers and they don't just leave you, they help you *until*. It's like today in WAST, we was having training how to do Section 4²², and because of that there was one woman who was having a problem and because of that we couldn't just leave that woman, we have to go the extra mile with her, to tell her 'Ok, you come back tomorrow'... but that is what WAST do, to go that extra mile, really caring (Sofia, interview).

²² 'Section 4 support' is made available to those whose claims for asylum are deemed to have failed but who can show that for one of a number of eligible reasons they should not, in the short term, be returned to their country.

Maria said similar, when I asked what might put her off working with an organisation or a project:

Number one thing that puts me off is er, when you say you are helping people... I don't want to have it at the back of my mind that I don't think it's serious at all. If that's what they, what they project, is this really what they are into?... I'm giving my time, I'm giving my talent, I'm giving my everything, so I want it to be for the *real* thing, not just on face value (Maria, interview).

Asked to explain what would convince her an organisation was genuine, she said:

They are real, genuine, empathy, support and um, 'getting there in the end'... 'getting there' is- a client comes to you with a problem, you can't solve all the problem, but at least you do as much as you can, not just saying 'Oh just tell them to go, just tell them something and let them go'. You know, something like that. But you are there for them, you want to try as much as possible, *giving* him. And you know at the end of the day 'Oh I tried my best'. You know? (Maria, interview).

For Tendayi, genuineness in an organisation was linked to its acceptance of one's genuineness as a person and a refugee, as opposed intimations of suspicion or mistrust:

- Hannah:** Is there something about style of working or something about an organisation that would make you think 'Oh yeah, I wouldn't really like to do anything with them?'
- Tendayi:** There are- yes, there are some. But not with GAP or MRS- MRSN. No.
- Hannah:** No, because you have chosen to work with them
- Tendayi:** Yes, I have chosen to work them, er, because I genuinely trust them
- Hannah:** Mmm.
- Tendayi:** Yes. And there's- but em, but the missing thing I've had always, to say, when you go to, to an organisation, they believe you. They value you as who you are. There's no suspicion, to say 'Hmmmmm, you might be, this!' (laughs)

Why join the Arise and Shine 'campaign group'?

As explained in Chapter 3., the women who joined the Arise and Shine group did so after the first gathering and workshops with GAP Unit made them want to speak out about the way asylum seekers are treated, to counter prejudice, silencing and invisibility. That, or they were already core members of WAST, and had experienced the empowering effect of being part of a women's collective orientated towards mutual support and engagement with the wider community through awareness raising, campaigning and representational participation in local and national forums. Eder has noted that engaging in collective action itself "triggers reflective cognitive processes. As collective action produces the reasons for joining a collective action, it becomes itself a mechanism of collective learning" (1993:

54), while Stromquist observes that ““a person must first become part of some collective group to develop a collective identity; but, developing a sense of collective identity also leads women to mobilize”” (2004: 32). Joining Arise and Shine was, for WAST members Lydia, Sofia, Mavis and Naila, an extension of this activity and reflection of their increasing desire to be seen and heard and to work for change. Meanwhile, for those who joined from the more practical ‘help and advice’-orientated groups we worked in Phase 1., the consciousness-raising element of Arise and Shine was pre-eminent; these women had not been politically active or played public roles before or since migration, nor been involved in a process of explicitly naming the injustices and systemic flaws causing their personal problems. Meeting experienced campaigners and workers who shared a political analysis of the immigration and asylum regime as racist and discriminatory provided new conceptual tools for viewing their predicaments. Lastly, there were women who had wanted to continue working with GAP Unit because they found the experience of Phase 1. workshops restorative of previous identities. Tendayi and Elinah, for example, had previously been activists in Zimbabwe, deriving personal fulfilment from involvement in the public sphere, and their sense of alienation from the mainstream political structures of their adopted country had been therefore been a frustration. Tendayi explained that when she first came across GAP Unit:

I could feel that all my confidence had just gone. Not gone because I wanted it to go, but, I was so weary, physically and mentally, I was so weary because wherever I go it was like I was fighting, I was fighting, I was fighting.

Maria’s exclusion from mainstream politics had been literal – having been enthusiastically nurtured as a prospective candidate, she had had to abruptly end her relationship with her local Labour Party when her immigration status was discovered. She, Elinah and Tendayi were seeking political inclusion beyond just asylum advocacy. At a consultation hosted by Greater Manchester’s Women’s Solidarity Forum²³ on what should replace the Women’s National Commission (a UK quango valued by the women’s VCS which was disbanded in 2010), Elinah said she found it interesting to see consensual democratic processes at work, so different from the politics of command and patronage in Zimbabwe. A turning point for Tendayi came when Carolina asked her to write to the Minister for the Third Sector after our funding programme was cancelled, expressing the group’s discontent:

²³ This network was an outcome of Oxfam’s Routes to Solidarity (RtS) project; Elinah and Tendayi are members.

When I wrote that letter to the Minister, it was life changing. Yes, I cannot put it into words, but it was life-changing. I could feel that ‘Oh! I am this powerful!’ (Tendayi, interview).

That this small act was so significant is striking, and there were other examples in Tendayi’s testimony where a request to take on a task had been all she needed to trigger recovery of her willpower and resourcefulness. Maria, Tendayi and Elinah had already set up diaspora women’s groups for mutual support but my research indicates that Arise and Shine was an important addition. This was partly for the chance it gave them to work alongside, talk things through with and be championed by allies from the host community; helping bridge the divide which had opened up between their view of themselves and their own capacities and what had begun to appear as limits on their room to manoeuvre in public life. Arise and Shine was in some ways the kind of ‘liminal space’ between public and private, “used strategically by women to develop capacities and resources – for the benefit of self, community or other women – sheltered from the wider public gaze”, which has been written about by Newman (2012: 472). According to Robson and Spence, “evidence suggests that as women cross the boundary from informal community action to formal politics, such space remains critical because their politics are rooted in ‘trust, mutuality and [build] upon informal community connections’ (2011: 294).

The fact that different women want and need different things in terms of a relationship with the world beyond the private (and liminal) realm is taken up in the next chapter, which considers the role of allies in facilitating agency among asylum seekers and refugees, and some of the things we do well to bear in mind. This chapter ends with an illustrative example.

In 2010, NWTWC organised a ‘showcase’ event in Nelson, Lancashire, as part of its annual conference, inviting all of its funding recipients to make and attend others’ presentations and as well as talks, workshops and plenaries debating the future direction of community engagement and CD in the North West. Twelve of us attended, including most of the actors from the WAST play, who showed a clip from the DVD and spoke about their work. Maria’s assessment of the day was positive:

Beautiful. Beautiful.... it shows quite the length of GAP, how GAP is one of a network of organisations in the North West... and here we were able to meet with different organisations... there's quite a big activity which I'm so happy to be a part of. If an

organisation like that, the North West Together, they can organise that kind of forum often and on, it's good. I love that day. (Maria, interview).

Tendayi, who also thrived on being socially and politically active also found it a good experience:

It was part of a whole network, but coming together to speak with one voice. And all the organisations represented there on that particular day, they never showed superiority... we were just together as one, equal partners. And the workshops, again, which we did at that conference, they were very open... Everything from the organiser's speech to the workshops which we went into. Very – personally - very empowering, and it was an eye-opener (Tendayi, interview).

Fiona, on the other hand, contrasted the NWTWC event unfavourably with those organised by Arise and Shine, where audiences had come *specifically* to hear from them:

The people who came to the play they came to know what really happens... But the people in Nelson, it wasn't just one agenda why they are there... from the play everyone gets out thinking of questions or wanting to know more, but in Nelson, everyone who was there was- came for a different thing. So they may push on their own agenda before they bring in asylum seekers (Fiona, interview).

For Fiona, the wider remit of the NWTWC conference was a distraction and a dilution; her conditions of existence as an asylum seeker were her political focus and she did not, at that time, have room for general curiosity about the society she was being excluded from:

I think everyone was about public sector, changing of government and all that. Which asylum seekers we are not thinking of, because my, most of our minds is just on our case, how are we winning our case to get Leave to Remain here (Fiona, interview).

Summary

Illustrating the diverse range of associational activities in which my participants were involved, this chapter confirms recent findings by the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) that many asylum seekers and refugees are “strongly motivated to avoid dependence” and show “a profound desire to both develop bonds with either co-ethnic or with the general asylum seeking populations *and* to make links with the local population” (Mulvey, 2013: 113). While lamenting that it was more common than not, due to lack of support for integration and the enduring impact of the asylum system, for respondents to the SRC's survey to indicate withdrawal from general contact, it said that refugees nevertheless “show a huge propensity to straddle co-ethnic and host community contact and connection”, successes which are very much “despite rather than because of the asylum process and its effects” (Mulvey, 2013: 117). This chapter has given some wider context to my participants'

involvement with GAP Unit and showed them to be discriminating in their choices of organisation, seeking 'genuinness' in the sense of reciprocal trust and shared values around care, respect and compassion. Chapter 5. looks at their involvement in campaigning and advocacy and considers the role of CD in supporting asylum seekers and refugees to be active in the public sphere.

Chapter 5. Getting political

“Our views – are they fed in?”

When asked at a meeting: “*What is currently missing in Manchester in terms of support for asylum seekers/refugees?*”²⁴, Tendayi’s group replied “Representation for asylum seekers and refugees - not being given a voice/platform”.

Tendayi: When we are talking of provisions about policy decision making, so we don't fit in the decision making process. Or, our views - are they fed into that?

Sofia: It's like, decisions - they don't include asylum seekers' groups

Tendayi: Eh hey! Only ‘on behalf of’. Yes, so it’s like a prescriptive type of [thing], to say ‘I think you have a headache. You need two tablets.’

A further point was that they had a sense of there being an advocacy industry which consults with but ultimately speaks for asylum seekers. At random I listed the Refugee Council, Refugee Action and Still Human Still Here, and the four women I consulted (Elinah, Sofia, Chenai and Lydia) agreed that these were the kinds of campaigning organisations which they felt rely overly on British experts and fail to place refugees and asylum seekers at the forefront of their representations and negotiations. It seems there is still relevance in the work done by Hardy and Phillips (1999: 7) which identified a tension between paternalism and empowerment among agencies, some of which, the data suggested, found it difficult to perceive refugees as an interest group, rather than a client group, and difficult to adjust to refugee organisations increasing their influence. With respect to media representations, it is a view shared by O'Neill and Harindranath:

Much of the knowledge generated by advocacy groups, organisations, self-organised groups and services supporting asylum seekers and refugees provides much needed alternative voices, dispelling myths and promoting better understanding and knowledge. However, the knowledge generated is also subject to media representation and this tends not to be constituted by the voices of refugees and asylum seekers. Thus asylum seekers and refugees are represented by others, such as NGOs, advocacy and support groups. Organisations such as Refugee Action, the Refugee Council and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles are exemplars (2006: 41).

The Arise and Shine women believed that their first-hand knowledge makes asylum seekers and refugees the best possible spokespeople on migration issues. They saw a need

²⁴ I only noticed the passive positioning of refugees in this question when I saw that their written answers (which demonstrated their familiarity with UK policy jargon) included a need to remove barriers to their own action and self-determination.

and wanted to do their part to change things. For Naila, allies are created when you “pass the original reality to them... real things, from direct, from one asylum seeker.” Asked if it seemed right for asylum seekers themselves to be the ones undertaking to educate the public, Fiona replied:

I don't think there's something strange about that. Because you're the one experiencing the situation... Then, from what you have explained, maybe the Government can implement it, or can make it a policy... Because them, they don't experience it, they may not be able to explain it very further, well (Fiona, interview).

The Refugee Council concurs that: “when they do get the chance and the support to speak out, women with direct experience of the asylum process are powerful advocates and best placed to voice the challenges they face” (Musgrave, 2011: 5), and this was borne out by comments Sofia received when she attended a hearing on detention before the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Refugees at the House of Commons in December 2012. She was told by the Chair, Liberal Democrat Sarah Teather²⁵, that she and her fellow MPs on the APPG greatly valued opportunities to question those at the sharp end of the immigration system directly, and had welcomed her testimony for its depth (she had recounted experiences of other WAST women as well as her own). Given that the Government’s official advisors, the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), appear to “draw up their recommendations and proposals with a calculator and a rule book, with no resorting to talking to actual people, so they do not have to consider the effects of their recommendations on the lives of real people” (JCWI, 2013), these occasions would appear to be utterly vital. It occurred to me to ask, however, why Sofia from WAST Manchester and Beatrice Botomani (another well-known figure) from Bradford’s Why Refugee Women?²⁶ group, were the delegates at this hearing. They had been invited by Women for Refugee Women, which supports WAST’s sister group in London. Was there no one more local available? Sofia acknowledged that the number of women still in the asylum system who would have been prepared to make the address was probably small. For the same reason, a few core Management Group members take on most of the representing roles on behalf of WAST Manchester, even though when an invitation comes in they always “open it to the floor” at the Friday drop-in. Vickers makes the point that:

²⁵ Teather announced in 2013 that she would not contest the next General Election because “she no longer feels that Nick Clegg's party fights sufficiently for social justice and liberal values on immigration” (www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/sep/07/lib-dem-sarah-teather-step-down)

²⁶ Why Refugee Women? have created their own refugee women’s charter based on the one first developed by Asylum Aid in 2008, and in 2011 ran a conference on refugee women’s issues similar to the one in Scotland in 2004 which launched Glasgow’s RWPG. Like WAST Manchester, they have benefited from training and support provided through RtS.

forms of [political] activity relate to not only understandings of the world and estimated outcomes, but also factors such as emotional exhaustion, trauma, political confidence, and hope. Social capital formations may both be influenced by these factors, and impact back on them (2010: 209)

The Arise and Shine group, in terms of levels of confidence and experience, was probably atypical of their demographic. For a few everything was new, but among the rest were some of the most active members of WAST Manchester²⁷; leaders within Manchester's Zimbabwean community (with Elinah already employed as a refugee forum worker); and others who during and since their involvement in Arise and Shine pursued a succession of empowerment-focussed training opportunities²⁸. A glance at some of the training and roles undertaken confirms them as now some of the most civically engaged asylum seeker and refugee women in and around Manchester, whose names and photos are often to be spotted in event reports:

Elinah – MRSN School of Participation, MRSN Community Leadership Training, GAP Unit/Community Pride Training the Trainer course, United for Change, MRSN Forum co-ordinator

Tendayi - MRSN Community Leadership Training, GAP Unit Community Researcher course, Routes to Solidarity

Sofia – WAST Management Group, MRSN Community Leadership Training, Salford School of Participation, Salford Apprentice, United for Change

Lydia - WAST Management Group, MRSN Community Leadership Training, New Shamwari training, United for Change, GAP Unit Training the Trainer course for WAST

Naila - WAST Management Group, MRSN Community Leadership Training

Chenai - Salford School of Participation, GAP Unit Community Researcher course, Salford Apprentice, United for Change, Revive Action Group

As in any community, a few strong leaders emerge. The issue is whether their existence is then recognised and whether opportunities exist for them to put their skills and knowledge to use. Sofia reeled off a long list of reasons why women asylum seekers may find it hard to speak out in public: lack of English, intimidation by the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) and other officials, fear of damaging their chances of a positive asylum decision, an insufficient grasp of the system, their rights or UK politics in general, and in

²⁷ As indicated by Fiona's comment on p.115, this balance contributed to the success of the project.

²⁸ Their involvement in Arise and Shine directly motivating these other involvements, in some cases.

some cases familial disapproval of women taking public roles. Many of these barriers are surmountable, however, and those who surmount them need a platform. The Refugee Council (one of those criticised for having mostly British-born staff, which may or may not be inevitable - the Arise and Shine group thought not), has clearly recognised this point, since the passage quoted above continues:

The Refugee Council would therefore strongly welcome increased engagement between government and refugee women. However, for this process to be meaningful it requires commitment, resources and expert knowledge. Practical considerations need to be borne in mind to enable refugee women to participate in such initiatives... We would welcome the opportunity to facilitate direct engagement between refugee women, Ministers and policy officials (Musgrave, 2011: 5).

The role of community development

The presence of women asylum seekers in advocacy processes, as invited speakers and in other forms of engagement with mainstream politics can often, as the above list of Arise and Shine participants illustrates, be traced to some form of CD, which has had a steady impact within the refugee sector in the last ten years, only threatened now by the VCS funding crisis. Leudar and Nekvapil wrote at the start of the last decade, that refugees “rarely have the opportunity to assert their identity in public” (2000:188), and while this remains the case, local advocacy initiatives which make this their aim have proliferated, boosted by Black History Month, Refugee Week, International Women’s Day and other dates in the civic calendar which are attended, often, by small grant programmes. In a 2006 survey, Navarro came across many projects which:

provided support to asylum seekers and refugees to enable them to speak at conferences, seminars or workshops as well as visiting schools to talk about issues and raise awareness regarding asylum seekers and refugees and inviting refugees as guest speakers (2006: 13).

Arise and Shine was thus quite typical of what was going on nationally in terms of a supported advocacy and awareness-raising process prompted by the need to “counteract the wrong and often deliberately misleading information that host community members were reading and listening to” (Navarro, 2006: 6). Such activities are frequently facilitated by paid workers, volunteers or activists who follow a CD model (consciously or not). For Navarro, this means work which sets out to:

support community members, groups and local infrastructure to change power structures, to remove barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that

affect their lives, to challenge the attitudes of individuals and the discriminatory practice of institutions, and recognise the skills, knowledge and expertise that local community members can contribute to their own communities. Finally community development practitioners will encourage... networking and connections between communities and organisations (2006: 3).

Not everyone who adopts such goals would call themselves CD practitioners; they may be social workers, volunteers with no specific training or community activists of different kinds. However many share a philosophy rooted in the CD/community work tradition with its emphasis on the importance of supporting people “to define their own needs and identify ways in which these may be met” (Ledwith, 2011: 14) and the role of collective action in altering the balance of power in society. Refugee arts organisations commonly employ a CD ethos (and a CD worker), even if ‘having a voice’ would only be one reason for someone to choose to participate in a refugee arts project, as Cilla Baines of CAN explained to researcher Alison Jeffers:

For some people it might be about a sense of well-being, for some people it will be about professional development as an artist themselves, for many people it might be about communicating what is going on, for some people it’s about making connections with other communities (Baines quoted in Jeffers, 2011: 117).

The same (multiple motivations for participation) applies to all CD work to some extent, which is why strategic political outcomes are rarely the only goal. As we saw in Chapter 3, there are various facets to empowerment. Sometimes sequentially and sometimes in parallel, CD in the refugee sector operates on the same three levels (given the common link to Freire) of the ‘liberation psychology’ approach outlined by García-Ramírez et al in Chapter 3: the support of individuals; the support of group development; and the promotion of participation in forums and partnerships. Refugee and migrant networks thus very often owe their existence to CD input, while those female refugees and asylum seekers who become community spokespeople are frequently, if the Greater Manchester case is typical, graduates of CD programmes. The individuals concerned may already have had the appropriate skills and confidence, but host society practitioners (VCS or public sector) are in an ideal position to broker initial links between refugee communities and structures within society and the establishment. Navarro found that all of the CD workers she interviewed directed their efforts towards:

new arrivals being part of the community and not feeling isolated, having control over their lives, living in relative safety, being recognised for who they are, having cultural

differences and traditions accepted, and being able to access services in ways that suit their needs (2006: 2).

Focus on women

In this chapter as in the others, the focus is on women. The specific needs of women within an asylum system which has been traditionally gender blind (and changes slowly) need to be articulated separately from and in addition to those of men. Women-only advocacy groups and gender-specific national campaigns such as Asylum Aid's *Charter of Rights of Women Seeking Asylum* have thus been crucial.²⁹ Men who are isolated and struggling with numerous pressures and the cruelties of asylum bureaucracy are also helped by the support of peers and the kinds of host-led services which exist for them, but which are more often targeted exclusively at women. This does not however undermine the case for women-only groups, without which women would (and do) face the same problems as men, compounded in many cases by consequences of gender oppression. Women more often have primary responsibility for caring for dependents as well as themselves and are more likely to have less confidence, to have suffered violence at the hands of men and to face cultural prohibitions on their free movement and communication with others. According to Elaine Connelly of the SRC, the intensive CD support provided to the Refugee Women's Strategy Group (RWSG)³⁰ in women-only contexts has enabled the group to increase its capacity and influence and to ensure that the Scottish Refugee Policy Forum (SRPF) is gender sensitive (making the link between supportive group work and engagement in the public sphere). Similarly, in the view of a male member of the Migrant and Refugee Forum in Manchester, the presence of vocal women from groups like WAST had visibly encouraged other women to become less reticent in meetings. He saw women successfully influencing the Forum's agenda, since they would come knowing what they wanted to achieve having had pre-discussions and briefings within their groups. This evokes the (contested) theory of 'critical mass', which states that "it takes a certain minimum representation, for example, 30 per cent, before the minority, here women, are able to make a substantial difference in politics" (Dahlerup 2006: 511)³¹.

²⁹ Collective lobbying by the endorsers of the *Charter* led to the appointment of a Gender Champion at UKBA and to childcare being made available for asylum interviews in most (but not all) UK regions (Asylum Aid).

³⁰ The refugees and asylum seekers of RWSG work together to influence policy and improve practice for refugee and asylum seeking women in Scotland as an integral part of the SRPF, a forum of RCOs in Scotland.

³¹ Research conducted in 2004 on the gender dynamics of local decision-making (GEM Project) first convinced me of the influence gender can have in formal settings. During a colleague's observation of Manchester's LSP Steering Group, for example, the first time a woman spoke (one hour into the proceedings) a second spoke immediately afterwards; and this pattern of back-to-back contributions by women (a longer volley in the second case) was repeated the only other time a woman addressed the meeting. This was

Dis/empowering practice within RSIs

Not all RSIs are instinctively orientated towards empowerment. The Red Cross WISP groups, for example, were concerned mostly with the first of Navarro's three levels: supporting individuals (although in a group context). They provided guidance and information, offered women new experiences, therapeutic activities and opportunities to learn English, but there was no habit of encouraging them to look upon themselves as a group. Collective reflection on their common issues - the typical first step of an empowerment process in the CD tradition - was not actively cultivated. Rut had enjoyed and made close friends at the Manchester WISP, but valued the contrasting space Arise and Shine provided for thinking about what it means to be an asylum seeker:

On Red Cross there's no things to talk about asylum seeker... From GAP group I can get a lot of information about asylum seeker and about people... in that women's group there is no like these things, just we go English class we have, and like this we have people they came tell us about project, and that's all (Rut, interview).

In Preston, too, it was evidently novel for the RMU women to be encouraged to sit round in a circle and talk to one another – during our first session women came to learn the names and other basic information about people they had been seeing there for weeks. I asked Fiona whether she felt a sense of solidarity and shared experience among the drop-in users, and she replied:

No, we don't have. We have only one person, and that's the manager... So we don't have whereby we are talking to each other about our problems. No. When everyone has problems in RMU, you just approach the manager...Simply, Leave to Remain has been bringing us there. And maybe we only talk about that, Home Office, only, and from there, everyone they get on with their business, and that's how it has been (Fiona, interview).

Although the RMU group provided women with vital practical and emotional support, it was not an organisation infused with a CD ethos. The dynamic there appeared to actively inhibit mutual support, and had the potential to perpetuate a sense of passive victimhood as a result. Refugees may, tactically, in some situations and not others, conform to “the stereotypical notion that the support organization wishes to promote, such as poor and vulnerable, in order to receive assistance” (Shepler, 2005: 203). However, there is a danger

interpreted as showing women deriving confidence and legitimacy from one another, in addition to their interests coinciding on certain topics.

of reinforcing a helplessness that women are really inhabiting, when they could be sharing and inspiring one another with their strategies for coping and resisting. Fiona said she had:

come to realise that I'm the strongest person in RMU. And everyone thinks that I can be a support worker to other women. But they don't know where I've got the courage to do that, it's from going to GAP Unit. The women behave *very* different, strong, some women had even more problems than I do, but they were strong[er], than I was! So I picked up from that, because I'm always lifted by somebody else, that's how I am... The women in GAP Unit, the problem had not really taken them too much, they were still strong though they had a problem going on same as mine. Whereas in RMU the problem really its takes its toll with the women. And I think the problem is because we expect from one person to do everything for us. So we don't look out there, to see how can we help ourselves (Fiona, interview).

Asked whether she had been able to bring some of this new energy back to the women at RMU, she answered:

I've not. Outside RMU I should say yes, but inside RMU, no... I think we can just meet in the street and someone asks me 'Fiona, how do you manage life, how comes you're more happy than anyone I see there in RMU? How do you do it?' So that's how I try to explain, that I have *another* group, whereby the women have made me strong, that's how I do it. But I wouldn't go and like announce it in front of RMU, no, no, no, because things work differently there (Fiona, interview).

Without discounting the philanthropic motives of individual organisers and volunteers, Rainbird problematises organisational investments in emphasising asylum seeker vulnerability (2012: 407). She suggests that a need to justify their existence in terms of clients' need to depend on their services might be part of it, but this is a misplaced anxiety if so. To take RMU as an example, its services will remain vital for as long as asylum seeking women continue to arrive in Preston and to have children. It would seem worthwhile for workers to reflect on whether social exclusion is inadvertently perpetuated when a client is expected to "remain in their role as the subject onto which assistance and benevolent support could be handed down" (2012: 415). Rainbird came across organisations which, in their concern not to take advantage of clients' vulnerability, even took decisions on whether or not to consult them without consultation. The chair of a multi-agency meeting, for example, stated:

I am really concerned about consulting. You know that this was one of the findings of the Fleming report! You can't expect to ask asylum seekers their opinions about things that would probably not even make any sense to them and they wouldn't necessarily understand. You have to remember that asylum seekers have been interrogated by

immigration, they are frightened and vulnerable, and consultation would be just as bad (Rainbird, 2012: 413).

Organising drop-ins and other services for asylum seekers can be pressurised, demanding work and regularly descend into crisis management. Many would not have the time or resources to support politicising empowerment processes even if they wanted to. However, small shifts in practice can transform a disempowering culture in which service users are fixed in the role of passive beneficiaries, into one in which they can exercise some agency – consulting them for their views being the least of these. Connelly accepts that not all asylum seeking women will want to become involved in policy and influencing work and some women will, through existential need or lack of English and confidence, gravitate initially towards support organisations where, with luck, they can find a case worker, ESOL and other relevant help. But when she coordinated a drop-in for/asylum seeking women in Glasgow, attention was always paid to creating a sense of membership and ownership:

we used to hold development sessions every six months or so, inviting whoever wanted to attend, asking what they wanted to see happen and encouraging them to take on tasks. It could be making the tea, buddying, meeting and greeting... I tried to open out the planning, delivery and evaluation of the service and to feed people into other structures as they wanted to do more (Connelly, phone conversation, 12/3/13).

She sees it important that there are a “range of structures through which individuals can move as they gain confidence”, and Glasgow, which is known for its strong CD tradition, has developed such structures. Her current role involves supporting the members of the RWSG, who have met with key decision makers including MSPs, MPs and relevant service providers; given evidence to parliamentary inquiries; and campaigned on barriers to employment, for better support for victims of sexual violence, to make the asylum process more gender sensitive and to improve information provision, because so many women “don’t know where to go or what their rights are” (Connelly, phone conversation, 12/3/13). In Connelly’s view there need to be multiple mechanisms for ensuring that refugee women, not just those in the RWSG, have a chance to be heard. Regular grassroots engagement by RWSG delegates is one way they try to achieve this, including holding conferences and events organised by, about and for refugee and asylum seeking women.

Debora Singer, who runs Asylum Aid's Women's Project³², mentioned that the original vision for WAST London was that members would be willing and able to speak at public meetings and to journalists. However, it worked out differently, because "most of the London group come for the social togetherness, for ESOL and activities like yoga and relaxation" (Singer, phone conversation, 12/3/13). In 2013 the Refugee Council and Women for Refugee Women advertised a five-week empowerment course covering such skills as public speaking, influencing and the 'workings of government', but it was not the WAST women who enrolled, but individuals they had never met, mostly educated women with good English who had a history of political involvement or organising elsewhere and who were keen to learn how things work in the UK. According to Singer, the London WAST members are "at a different stage". One of the volunteers there, in reply to an email, echoed Connelly's point about the incremental ways in which agency is recovered and developed:

Like you say, there are many powerful refugee women and in WAST we do our best to help them get their voices heard. At the same time, we have to realise that many have been through horrible experiences and aren't always ready to share, and we have to be sensitive about this too. What we try to focus on at WAST is to encourage women to support each other... As you say, English language skills are often one of the biggest challenges and this is such a shame because it raises such barriers. There are many forums and events where women could speak but they don't always have the confidence to do this. I guess we won't be able to solve it entirely, but what we can do is try our best to open up as many spaces for them to share and keep encouraging them to speak out... we try to encourage the women to be as active as possible in organising and leading [the different projects], and we're there just for support (Darja Markek, by email).

As Vicky Marsh, the volunteer at WAST in Manchester, points out, becoming political is not, in any case, about whether a woman moves from a state of fearfulness to wanting to stand up before a Parliamentary committee:

Women ring up and ask if they can ask a question, but we explain that we are not an advice service. We tell them 'Ok, first you need to become a member of WAST, come along to a meeting, and there will be people here who can help see what you can do.' Coming to WAST, it gives them an understanding about what is happening to them and what their rights are. They come and don't have a clue, but they see all these other women, and we tell them what questions they need to ask their solicitor, things they need to check to know whether he or she is doing right by them. The majority can then start to get control of their own case and understand what is going on. They come desperate, but first they get their accommodation sorted and then they meet WAST

³² Also a trustee of the charity Women for Refugee Women which supports the London branch of WAST.

women and they realise they can do things, first for their own case but then they will support someone else. They might not get to the doing it for all others, not everyone has the natural confidence to challenge institutions, but for one another they get active and that is political (Vicky, phone conversation 12/3/13).

At WAST Manchester, it is the combination of peer support and a stress on knowledge as power which makes it an empowering group. Launching a campaign - as many WAST women end up doing as a last ditch attempt to get their cases looked at fairly - is an overtly political act, and not something all RSIs would accompany their service users in (though many do). However, individual WAST members also readily undertake different forms of advocacy, awareness raising, representation and engagement in formal processes locally and occasionally nationally. For this, the group has relied on the input of external organisations, which have invited its members to take part in discussions, planning and training and helped them, in Vicky's words, "feel comfortable in the public eye":

Women need training and consistent support over a period of time and it needs to be done sensitively and appropriately taking into account their learning needs and who they are. There was Oxfam [RtS] which was really well done and you [GAP Unit] did stuff... WAST hasn't got the resources for this sort of thing internally – we're just fire fighting, trying to stop women being deported or evicted or whatever (Vicky, phone conversation, 12/3/13).

Elaine Connelly, too, stressed the importance of dedicated resources for CD work:

You need resources... Community development workers at the City Council have been laid off and the SRC Community Development team has also been through a round of redundancies in the last few years – Glasgow has developed good structures but without the relevant resources and support they will be under threat (Connelly, phone conversation, 12/3/13).

External resources were also pivotal to the development of two local refugee-led networks/forums in the Greater Manchester area, both of which benefited from focussed CD initiative in the Freirian popular education tradition:

MRSN / Manchester Refugee and Migrants Forum

Individuals from the Chilean, Kurdish, Bosnian and Sudanese refugees living in the Moss Side area of Manchester set up MRSN in the early 1990s to share information, support one another's groups and have a representative voice for refugee communities within the city. Representatives of other groups joined as new communities emerged, and MRSN became a constituted network in 1996, overseen by a voluntary committee of trustees. Around this time, many "locally driven initiatives underwent a process of formalisation following HO

recommendations for improved co-ordination of support based on partnerships of local authorities, voluntary agencies and refugee community organisations” (McKenzie et al, 2012: 633). Refugee Action and the local authority’s advisory service, Manchester Advice, helped the network position itself as a provider of services to RCOs and provider of advice and signposting to individuals, and it took on paid staff.³³ An early employee told me that the network aspect got lost for a while, because of the sudden humanitarian demand on its services with the onset of dispersal. It gained a new momentum from around 2004, however, following an encounter with Community Pride (p.19) at a time when, due to government-matched European Union regeneration funding and New Labour’s investment in community engagement and participation initiatives, there was some money around. The rejuvenation of the network element of MRSN thus coincided with the consolidation of the 27 sub-networks of CN4M, and with the new development worker Hazel Healy’s³⁴ interest in helping the organisation become “more about people’s political rights”. In Healy’s view:

The problem we had with RCOs was that everyone was too busy helping people in need, and getting their own lives back on track, to do political work on top of that. We needed a wider core of political leaders who were not already overcommitted - and who were more diverse: women, younger people, sexual minorities - to draw on for advocacy work, which is why Community Pride’s work was such a good fit (Healy, email, 15/3/13).

Community Pride was the result of a vision shared by Ed Cox, a United Reform minister³⁵ and Anne Stewart, a lay Catholic sister (with a background in liberation theology from overseas work with her Order). Carolina had arrived to share her knowledge of Freirian popular education, and had helped them develop and pilot their initial SoP programme. Elinah, the first chair of MRSN’s new Forum, was a participant in the MRSN SoP. As always with this methodology, the individuals involved defined the direction of the work, with the role of the facilitator being to support them:

to analyse and understand the nature of power that they *already* possess, and consequently working with and alongside these groups to explore ways in which this power might be expressed most effectively to effect changes which *they* deem important (2011: 12-13).

³³ The advice service is the only element of MRSN currently funded (through grants from private funders including United Utilities and Lloyds TSB).

³⁴ Hazel Healy, anarchist and member of the Manchester No Borders group was also involved in setting up the Basement social centre (p.261) – illustrating the ideological cross-overs within the sector.

³⁵ A New Labourite who became a policy advisor to the Communities Secretary Hazel Blears during Gordon Brown’s premiership – I highlight these different ideologies to show how they coexist in the third sector.

The SoP “gave us a platform to compare different skills and come together”, said Elinah. Participants mapped power structures, trained themselves up in different areas and ultimately made it their goal to create a Manchester Refugee Charter, outlining their rights as refugees and people seeking asylum. The charter became a blueprint for action; from that moment the focus of the Manchester Refugee and Migrants’ Forum was to be on campaigning, influencing decision makers and continuing the legacy of the SoP through an annual Community Leadership Course, accredited (as was the SoP) by CAEC at MMU. Lydia said of this course:

Well at MRSN I learned such a lot of campaigning and also to raise er- refugee awareness training, they did have. Also I did do a leadership training, how to be a leader, and in that same thing you learn how to go and lobby your MP... the skills are useful skills (Sofia, interview).

In Elinah’s view, the SoP had a foundational influence on the Forum’s way of working, including in the way it saw each of its campaign projects (national campaigns such as Let Them Work; local campaigns for better access to education, primary healthcare, ESOL etc.) as an empowerment process. Those who got involved were provided with training, acquired new skills, brought experience from other settings and gained confidence through working together and, in so far as it was possible, making themselves heard. London’s multiple migrant networks and forums (which are now fast disappearing) apparently “often had a difficult relationship with the RCOs they were meant to represent and serve. In some areas, criticism was made that they tended to snap up the funding that might otherwise have gone direct to RCOs” (Harris et al 2012: 13). I am not sure whether this kind of tension existed in Manchester, but the Migrant and Refugee Forum assisted local RCO development in Elinah’s view, in that it allowed strategically-minded, active individuals from even very low-key, unfunded groups to link their community members to a wider slice of society. Forum delegates picked up transferable skills and could take fresh ideas back to their groups; alert them to upcoming opportunities; and potentially draw others into the Forum’s campaigns. The Forum’s quarterly ‘integration meetings’, open to all, were a chance for people to meet one other and discover what else was going on. (It is interesting that the word ‘integration’ has been claimed here, as Sofia does on p.207, for what is essentially a forging of bonds between refugee communities - although invited guests would occasionally include ‘host community’ representatives).

At the time of writing, these meetings are unfortunately on hold because of lack of funding. Vickers' research (based in Newcastle) demonstrated "the importance of collective organisation by refugees, but also the vulnerability created by reliance on funding, with funding empowering but its withdrawal disempowering" (2010: 172). Cambridge and Williams insist that funders must "acknowledge the benefits that independent advocacy brings refugees and refugee communities", warning that "without such recognition, advocacy work risks sliding towards institutional models where advocates function more as agents of central or local government, rather than being driven by the imperative of social justice and the wider need for political action" (2004: 110). Even if individuals retain positions in local structures as representatives, paid or otherwise, unless there is a democratic and accountable way for them to be in touch with fellow refugees or asylum seekers, especially given that both the asylum system and refugee demographics are in constant flux, there is a danger that their presence becomes merely tokenistic.

Despite the current state of MRSN and its Forum being a serious loss to the city (Elinah has been made redundant, and the Leadership Programme had not run for two years), it has an impressive legacy in terms of the alumni of its SoP. Several went on to enrol for Salford Apprentice, a course jointly run by Community Pride and a department of University of Salford, and several are involved in United for Change (UfC) and Regional Asylum Activism (RAA) (see p.268). And as Elinah pointed out, the majority of the men and women who set up the Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum (SRF) in 2010 had either been through the MRSN's Community Leadership course or took part in a second Community Pride SoP with refugees and asylum seekers held in Salford in 2009.

The SRF

The Salford SoP was again under auspices of the Take Part programme³⁶ and accredited by MMU. One of the main issues participants identified was that NASS-contracted housing providers were 'out of the loop' in Salford, failing to connect their tenants to sources of support, disengaged from multi-agency working in the city and confused about tackling hate crime. As a result, they agreed to improve their induction processes, became better linked to other local agencies and committed to addressing the state of their properties

³⁶ The Take Part Pathfinder Programme was designed to support improvements in line with the National Indicator (NI) System, especially NI 3, measuring civic participation in local areas, and NI 4 which measured the number of people who felt they could influence decision making in their locality (Mayo et al, 2012).

(Mayo et al, 2012: 188). The local CVS then helped participants create a permanent structure, as Sofia described in her interview:

There was no organisation in Salford to help asylum seekers, so we did decide to start our own Forum so that we can refer people when they come, and also to empower people how to stand up. We go to meetings... with the police in Salford we went... then we have also with the Multi-Agency Forum, who comes also together in the Town Hall in Salford, and then we also work with the CVS, who also help us with funding, for bus fares for the people, so the group met the first Saturday in the month and the last Saturday in the month (Sofia, interview).

As Sofia mentions, the Forum fields delegates to local meetings. The New Labour days of intensive local engagement are over - whereas ten years ago the VCS was constantly being asked for input, these days groups talk of needing to “just keep knocking until they give up and agree to meet – otherwise we are ignored” (Firth, 2012). However, in Elinah’s view, Salford has done better than most councils in the region (including Manchester) in maintaining external participation and accountability structures. Most policy decisions affecting refugees and asylum seekers are taken nationally, but improvements can be achieved around the edges when issues are understood and respectful and responsive relationships have been established with local actors. Forums like the Salford one “provide a focus for and co-ordination of activity between public and community and voluntary sector agencies” (Navarro, 2006: 15), and I came across a report in which the leader of a Salford RCO, had flagged this point two years before the SoP occurred:

Networking between communities is very helpful. For higher up, it is like policies are going around without seeing the actual people who make them and want to see them enacted. These are people who don’t see you or interact with your work... When there are activities that can bring all of us together in Salford we can share our values and cultures, so people will know who we are and we know who they are (Thompson, 2008: 7).

The SRF’s fortnightly drop-in is staffed by refugee and asylum seeker volunteers. They provide advice and signposting to other services as well as sports and recreation activities for adults and children. In early 2013, a group of GAP Unit’s community researchers (including Chenai) looked into the impact of actual and threatened cuts to the voluntary sector in Salford, on behalf of LINK, part of the NHS (and since disbanded). Extracts of interviews with users of SRF, shown in [Table 6.](#), showed a strong appreciation for the culture and atmosphere of the Forum, with many emphasising its social function and the fact that it is run by people who know the asylum system from the inside. Comments such as “To brainstorm on the common issues that refugee and asylum seekers are facing”,

“This project...gives me a chance to challenge housing provider” and “It empowers us to raise our voices” confirm that such spaces constitute what Fraser describes as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (1990: 67) as well as bringing “people together as a clearly identifiable vocal focal point... based on a shared sense of meaning and [with] the potential to impact on the political arena and its agendas” (Pepper, 2010: 71). They allow asylum seekers, supposed to be apolitical and unseen, to have a formally sanctioned voice within society. Pepper goes on to argue that although:

‘invited spaces’, the institutions of the participatory sphere [including council-led and multi-agency forums] are framed by those who create them, and infused with power relations and cultures of interaction carried into them from other spaces... these are also spaces of possibility, in which power takes a more productive and positive form: whether in enabling citizens to transgress positions as passive recipients and assert their rights or in contestations over ‘governmentality’ (2010: 36).

The SRF is ‘feeder’ into these “spaces of possibility”. One thing a local council does control which affects refugees and asylum seekers is how it directs its (albeit dwindling) budgets for local amenities, groups and services. The future of the much improved social net for refugees and asylum seekers in Salford is uncertain given the threat of cuts to the Forum, especially now that the Horizon Centre, Salford’s exemplary NHS General Practice, whose staff were experts in holistic working with migrants, was closed in 2012.

Table 6. Services user opinions on SRF

Why do you use the service?	What do you like about the service	What difference would it make to you if it disappeared?
To share ideas about asylum and support each other Useful for asylum seekers to get useful information Attend meetings - drop in The support I get; meeting friends To get friends and be involved in the community To help people who are detained To keep me healthy and meet new people It helps me to understand the UK system It involves me with a wider community To brainstorm on the common issues that refugee and asylum seekers are facing To play different sports and	Information about asylum and refugees The support from each other as asylum seekers It is refugee and asylum seekers led Socializing and knowing what is happening in the community It gives me hope that at least there are some people who understand my situation They keep time They are understanding and they listen Has helped me to learn more about society, I was the treasurer and learned skills It is a friendly environment It empowers us to raise our voices	I and my children will be very sad as we will be isolated from community I am a human being, please don't take away what keeps me alive There is nowhere else in Salford where I will get information about asylum My mental health will deteriorate It would make a big difference - nowhere to get support It will affect me because that is where I meet friends Who will reach out for us? People will be detained and deported by UKBA I will feel lonely with no one to talk and get support from People won't have community

socialise I get food to eat, help with housing, clothes. I'm a destitute I am new in Salford, SRF provides me all advice and help I use this service to socialise and get help with different services in Salford Information, help with problems (related to housing and UKBA) I get help with translation of my letters, my children school and socialising SRF helped me and others to raise concerns about housing provided by SERCO. I am happy as someone is looking after me I attend meetings, events and different activities	Forum has provided me a place where I can play sports and keep fit SRF are very serious to help and assist you. I was helped many times when I was detained by UKBA I am being looked after and listened whenever I need help This project helps me to live a decent life and gives me a chance to challenge housing provider I like everything about SRF. I get help, know people from different services. I go to meetings at City Council It helps with everything I need, for example English classes, children playgroups	support they need I will be very sad, I love to play with friends I will suffer. I won't get help as getting help with appointments I will be left with no family I will have no place to go for help and assistance as SRF knows my problem very well SRF is my family. I will be devastated SRF is our organisation, if it will disappear we will have no place to raise and deal with our concerns No one will hear us and we will have no representation in Salford
---	---	--

Universities and refugee empowerment

The role of the local universities in the CD initiatives just described should also be highlighted. WAST Manchester began its awareness raising with invitations to talk to students at Salford University (where founder Farhat Khan was later employed for a time) and another local RSI, Revive, decided to create an Action Group after the same department invited speakers for a Human Rights conference in 2010 (and after seeing the WAST play). The Revive staff and service users who went along experienced the power of speaking up against oppression, as opposed to just trying to ameliorate its consequences. MMU has run access courses for people without the right to work and has issued certificates of participation and temporary student cards to the numerous refugee and asylum seeker participants who have been through its accredited courses, including those run by GAP Unit. The lecturers in the community/youth work/social work/care work departments are often people with a history of activism themselves, sometimes occupying the role of 'subversives' (Waterhouse & Scott, 2013: 6) as they try to reconcile their political values with the constraints of jobs in institutions increasingly colonised by neoliberal managerialism. The legacy of socialist, anarchist, feminist, pacifist, green, anti-nuclear, LGBTQ, Black, Jewish, Asian, disability rights and other activism lives on in the curriculums taught in these departments, which have also integrated Freirian CD approaches since the 1970s. CAEC (p.20) was created because MMU students were being trained to deliver informal education in schools, and placement organisations started to approach the university asking for staff (not just undergraduate trainees) to deliver audits and participatory appraisals for them. It was created to be 'community-facing', to take the

university out beyond the campus and to encourage people (including adult migrants) to find their way in.

Reflections on CD, advocacy and ‘participation’

The emphasis of this chapter so far has been on the role of allies in expanding the opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to advocate and participate in the formal public sphere. Some are well-placed to broker relationships with power holders and support groups and individuals to take part in dialogue and advocacy. Training programmes which introduce refugees and asylum seekers to ‘how things work’ and assist with leadership skills and political influencing also contribute. Refugees and asylum seekers themselves can then create their own groups, forums and campaigns and involve others as they feel ready. The first step, particularly for women, involves mindfulness by the providers of support services of the need to counter the disempowering effects of the asylum system. This means sharing their knowledge, encouraging attendees to value themselves, presenting their predicament in political rather than personal terms, and generally assisting them to achieve commonality and community in the face of an asylum discourse dominated by otherness and isolation.

We have seen that in some dispersal areas, including Glasgow and Manchester, good structures have been created, due in large part to the thoughtful input of CD practitioners (refugees and non-refugees) and adequate financial resources. CD under New Labour was criticised for taming groups with funding and engagement - creating compliance and openness to external agendas - in particular as community leaders increasingly came to enjoy paid roles. However, it is also possible to appreciate that these structures have been greatly valued by refugees and to regret the fact that so many of the gains are under threat. In London many of the more than 20 local networks/forums identified in a 2009 scoping study had disappeared by mid-2012 (Harris et al, 2012: 13), while the sole citywide network, London Refugee Voice, had lost all its funding and collapsed. If networks disappear, it risks asylum seekers becoming more atomised and disempowered. On the other hand there is also potential for gaps to be filled with more militant organising which runs on anger rather than grant funding – particularly if mobilisations against the government’s programme of ‘planned poverty’ gathers pace and links are forged with dissenters in the wider population. This remains to be seen. However, it is a reminder that the scope of political engagement by asylum seekers and refugees is broader than so far discussed.

Other forms of politics and resistance

Constructive engagement with the state: parliamentary lobbies, empathy-based awareness-raising, participation in consultations and multi-agency forums are only part of the equation when it comes to migrant activism. In its origins, CD in the UK was not about reforms and concessions but fundamental opposition to state logics. Nor was it satisfied with having a few individuals ‘at the table’ or in paid positions as elite representatives of their social group. The legacy of confrontational political action lives on in the ‘solidarity groups’ described in Appendix 2., and WAST Manchester perhaps reflects a more oppositional approach than what CD has largely become – education and facilitation of relationships between the state and its outside (important as this may be for trying to affect short term change in the situation of refugees). Vickers uses Putnam’s categories of social capital, as adapted by Gilchrist (2004: 6), to describe what occurs in groups like WAST and Arise and Shine where an open culture of discussion and information sharing is combined with active political engagement and connection to organisations or individuals who hold firmly grounded political perspectives. ‘Bonding capital’ develops “a coherent and confident perspective amongst those with a strong mutual commitment based on shared experiences and needs as refugees” (Vickers, 2010: 227) while ‘bridging capital’ helps “gain necessary support and resources from those with overlapping interests and goals, situate their experiences in wider processes, and effectively implement responses” (2010: 227). Meanwhile ‘oppositional social capital’ comes from developing a critical distance from the state and counter-discourses which may assist in “disrupting the smooth management of oppression” (2010: 227). In 2011, WAST stepped up its campaigning by taking to the streets of Liverpool and presenting a list of demands³⁷ at the regional UKBA headquarters. Speaking on the steps of St George’s Hall, members (with Sofia as spokesperson) declared:

WAST believes that it is possible to build a humane and safe asylum system which upholds Human Rights in Britain... This is an attempt to challenge the UKBA to recognise the suffering of women in WAST and other asylum seekers in Britain, and to improve the British Asylum system (WAST, 2011).

The full list of demands:

- Stop treating asylum seekers as criminals
- Ensure we have access to good quality lawyers

³⁷ MRSN’s Refugee Charter and Asylum Aid’s Charter of Rights of Women Seeking Asylum acted as inspiration for the list of demands. WAST’s demands are, in comparison, very political, being expressed in terms of “an absolute right to sanctuary based on membership of humanity” (Vickers, 2010: 144).

- Take gender issues into account when we claim asylum and recognise and use more extensively in-country reports as acceptable and persuasive evidence, especially for women who face persecution as lesbians or women who flee gender violence
- End detention
- End destitution
- Recognise that our children are suffering because of the Home Office's treatment of us and uphold their human rights as children. Our children's welfare should be a priority
- Ensure that women with disabilities are adequately housed and not discriminated against in the asylum system because of their disability
- Women who have lived in Britain for 5 years should be automatically given their status
- Women should be given travel expenses when they have to go and report at the reporting centre, because when a woman becomes destitute she doesn't get any money but the HO wants her to come to the reporting centre.
- Stop using relocation as a reason to refuse a woman's asylum claim.
- Recognise the importance of our family support network in our survival (WAST 2011)

Around 75 women marched singing and chanting through the city centre, halting at the UKBA where Lydia, Sofia and another member of the Management Group handed over the document. Sofia gave her name while Lydia was recognised by an official, her previous 'case owner'.³⁸ When Sofia was detained shortly afterwards and an attempt was made to detain Lydia (which succeeded in picking up her husband), there were no legal grounds to do so in either case, and there was a strong suspicion among supporters (compounded by comments made to Sofia by officers) that this was in retribution for their exercise of political agency in Liverpool that day. The march in itself was a bold act. It was one of the first marches of its kind, where the focus was not on the fate of one individual or one country group, but on the rights of asylum seekers per se.³⁹ 'Genuine' asylum seekers are expected to be passive and helpless, so demonstrations of agency can invite the rejection of their claim. As Jeffers has written:

Refugees almost literally 'shouldn't be there' in the sense of being in civic space because they are required to be invisible... while citizens can act in public space, refugees are usually forced to operate in humanitarian space... to perform their

³⁸ The asylum decision making process is regularly hampered by the shifting about of clients (and, significantly, their files) between case workers.

³⁹ Similar marches have happened since, e.g.: "June 2012 saw a new kind of demonstration through the streets of Bristol. People in the asylum process themselves, destitute and waiting many years for the security of Leave to Remain, conceived, planned and organised a demonstration to plead the striking message, "Dignity for Asylum Seekers". The protest was powerful and well-attended, serious and celebratory. We hope there will be many such events in Bristol in the future" (Bristol Refugee Rights, 2012).

authenticity as refugees, eschewing any activity which is not about simply surviving (2011: 85 & 86).

Noisily appropriating public space has “a greater impact precisely because they are not the citizens for whom the space was intended, interlopers, the ‘unsanctioned’ taking control of spaces to which they are not entitled and altering their function” (Jeffers, 2011: 85). A large section of the public ignore demonstrations and don’t read the leaflets, so the political impact, good or bad, is not always as dramatic as it has potential to be. The only discernible ill-feeling in Liverpool came in the form of four dishevelled teenagers who followed the march at some distance with an English Defence League (EDL) flag and a police escort. Nevertheless, Sofia and Lydia’s experiences illustrate the risk involved in being a refugee activist. It was only the diligence of their supporters and legal teams that allowed Sofia and Bernard to escape deportation (which UKBA, typically enough, tried to arrange hastily, ignoring their own procedures) on that occasion.

In his study into the political agency of non-citizens, McGregor found that detention “had a politicising effect, turning many ex-detainees into civic activists, drawing them into campaigns to challenge their exclusion and the boundaries of the civic sphere. At the same time, it appeared to heighten a sense of exclusion and diasporic identification on the part of a broader migrant community” (2011: 607). It is true of both Lydia and Sofia that earlier periods of detention had contributed to producing them as determined campaigners. Lydia had been detained the day after the very first performance of her play in Manchester, and had spent Christmas and New Year in Yarl’s Wood immigration removal centre (IRC)⁴⁰ fighting deportation. Sofia’s Nigerian husband has been periodically held in either detention or prison (for the same offence of not signing his removal orders) ever since he arrived in the country – twice exceeding the EU maximum of 18 months inside, for which he hopes to sue the HO for compensation. His confinement triggered mental health problems in this previously healthy young man, and the last time he was detained he refused all food, water and medication, so that his condition deteriorated significantly. When Sofia was herself detained a short while later it was the final straw and he had to be hospitalised for his own safety; meanwhile Sofia was denied her medication for her blood pressure which surged so dramatically that she had to be rushed to hospital from Yarl’s Wood (with handcuffs and guards by her bed). Vickers notes that inside the IRCs “hunger strikes, break-outs and other forms of protest have continued at a high level of intensity, although largely ignored by the media and isolated from outside support” (2010: 176).

⁴⁰

The government’s current preferred term for detention centre / immigration prison.

Often the only documentation of acts of self-harm and attempted suicide is in the form of medical reports, which tend to “ignore detainees’ own framings and social and political contexts” (McGregor, 2011: 599) of their actions.

According to Cambridge and Williams, WAST-style peer-advocacy, mutual aid groups have learned “from self-help and self-advocacy in other minority communities such as Black, Asian or Lesbian/Gay communities, or through experience of political action in areas such as the women's movement” (2004: 109), and it is true that the volunteers working alongside WAST from the beginning have been steeped in the politics of these movements. ‘Community development’ is not part of the discourse at WAST; when asked, Vicky realised she traces its way of working to the philosophy of Women’s Aid, where in the early days, service users were the ones in charge:

In the Old Trafford refuge, it was three women who had been through the refuges who set it up, it was all about skilling-up women who had had the experience themselves. That was the Women’s Aid model, they started off as co-ops – they are fully incorporated into the mainstream now - but it started off with squatting, it was part of that whole movement (Vicky, interview).

WAST grew, in fact, out of an anti-deportation campaign, so it has had its roots in oppositional, confrontational politics from the start.

Anti-deportation campaigns

Anti-deportation campaigns build strong affective ties, and British people who are active in pro-migrant causes can very often trace their activism back to a campaign for a particular individual or family which opened their eyes to state oppression of non-nationals (this applies in my case). Since the seventies and eighties, when the women’s movement was agitating to raise awareness of domestic violence and building the refuge movement, feminist activists have been strongly represented in the campaigns of female asylum seekers, and both LISG and WAST Manchester were initiated by women who had worked together on a campaign. For space reasons, my history of anti-deportation campaigning in Manchester has been confined to Appendices 3 and 4., but it makes two important points. One is that the mingling of asylum seekers with left wing and anarchist activists in the context of shared spaces and solidarity action creates potential for everyone’s political horizons to expand and change, in interesting and unpredictable ways. The other, going in the opposite (less progressive) direction is that, alongside increasing global mobility, the retraction of asylum rights and entrenchment of the security state, defence of the right to

stay is now rarely articulated in terms of opposition to racist immigration controls, but as the due of the exceptionally deserving humanitarian subject.

Appendix 2. describes how, after 1999, ally organisations were increasingly enlisted to do the work of the state, and refugee politics became more institutionalised. When I got involved in the new wave of anti-deportation campaigning (2004-5, referred to by Vicky as “the time of the war on asylum seekers”), a pragmatic politics of particularism had taken over from the aspirational anti-racism of the early campaigns. Anti-racism itself had gone from being a social movement politics to being “thought of as a model of best practice, a category of public and private administration” (Pitcher, 2007: 84) and, through bodies like the Race Equality Commission, racism framed as a moral issue rather than as a structural one. The premise of asylum, that people should be granted protection if judged to be in danger of persecution, is explicitly humanitarian. Those who seek asylum are compelled to draw upon a victim identity to insist on the legitimacy of their individual claims, as well as when they seek to challenge the inhumane treatment of ‘refugees in waiting’ and to correct the harmful misconceptions which have attached to the figure of the asylum seeker. The Arise and Shine women were careful to point out that as asylum seekers they suffer a series of specific injustices: the violence of not being believed (many had to repeatedly resubmit their claims before they were accepted); constant fear of detention and deportation; compulsory dispersal; benefits (when not either completely destitute or living on vouchers) set at well below citizen entitlements; and all of this when they came in the hope of finding refuge from unliveable situations. However, although they appropriated this discourse for their advocacy, and had little choice in doing so, the women were aware of the dangers of homogenising the asylum experience and the consequences for them as a group of an over-emphasis of victimhood. The Zimbabwean refugees in the Arise and Shine group, for example, had colleagues and family who also left Zimbabwe to escape the political heat, but who went straight into professional jobs because it was before a 2002 change in visa regulations. Despite identical pre-emigration situations, and arriving as resilient people more than able to prevent past events from dominating their present, those in our group had had to present convincing narratives of trauma and suffering and then languish in the asylum system for several demoralising years, feeling their optimism and ambition ebb away.

Lydia and Bernard Must Stay

In 2008, with the introduction of the New Asylum Model (NAM) and the ‘legacy exercise’,⁴¹ anti-deportation campaigning had peaked. Indeed, the Legacy process was in Vickers’ view partly a response to the difficulty of removing people who had been in the country for years, formed alliances and learned to campaign and resist (2010: 176).⁴² Anti-deportation campaigning continues, however, and GAP Unit supported Lydia and her husband Bernard’s fraught but eventually successful campaign throughout 2012. The group make-up was typical of the campaigns of previous decades, including an anarchist activist (and Unite member) who had been part of Begum’s campaign (p.278) back in the 1980s, members of RAPAR (p.266), action-orientated Christians, and the CD worker at CAN. As well as twice acting to get Bernard/both of them removed from sudden detention, the main challenge was raising money to pay a private solicitor to put together new expert evidence on the situation in Cameroon and the risks they would face if deported⁴³.

Lydia was the main face of the campaign throughout, even after Bernard became the main legal appellant. It was she who had suffered most at the hands of the authorities in Cameroon, but she was also well-known because of her work in Manchester as a playwright. She was adopted by members of English PEN and, championed by journalist Natasha Walter, gave several national press and radio interviews. Ten years ago, male asylum seekers were disproportionately represented in the media and were the ones quoted in the rare instances asylum seekers’ opinions were sought by journalists. Although typically this exposure was to men’s detriment, the “exclusion of women and children from articles about asylum seekers and refugees” meant that only “half the story of asylum” received attention (Buchanan et al, 2003: 35). In 2003, for the study just quoted, Article 19 researchers conducted a focus group which showed that the reason for this was blatant, unjustifiable media bias. Only three out of 22 women asylum seekers said that they would not wish to be interviewed by a man, while a woman from Sierra Leone had “passionately objected to the fact that people in this country assume that in different cultures men are

⁴¹ In 2009 when Arise and Shine started, many asylum seekers in Manchester had been in the system for up to ten years, lost in a UKBA backlog. The 2009 ‘legacy exercise’, a cross between an amnesty and a lottery, was brought in to fix this situation and four of the core Arise and Shine participants were granted Leave to Remain as ‘legacy cases’. At the time of writing there are still two women in the group who have been waiting for a decision for more than five years, and others also waiting.

⁴² A leaked 2010 briefing paper from the Head of Asylum, Refugee and Migration Services at Manchester City Council (MCC) referred to the problem posed by “community protest on the day of removal” (Rea 2010) and suggested this was less likely to occur when asylum seekers are kept in detention (one of the key strategies of the NAM) rather than in mixed residential areas.

⁴³ The solicitor, once a far left legal aid solicitor at GMIAU, had moved into the more lucrative private sector and also practiced as an immigration judge – a good illustration of the capitalist cultivation of subjectivity.

considered superior and therefore only approach men” (Buchanan et al, 2003: 35). More recently, however, refugee advocacy has been accused of significant bias towards representations of women and children; a direct, pragmatic response to the media obsession with criminality, violence and ‘hordes’ of young men trying to ‘sneak’ or ‘flood’ into the UK. This unfortunately “plays into a binary where a certain embodiment of refugeehood is implicitly portrayed as ‘real’ and ‘genuine’ and is subject to welfare solutions, and teenagers and men who do not fit into images of vulnerability remain subject to the stigmatising politics of asylum” (Judge, 2010: 26). In this view, “advocacy’s tropes of trauma and victimhood adhere to a wider biopolitical logic... rather than challenging the political basis of exclusion” (2010: 32). Others have pointed to a second “counter stereotype” (Pupavac, 2008: 285) in advocacy: the “exceptionally talented” (2008: 272) refugee, who fits with the norms of our celebrity-focussed, individualising culture and again may work against the majority who are not particularly talented, reinforcing exclusions. This was demonstrated by fans’ response to the disqualification of X-factor candidate Gamu Nhengu, who was found to be living in the UK illegally:

The legions of reality TV fans and online campaigners who championed Gamu in her battle to remain in the UK in the main cite not the injustice of postcolonial border controls, but her exceptional qualities, that ‘extraordinary talent’ which distinguishes her from the mass of ‘undeserving’ postcolonial migrants imagined to be pressing at the border (Tyler & Gill, 2013, 16).

Lydia experienced some resentment from fellow asylum seekers frustrated by the amount of attention given to her case – including when a group of friends were interviewed for a magazine article but only Lydia quoted and pictured in the published piece. However, the tropes favoured by advocacy organisations are a separate issue from the activities of individual refugee advocates. Moreover, it is vital that women asylum seekers become audible and visible as political subjects, transcending stereotypes of victimhood and using their platform to spread awareness the injustices of the immigration system. The decision to write a play and perform it alongside WAST members came unsolicited from her desire to speak out. A second play by Lydia, this time dealing with the political situation in Cameroon, was performed at a Refugee Arts festival in Bristol and twice in Manchester, thanks to Arts Council funding secured by CAN. Refugee, migrant and Black British actors made up the cast, and during a conversation with the audience afterwards, cast members spoke movingly about how much Lydia had inspired them and given them hope through her refusal to be silent. The Gamu affair too, Tyler and Gill acknowledge, despite the reservation above, “cultivated an unexpected if precarious empathy for the wider

situation of irregular migrants” (Tyler & Gill, 2013: 9) among readers of the popular press, highlighting the both/and ironies implicit in refugee advocacy.

Summary

This chapter has considered the political activity of asylum seekers and the role allies can play in promoting (or hindering) the “creation of active agents who fight for gaining individual and collective rights” (García-Ramírez et al, 2011: 92). Involvement in ‘transformative civic actions’ is crucial to the Freirian model of empowerment and integration outlined in Chapter 3.. The collaboration with WAST to bring Lydia’s play to targeted audiences represented the most ambitious transformative action of the Arise and Shine process, and Chapter 7. will now look at what was achieved by and for participants and audiences, considering the symbolic realm of ‘the political’ alongside more conventional interpretations.

Chapter 6. Theatre-based advocacy

When I came to WAST I saw that they are doing awareness raising and campaigns, and they wrote a book, so I thought if we do it in the form of acting, it will be better also. (Lydia, interview).

The book which prompted Lydia's idea for a play was *Am I Safe Yet: Stories of women seeking asylum in Britain*, published in 2008 by the local Race Relations Archive and WAST's most ambitious advocacy project so far. It contained twelve interviews with WAST members and photographic portraits of the women, background information on the organization and an overview of the way women are dealt with in the UK asylum system. Each story was preceded by a paragraph outlining salient aspects of the social or political situation in the country the woman had left. All seats in the large Lord Mayor's Parlour at Manchester Town Hall were filled for the book launch, which boosted WAST's profile and was welcome evidence for members of the strength of their support in the city. Buying a book was an effective way for people to contribute to WAST and inform themselves and others about the issues, and it continues to raise funds for the organisation.

Within refugee advocacy there has been an increasing emphasis on refugee narratives in recent years. As I researched distribution channels for *Am I Safe Yet?*,⁴⁴ I came across a wealth of books, 'grey' literature and past exhibitions based on verbatim accounts, all intended to counteract negative stereotypes of asylum seekers and improve public understanding. The twelve WAST women had been keen to have their stories included, even if they used a different name or had their photograph taken from behind so that they could not be recognised. This kind of storytelling has been assumed to have a number of potential benefits. The interview can be an unburdening experience, though that was not necessarily so relevant here since many of the women had close friends within WAST with whom they could share aspects of their lives, and some were already accustomed to telling their histories in self-advocacy contexts. Being listened to with respect and empathy, being believed and having one's courage honoured is affirmative and commonly thought to help repair damage done by HO screening interviews and appeal hearings (Bögner et al, 2010; Silove et al, 2007), where not only does a person's future hinge on her story, but it is subject to scrutiny, suspicion and attack (all had been turned down for asylum at the time of the interviews for the book). It may not have been easy for the women in the group to go

⁴⁴ I had been involved in the project as a volunteer, conducting two of the interviews and managing aspects of production.

over painful details and relive their interrogation by the Border Agency, but the context in which they were choosing to do it helped them overcome this. Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa talks of women's need to "write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you" (Anzaldúa 1983:169). The WAST women were not writing their own stories for the book, but what they related was included as far as possible verbatim, and each participant was encouraged to read her chapter and confirm or amend her account). Although they were mediated, each teller was positioned as the expert on her own life and on culture and politics, including the realities of the British immigration system. According to one critical performance ethnography specialist, in such work: "the teller's experience is illuminated and made accessible and available as an advocacy discourse for social change and/or affirmation" (Madison, 1993: 215). Because they allow insight into the effects on people of their experiences at the hands of others, personal accounts offer something more affecting than statistics or second hand reports. One of the WAST women's main motives was to show why people like them seek refuge, to help counter the myth of the 'bogus' asylum seeker which continues to pervade media portrayals and produces indignation and hurt in those to whom it attaches. They were giving expression to their exasperated claim that: "People are not coming to live here because they want to. They come here because they have problem and they want to be safe" (Male asylum seeker from Cameroon quoted on the In Place of War website).

However, whilst the project proceeded in close consultation with the organisation, I was conscious that the main editor and I were getting to use and practice our own skills *on behalf of* the group. Ultimately we were shaping and editing the accounts, attending meetings with publishers, deciding on the scope and overall design of the volume; the women's role was talk to us, have their pictures taken, check over the drafts of their accounts, and take part only in those decisions which we had presented for their conferral. Lydia's comment: "I came with an idea that it's good we write a play, at least I've met them they've written a book... if we do it in the form of acting, it will be better also", suggests that she saw dramatisation of their political messages as a natural progression. This corresponds with a view commonly expressed in the literature of applied theatre that drama is qualitatively different from and superior to narrative text in its capacity for communication (e.g. Taylor, 2003). In terms of the degree of participation and control afforded the WAST group, the skills and confidence they acquired, and the emotive power of the play to affect the intended audience (all of which is discussed below), the play was an advance on what the book could achieve. Nonetheless the book had advantages as an

enduring document which could be stocked by schools, libraries and resource centres, passed around, and consulted.

Taking to the stage

With the play, WAST joined another popular trend in refugee advocacy. In 2011, Anne McNevin noted that “Theatre by and for refugees... has grown in volume over the last decade as an artistic, therapeutic and political response to the hardening of borders against asylum seekers”. Pupavac detects that “Where in the nineties it was all about images of refugees, “the new millennium has wanted to empower refugee voices” (2008: 271). Already in 2001, a Canadian practitioner/academic, Julie Salverson, wrote that “theatre making that engages with people's personal stories has become mainstream, almost trendy” (119), and Sonja Linden, the director of Ice and Fire, a company which explores human rights issues through performance, notes a recent flowering of verbatim-style political theatre in Britain; a form of public speaking created by writers who have “the great advantage of knowing who they [are] writing for and what they [are] writing about”, in contrast to a more comfortable and less didactic bourgeois form of theatre (Linden, undated quote).

How I Became an Asylum Seeker was written by Lydia, but her script was used flexibly in the process of rehearsing and ‘workshopping’ with the director. It included only a small amount of verbatim personal narrative (e.g. Khumbalani’s speech on p.142), but in representing the situations and dialogue drawn from the writer’s daily reality, had a similar quality. It merged “natural script dialogues with dramatised scenes and the use of composite characters”, something characteristic of ‘critical ethnodrama’ according to Denzin (1997: 99). The dramatised scenes included a political murder in Africa, the queue at a reporting centre, the interior of an immigration removal centre and a WAST meeting, and it elaborated composite characters based on Lydia’s friends and fellow asylum seekers. The play was clearly in the Brechtian ‘epic’ tradition of theatre, which challenges audiences to face and acknowledge injustice in society. As such it fell into Denzin’s category of ‘presentational theatre’ which, in contrast to the performance-based aesthetic of ‘representational theatre’, “creates the spaces for an audience-based aesthetic that works to uncut the logic of strict realistic theatre” and in so doing “allows audience members to separate their emotional reactions to a performance from the text and the performance” (1997:98). The concept of ‘actor alienation’ was developed by Brecht. His alienating devices – helping the audience stay aware of the actor as well as the character - included

“direct speeches to the audience, avoidance of the concept of the fourth wall, actors shifting roles and playing more than one character... actors singing to the audience in a way that commented on on-going action, the projection of pictures and printed comments on background screens, bare stage walls, minimal props, successions of independent scenes and segments, and the use of narrators who tied sequences together” (Denzin, 1997: 106). All of these techniques, apart from the narrator, were used, or experimented with, in the production. During the project evaluation several of the cast mentioned that they would like to add a narrator if they had a chance to develop the play further.

Augusto Boal, a Brazilian exponent of Third World Popular Theatre - “theatre used by oppressed Third World people to achieve justice and development for themselves” (Etherton, 1988: 991) - passionately promoted the role of drama within a ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’. For Freire-influenced Boal, a theatre for social resistance “reconfigures mainstream notions of the speaking subject and gives voices to silenced stories”; is “rooted in specific social circumstances”; serves to “both construct and question issues of identity” and “physically re-enacts lived experiences within the context of the performers’ voices and bodies” so that “concrete strategies for change can be imagined and put into action beyond the performance” (Bryant, 2006: 4). However, while *How I Became an Asylum Seeker* shared these educational ambitions, Boalian theatre tends to focus on spontaneous improvisation rather than the creation and performance of a rehearsed piece.

In a UK community context, there is a wide literature on applied theatre, an umbrella term for the use of drama practice in a specific social context and environment. Applied theatre can involve bringing a pre-rehearsed play exploring relevant themes to a specific audience, or can mean working with a group to dramatise aspects of their lives through improvisation, as a ‘therapeutic’ intervention and / or a vehicle for promoting social change. It is usually facilitated by a professional, with the initiative for the project coming from people outside the target group. The WAST play is unusual in that the initiative came from within the group. It is not surprising that refugees, many of them well educated and accustomed to involvement in civic or political life ‘back home’, should take such an initiative, but it is testament to the facilitative and supportive environment of WAST that its members felt inspired to create their own opportunities for intervention in the public arena. The literature on applied theatre cautions that there can be a tension between the naturalistic stories which participants want to present and facilitators’ desires to open up critical issues for the audience in an effective way, which are simultaneously frustrated by a reluctance to intervene and manipulate (Salverson, 1996). *How I Became an Asylum*

Seeker avoided this because it was crafted with the impact on the audience in mind. Lydia was willing for others to offer advice to improve the script and, once they had a director, to work with her and fellow actors to workshop new scenes and refine the ones she had conceived.

The rarity of this is captured in the reflections of Yasmin Yaqub, the development worker at CAN, in a short film on the making of the play. She had received Lydia's script on the morning of the day she had set aside to start looking for a refugee women's group to collaborate with, to try and rebalance the programme of Exodus (Greater Manchester's annual refugee arts festival) which was, as usual, already filling up with acts by youth groups and men:

I read the script and I thought... it told a really powerful story, the stories that I hear every day and that I've heard for the last ten years of working at CAN, you know, women's stories, but the thing is I hadn't seen a lot of opportunities where women had their space to kind of be able to tell that, through theatre and performance... We were bringing our experience, expertise and finance and ideas into it, but so was WAST as well (Yaqub, interview in the 'Making of' footage from Siobhan McGuirk's 2010 DVD of the play).

A sub-group at WAST had already started selecting roles and experimenting with scenes, but had realised that they would struggle without professional input. Hence the speculative email to CAN, which resulted in a three month collaboration and Exodus funding for the project. Yasmin contracted a trusted freelancer, Magdalen Bartlett, to direct and develop the play. Mags, a dancer and choreographer as well as drama educator, director and young mother, had experience of working with women's and refugee groups and was herself from a refugee family. She felt that this shared experience was important to her relationship with the WAST women:

Having experienced the pressures of the threat of deportation and the sense of shame that this gives you has given me an insight of how important it is for people in this situation to have an outlet for their experiences and an opportunity to communicate. Throughout my campaign against deportation I was studying dance and drama which helped me to escape the pain and gave me inner strength to continue (Magdalen, 2010 DVD 'Making of' interview).

She led weekly two hour sessions in the room adjoining WAST's office, starting with drama games and breathing techniques which the participants, in the feedback sessions, said were fun and helped them to "access our emotions" and to "get us out of our shells". In addition to her patience and encouraging manner, the women's feedback spoke of the inclusive and non-directive style of Mags' approach: "She doesn't tell you what to do, but

collected our opinions”; “Collective decision making”; “She emphasised that it was about us”; “She accommodated everyone, whatever our skills, language etc”. Although they had already taken roles, they were happy to revisit the casting, and liked the way Mags handled it by “giving everyone the same piece to see who suited the best role”, trusting her opinion of who was best suited to which part(s). Yasmin commented:

Magdalen, I think did an excellent job of being able to, one, give these women skill; two, confidence... Because they'd written the play, they were familiar with the play and this is not- this is their *life* actually, so they're familiar you know, I mean, but it was like giving them the confidence to be able to stand in a theatre and to present their life (Yasmin, 2010 DVD ‘Making of’ interview).

This was echoed by Lydia, who described her sense of elation at seeing it all come together:

It wasn't easy for us, I can't lie, but this lady was so patient with us and everything went on well. But I was surprised! Because you know, I'd written, but the director knows better- what to do, to- for a play to be on stage....So it happened, I was really amazed myself. Even myself acting in the play, I was surprised! (laughs) I've never been onstage, I am always a shy person, I'm always feeling shy, but I did it, we *did* it all of us, yeah (Lydia, 2010 DVD ‘Making of’ interview).

The sense of a group project comes though strongly, and of collective self-actualisation. As another actor put it: “We became very united, Magdalen brought the necessary confidence that we can *really* do it, it *will* work.”

The story

The play is a generic story of exile, in which political unrest sees the central character, Monique, widowed and forced to flee her African home, leaving her children behind. She finds herself in a cold and hostile country, her asylum claim rejected, existing in a limbo of reporting, poverty and isolation. There are a series of disconnected scenes, but Monique reappears often enough to produce a narrative arc. The only male characters are Monique's husband, the thugs who kill him and threaten her in the first scene, and the reporting centre guards who treat the claimants with callous disdain. The play is forged out of what Freire called “generative themes” (1996: 74), or what Rainbird calls the “speech-acts” of people seeking asylum; their explorations of “themes relating to their objectification, community perceptions, their understanding of the system” (Rainbird 2007: 3). On stage as well as in everyday life, these emotive speech acts are a strategy employed, according to Rainbird, “to push the boundaries of their predicament and to negotiate a possible future” (2012: 420).

Towards the end of the play, her new friend Aminata asks Monique questions about herself, which are answered by actors playing the voices in her head. Her own mute silence represents reluctance to speak about her ordeal. This section includes several topics the women wanted to bring to public attention, including the physical suffering endured by many asylum seekers and the hardships of the voucher system.

Aminata And is your husband here with you?

Monica (*Crying*) I don't like this topic.

Aminata (*Tries to console her*): Are you all right? What is the problem? Be strong.

Spotlight

Voice 1 My husband was killed, I was also targeted, beaten, tortured – and worst of all... I feel so ashamed... I was raped. I had to flee the country. That is why I became an asylum seeker. Right now I don't know much about how my children are, or how they are growing up without me. What about Grandma? Who will push her wheelchair? Even little Alice, my niece - her dreams have been shattered. I and my husband were the only support she had.

Aminata Never mind, stop crying. God will pay those people for their wickedness. Do you call home often and talk to your children?

Spotlight

Voice 2 Where do I get the money? The Home Office refused my asylum claim and I only get vouchers. I can't buy from any other shop with the vouchers except ASDA. I can't buy a bus pass or even pay for a TV licence. There are so many things you can't do with vouchers.

Aminata You have to be strong, my sister. Don't give up. Which support group do you go to?

Spotlight

Voice 3 Support group? No, I don't have a support group, I only have my church.

Jeffers ponders the difficulty of challenging the very real prejudice against asylum seekers, so often eyed with suspicion, “without resorting to demonstrations of victimhood” (2011: 143). The fact that the majority of claims are rejected creates a further imperative for people to insist on their victimhood. The important point here, however, is that for those (the majority) rejected, untold damage is done by the state's refusal to believe them and by the climate of scepticism towards their reality. Transmitting the message that “Being a refugee was not a matter of choice. No-one would choose to leave their homes and seek asylum unless there were no other options” (McNevin, 2010: 149), was one of the principle aims of the WAST play.

How I Became an Asylum Seeker depicts the horror of murder and brutalisation, and the depression and fatalism which may overtake a person in the asylum system after years of fruitless waiting, being disbelieved and humiliated by officials and despised by the general public. However, as the script extract demonstrates, the play also stresses the support which asylum seekers provide for one another, and so sidesteps the “triangular melodramatic structure in which Africa retains its negative image (villain), allowing the UK to step in as the (reluctant) hero while the individual refugee maintains his/her status as helpless victim” (Jeffers 2008: 220). Another way it resists showing the women as passive acceptors of their fate is through humour as a form of counter attack. We see characters mocking the ignorant remarks they receive from British people, such as assumptions that all Africans are illiterate, or jolly reminiscences of beach holidays in the asylum seeker’s country. Here, exposing the likely disingenuity of the question, Mavis’ character ‘enacts resilience’ and shows that “in a surreal world” she “still sees what is absurd and has not become an abject figure, the victim of the authoritarian situation” (Burvill, 2008: 238):

Mavis: Well the other day someone ask me, how did you get to Britain? I said I swung from tree to tree like a monkey! I swam like a fish through the sea!

This kind of play moves people past the “images that have come to stand in for the diversity of actual people” (McNevin 2010, 153) allowing the complexities of individual lives to come across and disrupt the banal homogeneity of stereotypes. Were care not taken, community theatre could have the opposite effect and “reinforce objectified perceptions” (2010: 153) – Jeffers warns, for example, about portrayals of “wounded asylum seekers” (2011: 56) who become politically neutral symbols of human suffering. However, this would represent a considerable failure of the form’s promise. *How I Became an Asylum Seeker* included characters who were struggling and others who had reached a position of strength. It contested dominant discourses by reversing them – showing that rather than asylum seekers, it is the immigration authorities which are untrustworthy and responsible for abuse and violence. Following the drama with a Q&A session and workshops also guarded against the creation of mono-dimensional characters.

In the final scene, when Monique attends her first WAST meeting, the women’s agency is underlined: they solve the problem of isolation and lack of resources by creating this dynamic support structure for themselves. The full cast assembles on stage, after a costume change into traditional dresses and colourful headwear which symbolise enduring

connection to and pride in their cultures. They hug, introduce one another and where they are from (some using their real details, others continuing to play a role) and explain to the newcomer Monique what WAST provides and means to them. Monique expresses exhaustion and desolation but is reassured by Khumbulani, whose monologue made a strong impression on me the first time I saw the play. It seemed that she was talking in her own words and from her own experience, which I subsequently discovered to be the case. This acts as a clever bridging device, breaking with the fictionalised mode to reveal the women no longer as actors but as the members of an existing organisation, gathered on stage around its banner. Her testimony conveys the importance of hope and resilience:

Khumbulani

I was like you my sister. I had depression. I lost my mum, my sister, back home. I had been refused three times and even the high court. No accommodation, no vouchers, no nothing, no food, no money, no friends. I fell pregnant my sister, I did not expect to fall pregnant. *(pause)* This life. *(pause)* Seven months pregnant, with nothing. They contact Home Office, they refuse me. I had to sign in at Dallas Court, no money. Travel to the hospital, no money, had to walk. Had baby, no money, no clothes. I did not give up hope. Be strong my sister. I had a baby and nothing. Red Cross give me clothes and pram for my baby. If my baby sick I have to walk to hospital. I wait and wait. Then I came to WAST like you. I started to feel better. People to talk to, I found a family, friends. When I received the letter from Home Office, I could not believe it. I trust nothing from Home Office. Please be strong my sister, do not give up. Seven years my sister, and I got my stay, April this year 2009. Be strong.

Music is used strategically to set scenes, evoke atmosphere or emotion, or to move the story on. Different productions opened variously with a haunting Bangladeshi folk song from Naila, the sound of the kora or the harmonies of a Shona lament - each locating the action far away. Later in the play the women sing about missing their homelands and about being 'strangers' in the world. However, in this final, valedictory scene (the WAST meeting) they start to hum *We Shall Overcome* and conclude by singing and dancing a defiant rendition of Boyzone song *No Matter What They Tell Me*, ('Me' changed to 'Us') which (in contrast with the previous melodic African tunes), helps complete the transition to their present environment and the present tense (and it was amusing to discover the song's connection to two very English institutions: Andrew Lloyd Webber wrote it for the musical of *Whistle Down the Wind*).

The audience

How I Became an Asylum Seeker was first staged at the Zion Centre in Manchester in December 2009, a work-in-progress show following WAST's three month collaboration with CAN. It was attended by many WAST members, who came onstage to join the 'WAST meeting' and sing the final number. The WAST volunteer was disappointed when she realised the DVD (which was shot separately in a studio environment) missed this element: "The ending is a bit- isn't as effective as it was... it lost all that feeling at the end, that you get at the end of the play" (Vicky, interview).

Most of the sell-out audience that evening (around 170 people) were WAST supporters and others active in refugee solidarity. The reactions of those interviewed in the foyer afterwards for the DVD gave a real sense of engagement with the play, and its effectiveness on different levels: political, philosophical, artistic and emotional:

I thought it was so humane and warm and a real women's play, very moving and funny and I thought it was lovely, just lovely.

It's scary enough just to get on stage but they were so great to do that, I've taken so much from it, and Women Asylum Seekers Together will have my full support and any way that I can get involved to help them campaign. I should say that at the end she says they're not born asylum seekers, they're born human beings, and that's exactly how we should be thinking.

It was absolutely fantastic to see it. We were just talking about how you go from feeling with them, like the despair, to then laughing, it's a real range of emotions. And their [singing] voices are absolutely beautiful

(Audience members quoted in 'Making of' interview for DVD by McGuirk, 2010).

A few weeks after this show, GAP Unit, after negotiations with WAST and NWTWC, succeeded CAN (whose funding for this had ended) in backing the development of the play. The grant we secured allowed WAST to work for nine more weeks with Mags and the Arise and Shine group to carry out the targeted public sector awareness raising they wanted, based around the play. The next two performances, at the Zion Centre and Liverpool's new Contemporary Culture Centre (CCC), were followed by a discussion workshop (two in Manchester, 30 people in each). The audiences were recruited from local authorities and public agencies within the region. We asked for people with decision making powers or frontline contact with asylum seekers and refugees but no or little specific training for this work. As part of the booking process they were asked to explain their interest in refugee issues, so we knew that quite a few people had come to plug gaps in their knowledge. The head of social services at Liverpool City Council (LCC) helpfully

made available an administrator to co-ordinate the bookings and to promote the event to staff (although she was not assiduous about sending out reminders, with the result that not all of the reserved places were filled). As they collected their tickets in the CCC foyer, I asked two LCC employees if they would be staying for the workshop after the play, and one replied with visceral hostility “I very much doubt it”. Neither woman looked pleased to be there, which made me hopeful that, as we had wanted but couldn’t ensure, some staff had been required to attend the event by their line managers rather than choosing to come. The two women did indeed not attend the workshops, but during the (very emotional) question and answer session after the play I noticed that the scorn had been replaced with quite different expressions on their faces.

Even if the majority of those attending were already sympathetic to refugees in general, the provider-client relation tends to be “based on the non-equivalence of parties” (McNevin, 2010: 154). The play provided an opportunity for the expert role to be reversed. The kind of “active dialogue between service providers and asylum seekers” provided by the two events fulfills what Rainbird sees “as a necessary step towards active integration and participation in a changing society” (2012: 420). In a piece for the online Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QUARN), the one journalist who attended (in Manchester) gave the following assessment of how the Arise and Shine group’s aims had been met (although “vast” probably overdoes it!):

The play and workshops were billed as a ‘Professional Development Opportunity’. As a trained teacher in Adult Education as well as a journalist I had a critical eye on how the event was organised. I was impressed from the start. Amongst the two hundred delegates – I found Sure Start staff, the manager of a hostel for homeless women, at least one NHS manager, members of the police force and the manager of a council unit responsible for child protection. Concrete proof that this event would be reaching and educating vast sections of the community (Laing 2009).

Aware of how much we had hassled media contacts, she also expressed her disappointment to have been the only person with visible press accreditation:

Managers of newspapers are increasingly curtailing the frequency with which reporters are sent out to the field and covering such events is often left to intrepid freelancers like me... Immigration and asylum issues can be complicated. If your boss says they can’t afford to send you to an event, you cannot be there in person and have to use the telephone and the internet – there’s a danger that your information will be second-hand. Members of the media, the unions and the voluntary sector should be working together to counteract dangerous and misleading stereotypes through training. This type of event is really needed (Laing, 2009).

O'Neill states that the "nearly complete absence – apart from a few exemplary reports and television documentaries – of an alternative voice in the mainstream media from the perspective of the refugee or asylum seeker, raises important ethico-political issues relating to the politics of representation, democracy and immigration" (2010: 124). An ICAR report commented in 2005 that "by showcasing the arts, the press are helping to extend the forum for moral education that can bring about a better-informed political debate" (Smart et al, 2005: 41). Given the power of the media to shape public opinion, it is unfortunate if journalists are benefiting less and less from this type of educative event.

What does the play achieve?

The great thing about the play is that they're getting a voice and they know more about something than they [the audience] do, and people have to sit and listen and learn what an asylum seeker is and not to interrupt and say anything back - they can just give their point of view without any comments or interruptions for 40 minutes (Vicky, interview).

In so many contexts asylum seekers are powerless to contribute their opinions or can only do so if mediated by well-meaning (or self-interested) support organisations, not on their own terms. Through a play they can address an audience directly, or indirectly through dialogue or dramatised scenes which spur witnesses to question their complicity. The effect is powerful because "when the spectator enters into the theatre space, s/he enters into the reality of the situation enacted and thus, even when relating to personal or collective past, theatre praxis is always enacted and asserted in the present" (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008: 3.1). Neelands claims that this kind of drama mirrors Arendt's idea of a concept of the 'public sphere', in that it is "artificially constructed and formalised" and geared to "the deliberation of the common good and the exchange of reasons by actors" (2007: 315). He proposes that the real political significance of such work lies in people using their "common right to engage in struggles that challenge the cultural and economic norms of mutual recognition when they consider these norms to be unfair or unjust", treating the norms as "normative in Foucault's sense of being changeable through human agency" (2007: 315). The analogy is intensified when the audience is invited to comment and ask questions after a performance, when the audience are people with power to change unjust norms, and when the players are asylum seekers, a group systematically denied entry to the public sphere.

Many of the playgoers said they were moved on a deep level. Sitting down alongside several of the actors, after such an emotional connection had been established, made for

open, empathic dialogue during the workshops. The participants gained respect and admiration for the women through the play, and were thus in an optimal state for letting go of preconceptions and receiving new information. The hope is that this translated into effective and lasting learning, as they came to see people seeking asylum with 'new eyes' and to understand the immigration system differently. Participant feedback forms asked people to comment on what they had learned:

- This has been such an inspiring day. Thank you for having the courage to share your stories. This has made a real impact on me and I will tell everyone I know about what I have learnt today.
- It brought home and crystallized the reality of the situation of ordinary people.
- Will now ask questions with more sensitivity, e.g. questions about family could be distressing.
- *Dallas Court Scene* revealed inhumanity of the system, treating people as criminals when they have not committed a crime.
- Better understanding of barriers faced by women seeking asylum, and why they left their own countries

In the workshops, participants were asked to think about what should happen next, from small practical improvements to large scale political change. The issues identified were very similar to those raised by the women who participated in Phase 1. of Arise and Shine:

- Speed up the asylum process
- Change voucher system and reporting system
- Revise standards for housing people
- Increase nursery places, college places, free English classes
- Equality of access to services - education health housing social care etc.
- Better information at airports
- Overhaul of the whole system long term
- Allow people to work, recognise international qualifications

They were also asked to state what action they would personally be taking, although the question was interpreted more widely by some:

- Raise awareness of Right to Interpreters
- Improve information about local services for Asylum Seekers
- Raise awareness e.g. inviting WAST to our areas
- Inform and educate hospital staff
- Protect children if age in doubt
- Treat people with respect
- Education on history of British Rule in Africa & Asia etc.
- Give more voice to asylum seekers
- Challenge journalists
- Raise awareness within my own organisation and challenge prejudice or ignoring the problem
- Check policies for reference to asylum seekers or refugees

- Lobbying our MPs, need to speak to government at high level
- Do more listening
- Talk to people more about the issues facing asylum seekers
- Group / business initiatives – offer placements?
- Raise awareness through schools
- Awareness raising amongst ‘support organizations’ (police, housing, planning etc) to prevent institutional prejudice and inconsiderate or abusive behaviour
- Respecting & understanding different cultures/backgrounds e.g. date of birth/family names
- Work with policy makers – policies need changing

There is a government machine which is relatively immune to calls for greater leniency and care to be shown towards asylum seekers, which ignores even the reports it commissions itself.⁴⁵ “Many states feel compelled to grant asylum because of their supposed democratic nature, but are no longer interested in the principle of asylum”, writes Jubany (2011: 81), whose recent research shows how the working culture within UKBA codifies personal stereotyping as ‘experience’ and ‘expertise’. In other words, trainers are encouraged to share their personal knowledge and experiences from the ‘field’ in the training of new recruits and this “‘local knowledge’ is passed on with an unwritten (meta) message of mistrust towards asylum seekers” (2011: 88). No UKBA staff attended the events, despite various efforts including using personal contacts. However, there is a larger group within the public sector who are ready to have their eyes opened to shortfalls in existing practice, to try to understand other perspectives and provide more responsive services. There are areas in which officials at the local level can use their individual agency to “become caring co-presences through recognizing the sentience of people seeking asylum, ‘hearing-to-respond’ (Spivak 2000: 22), and making efforts of translation commensurate with theirs” (Pannett 2011: 209). A new service was created in Tameside Children’s Services as a result of a staff member’s attendance at the play and workshops. We also know that staff from Revive, a local refugee and asylum seeker charity, were inspired to incorporate campaigning into their activities; that a member of the local NHS Foundation Trust persuaded her line manager to invite GAP Unit to facilitate a presentation by asylum seekers at their next equalities conference (p.83); that a staff workshop using the DVD of the play was commissioned by Government Office North West (GONW); that an officer from Salford City Council ensured WAST brought their play to his borough and that many people who had not previously been involved with refugee issues became sensitised and responsive to campaigns in favour of asylum seekers.

⁴⁵ For example, one of its authors mentioned that a year-long study commissioned by the Home Office to consider the effect on forced marriage of raising the minimum age for a sponsor, and of leave to enter the UK as a spouse or fiancé(e), was shelved when its findings did not support its pre-conclusions.

When, some months later, we sent an online anti-deportation petition to the 80 people added to our database after their attendance at the plays, around 60 of them signed it within a few days. According to Etherton, “Brecht developed a poetics designed to channel the inevitable empathetic feelings of the audience into socially productive ends” (2006: 146), but apparently left open to question “whether such alteration leads to any sort of behavioural or attitudinal change, stimulating social action” (2006: 146). Ruth Judge also wonders whether interventions where “an audience comes expecting to be taken on an emotional journey... slip into a romanticised voyeurism of refugee struggle without an impetus to change policy or fundamental attitudes towards actual displaced people?” (2010: 29) The audience reactions to *How Became an Asylum Seeker* would, I believe, reassure Judge. McNevin writes about a play called ‘Journal of Asylum – Waiting’ which sounds similar to the WAST play (and also developed using verbatim theatre techniques and workshoping with the actors), and here, too:

Not only had audiences listened, but many contributed lengthy commentaries on the performance... Some of this feedback included accounts of audience members who had previously known little about asylum seeker issues but now felt compelled to engage politically in support of their rights (2010: 151).

An Arise and Shine group member told me that the best thing British people can do to support refugees and other migrants is to “get closer to them, ask questions, listen and feel them”, in other words to allow an emotional connection to be made. This is how they would move beyond their prejudices, she thought, although she added pragmatically that “even if you still go about with whatever stereotype you've got, listen more”. The women I interviewed were adamant that it is direct contact with asylum seekers, and hearing their stories from them directly, that has the power to “wake” people to the realities of the asylum system. There were three main aspects to what they thought the play had achieved:

1. Challenging the stereotypes:

The part that I love so much about the play, for me, is when the women came out and they explain themselves, why I left my country... Because that is when people, we see that lots of these people they are not just here to get the health thing, to take whatever - there they have their real problems.

We could let people know that what you think about us is not true, and what we are telling you is the actual story. So the great thing about it is the opportunity to change the ideas of people about, you know, the whole asylum process or immigration process.

2. Filling gaps in understanding:

In Liverpool people shared our emotional hurt because they didn't realise our difficulties... I was touched to see people sharing our hurt.

You see from their feedback, some people said they never knew this thing is happening. Some even said it that they had had to- they couldn't even believe. Some even said 'I'm going to investigate if this is true, they think maybe something is... maybe it's exaggerated'.

3. Redressing the absence of asylum seekers' perspectives in the public sphere:

It reminds me of how powerful it is when you use your voice to advocate on behalf of other women, because our voices are not being heard enough.

If you'd go to show it everywhere from Liverpool, Manchester and any- wherever, people will get to know who are we asylum seekers, why do we leave our countries, and maybe we can be heard by government, whereby, some of the government's policy is not to ask asylum seekers.

The women were reassured by the audience reaction, and perhaps took heart from realising that not everyone is as unmoved by their situation as they had come to expect:

The reaction from people and the way people took it and the way they were talking about it, and they came to talk to us who acted in the play, so I believe that I think the issue of raising awareness really happened that day, people really heard the message, the message went through.

Interestingly, they framed their assessments of the impact of the work by using and then undermining negative qualifying terms. Asserting that the impacts were bigger than they had given themselves credit for could appear contradictory but has the narrative effect of sounding positive yet modest about what was achieved. For example:

The awareness we are creating, *we don't know how big it is*. Because we just felt we are just small group... but it's quite powerful, you know?... The awareness is going places.

We may not realise now but it has made a difference what we have done.

The play *actually did* affect a lot of people.

McNevin also reports of *Journey- Asylum Waiting* that it "gave protagonists a sense that it was possible to change people's minds, 'to make history', as one actor put it, and to do so

on account of being spokespersons for themselves... it was possible to be both refugees and agents of political change” (2010: 151).

Further considerations

Several writers on applied theatre agree that it works best when audiences, even those sympathetic to asylum seekers, are somehow “taken by surprise” (Jeffers, 2011: 145) . This could mean being shaken out of a belief in the “benign intents of our institutions” (2011:145) and realising that it is on their behalf as citizens that unjust exclusions are being excused. If the refugee determination process is not the neutral, “evidence-based process it claims to be... we are confronted with what ultimately remains an *ethical* challenge - the *responsibility to decide* on the limits and hospitality of our own political community” (McNevin, 2010: 155-156). According to an understanding of Levinasian ethics, the effect on those who witness a play is more effective if it produces ‘unsecure knowing’; if, rather than giving easy stories within moral frameworks, it requires attention to be paid, “obligation traced but not required, and meanings touched but not pinned down” (Critchley, 2002: 34). This is because for Levinas, “openness to the face of the other and a responsibility for the other” (Burvill, 2008: 234) – an obligation to unconditional hospitality - is evoked when there is an “experience of the ethical encounter with alterity, embodying the enactment of that ‘unassumable responsibility’” (2008: 236). For Burvill, it is “not necessarily so much about knowledge of the other, or information about their situation... as it is about the ethical quality of the experience itself, about a certain kind of affect” (2008: 236) produced “fleetingly, in powerfully affecting moments” (2008: 241) when we are directly confronted with the Other. Burvill suggests that this is something “more purely embodied” and “less explicit” (2008: 236) than empathy, even, although this depends on how he defines empathy. Halpern’s understanding of empathy as involving “emotional as well as cognitive openness, and tolerating the ambivalence this might arouse” (Seu, 2008: 86) brings it close to the ‘affect’ of which Burvill speaks. *How I Became an Asylum Seeker* staged some of its stories in an oblique way, and this may have been part of its power.

Various studies into the “role of the arts in questioning what we mean by the concepts of citizenship and state boundaries” argue that arts can instil “a more sensitive appreciation of ourselves and others, and of the ethical ambiguities of the social positions in which migrants come to be placed” (Smart et al, 2005: 41). Jeffers argues that for static populations, in everyday life “the presence of migrants, forced or otherwise, offers an

opportunity to re-define all identities as ethnically produced” (2011: 10) and that this, for some, “creates a paradox whereby... in this very act of definition, made necessary by the presence of the Other, resentments and hostilities are built up by the imposition of the need to define” (2011: 10). The resentment could equally relate to a sense of threatened entitlement and the discomfort of having to confront the fact that we are all, as individuals, already inescapably embroiled in dense global webs of interconnection, exchange, exploitation and obligation. Where people’s response to this has been willed ignorance and a desire to figure the global Other as permanently marginal, submissive and ideally out of sight, Jeffers considers theatre - the encounter between audience and performers in a space which requires attentive listening - an ideal setting for starting to overcome this resistance to the presence of the Other (2011: 11). Levinasian ethics are at work.

According to McNevin, plays by asylum seekers which extend an ethical challenge to audience members about the limits of hospitality can be seen in the context of other “acts of citizenship” (Isin and Nielson, 2008) by ‘unauthorised’ migrants elsewhere around the globe. In her view, the protagonists’ self-projection as “makers and shapers of the common civic sphere through which we contest political relations and obligations to each other” (McNevin, 2010: 143) represents a challenge to mainstream understandings of citizenship. Lydia’s play set out to demonstrate that prevailing norms of legal entitlement and moral justice are undermined by ignorance and xenophobia, causing harm to people who need care and protection. In this sense, then, it reinforced an exclusionary moral framework – the humanitarianism which limits access to those deemed suitably deserving; a refusal of the universal call to hospitality. This was brought home to me when, after their presentation in Nelson based around clips from the play DVD, a community activist thanked the women for their important work, saying that he wished more people in his area realised that it was not asylum seekers they should be resentful of, but the migrant workers who are taking their jobs. However, it can also be argued that by standing up, asylum seekers, who are meant to be silent and supplicant, are rupturing the humanitarian frame; and that as people who are “counted outside the political community” (Millner, 2012: 61), their demand is ethical in the sense of implying a “rightful presence” that troubles the “categories of ‘host’ and ‘guest’ on which the statist framing of politics and sanctuary rests” (Squire & Darling, 2013: 61). McNevin views their actions as part of the emergence globally of migrant demands for access to rights and free movement (2010: 144), such as the ‘sans papiers’ in France, Filipino domestic workers in the Netherlands, African agricultural workers in southern Spain and Latin American immigrants in the United States

who have mobilised in recent years to demand fair treatment and routes to citizenship. For McNevin, a play like Lydia's is an 'act of citizenship' in that it allows the actors to contest their construction as (non-)political beings, showing them as powerful and resourceful despite having to flee their countries, and because it demonstrates 'failed' asylum seekers' refusal to accept this designation or to tolerate the systemically flawed asylum adjudication process. It is a "public assertion of asylum seekers' status as equal subjects of justice alongside citizens and as equally capable authors of the shape that justice should take" (McNevin 2010:143). In *Why I Became an Asylum Seeker*, as during WAST's march on the headquarters of the UKBA in Liverpool a few months later, asylum seekers were acting as autonomous political agents, assuming their "common right to engage in struggles that challenge the cultural and economic norms of mutual recognition when they consider these norms to be unfair or unjust" (Neelands 2007:10-11). By demonstrating that they *are already* citizens (Millner 2012: 44), migrants, refugees and asylum seekers "reinvigorate the practice of citizenship in ways that generate new geographies of civic engagement that respond to the contemporary realities of transnational labour markets, neo-colonialism and global social relations in general" (McNevin, 2010: 149).

Jeffers writes of refugee theatre that "these projects can also discuss more complex material... to show how 'we' can only exist in the conditions of possibility provided by 'them'. 'They' are created by the needs of the West and in order to protect 'our' standards of life, a challenging global image" (Jeffers, 2011: 147). Lydia's play did not make a similar point explicitly, but during the Q&A session at the Zion Centre a male audience member drew attention to the African and South Asian origins of all of the actors and asked us to consider what we had just witnessed in the light of the legacy of colonialism, Britain's ongoing implication in the poverty and instability of the women's countries, and the racist nature of immigration controls. The point was left hanging but it was, in my view, an important frame-disrupting intervention – the introduction of a "universalist stance" (Balfour, 2010: 185) which made clear that enforced movement results from "larger socioeconomic, political, and historical interplays" (2010: 185) – and perhaps, if Burvill is right, all the more effective for being 'fleeting' rather than hammered home.

Impact on other asylum seekers

The first performance had been for general supporters, and the next two were aimed at public sector workers. But all were also, importantly, for audiences of asylum seekers. For them to see their lives represented was an important part of WAST's aim. As Kaptani and

Yuval-Davis note, in applied theatre there is a “hunger” among audiences to see their stories played out as part of a shared experience (2008: 3.8). On seeing the play, a man interviewed for the WAST DVD, said: “I am myself an asylum seeker so I found myself inside the play. So it was very, very emotional, and joyful as well”.

In a Guardian write-up of the play, Lydia is quoted as saying:

When refugee women come here... they are often too frightened or ashamed to tell their stories and so they can be denied the right to stay. I would like to see more and more women speaking up so British women can understand that we do not come here to be scroungers but because we really are fleeing for our lives (quoted in Walter, 2010).

The article goes on to show that the play had had the precisely this outcome. A group in Cardiff “looked at what they were doing in Manchester and we thought, if they can do it there, then we can try it...We cannot just rely on people to advocate on our behalf – we have to stand up for ourselves”, while a woman called Hélène who attended the play in Manchester became an active campaigner with WAST London:

I saw how the audience said, I didn't know this was happening to women in this country. I realised that it is only if more people understand what it is really happening that we will get policies to change... People are blind to what we are going through; they are deaf, so we have to shout louder till everybody knows (quoted in Walter, 2010).

The close relationship between drama and political advocacy is highlighted by the actions of Small World Theatre in Wales, which in 2007 trained “a group of refugee women of all ages to act as advocates for refugees and asylum seekers in their dealings with public services, including the health service... training the women in both physical theatre techniques and forum theatre techniques” (Kidd et al, 2008: 41). The fact that this project was financed by the HO is less a sign of administrative capture and control than of the way third sector organisations make pragmatic use of available resources and achieve positive practice (- to borrow an expression -) “in the cracks” (Holloway, 2010: 200), much as GAP Unit did with Arise and Shine.

Benefits to the participants

Lydia’s main aim with the play was to create a powerful awareness raising tool, but taking part was important too. Neelands notes Schechner’s (1988) four interlocked domains of performance - education, healing, ritual and entertainment - and the potential for it to be

“affirmative as well as socially transformative” (Neelands 2007:9). According to Jennings, the protective ‘dramatic distance’ made possible by theatre can allow people “to experience reality at a deeper level” (1994:22). Being in and out of a role at the same time, simultaneously ‘me’ and ‘not-me’, “causes us to come closer to ourselves and indeed makes us get in touch with profound areas of experience that are not accessible in other ways.” (Jennings 1992: 241). Theatre provides a dialogical space for this “action, reflection and 'becoming'” (Kaptani & Yuval Davis, 2008:3.5). I did not directly ask the women whether these ideas resonated with their experience, but they talked about having grown in confidence, of feeling more comfortable speaking in front of an audience and generally being more “outspoken about asylum”. One said that now, “if someone ask about asylum, I can explain it” – which could be any or a combination of the play having taught her useful vocabulary for effective communication; feeling a stronger sense of entitlement to denounce unjust practices; feeling less daunted about speaking to British people (perhaps more able to anticipate a sympathetic reaction); and having a clearer analysis of her situation as systemic rather than her own private misfortune.

There is also the sense of accomplishment, especially for those whose enforced absence from the workplace and public life is experienced as a loss of demand for their skills and outlets for their talents:

It make us feel happy. Because all along here in the asylum process - some people have been here for eight years, seven years, I have been here since 2006 - it's difficult to have anything by my own name, we are only going by numbers given by the Home Office. So we can have something; ‘Oh, that play was acted by Lydia’, or ‘That play was written by Lydia, it was acted by WAST women’. ‘Who are the women?’ ‘Oh, Florence from WAST, then Sofia from WAST or Sarah from WAST’ - at least we should go by our names also (Lydia, 2010 DVD ‘Making of’ interview).

During an evaluation exercise the actors said that the play “show[ed] that we have skills to offer”, while another said of the DVD “We need to show it around and be proud of it that this is our work”. They talked about wanting the play to be performed nationally and shown on the BBC, with someone joking that she planned to write in for “Britain’s Got Talent – Asylum Seekers Got Talent!” Some of the group were keen to work on their acting skills, hoping for a chance to “watch the rehearsals of professional actors so that we can improve our acts” and to have more professional props. Some realised for the first time that they were good at acting, and enjoyed it:

If it was not for the play I would not have known I can act I until people come and tell me. I really didn’t act before; people think I have done it before I have never done this

before – staring in a crowd and performing, no. It’s come naturally and I am happy because I have learned a lot (Sofia, play evaluation meeting).

“I think they got better, all the performance got better the women got more confident, definitely” said Vicky. Sofia told me that the husband of one of the young women, Menon, had been taken aback to see her play a hostile male official. “He said, ‘I didn’t know my wife can speak that loud!’, because the manner that she performed as an immigration officer was amazing!” In the group evaluation session some of the more self-confident women acknowledged Menon’s achievement, as well as that of Saba, who by agreeing that she is naturally a quiet person accepted the compliment about her ability to transform herself onstage:

Comment from the circle: Saba and Menon, they were very quiet before

Saba: Yes, I *am* very quiet

Florence: Yes, you know yourself you are a quiet person, a shy person, some people would be surprised that you can stand in front of other people and talk with that voice, that strong voice and with so much confidence

Comment from the circle: Ask her who was surprised

Menon: My husband was surprised!

A need for caution

A lot has been written about the dilemmas within applied theatre of mature actors staging traumatic events from their own pasts for audience consumption. For example, in an article on some of the risks of community-based theatre, Salverson writes that she made a serious mistake, when dramatising a refugee’s story, in assuming that it was fine for him to play himself (1996: 185). On the website of a refugee theatre and research project based at the University of Manchester, a man from Congo (DRC) is quoted as saying “You couldn’t possibly act your own story. That’s how I felt and it would have been too much for me to be rehearsing it. It loses its value to me. It’s important [to me]; it’s in my life” (In Place of War, 2012). Lydia created composite characters and instinctively knew this, but there were one or two exceptions. Sofia was one of those providing the interior voice of Monique (Voice 1, p.140), a device sometimes used to avoid participants having to endure repeated retellings of their own experiences. Not in this case however; Sofia’s husband own was murdered and her three children given into the care of a relative, since when she had not seen them. While she admitted that this part “takes me back to what happened with my life” and is “very emotional” - which makes it a powerful performance - she was clearly willing to volunteer for or to accept the role. As mentioned in Chapter 7. (p.164-5), Sofia argued strongly for the cathartic power of the speech act.

Just before the first performance a few of the actors were interviewed on camera about what they were about to undertake. “Is it stressful?”, asks the camera operator.

No not at all, as long as- you know, it- it can be stressful, but it's only stressful when I think about - should I say stress? Or... it just brings up the memories you know. But I enjoy doing it because it's a way of communicating, of showing people, of telling people what exactly an asylum seeker goes through (Florence, play evaluation meeting).

Florence questions the word “stress”, finding it inadequate. She explains that the evocation of painful memory is made endurable by her passion for making people see that she and other asylum seekers have coped with and survived extreme adversity. Florence was one of those who suggested that for future performances, in addition to portraying their fictionalised characters, they should have the choice to come out of their roles and tell the audience their own stories. This does not mean to say that the work was not emotionally draining at times. “Theatre work is experiential and emotive, which can produce special ethical concerns” (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis 208:3.6). Conflict can arise in any group, and is more likely when people are plagued with constant worries, and there was some falling out at the Liverpool performance, due to an actor feeling criticised by another. She was shy and felt satisfied just to be on stage representing her country at the ‘WAST meeting’, but felt she was coming under pressure to make more effort for the sake of the play. The row subsided but took some time and negotiation involving Vicky, who was always concerned to see that the women did not overstretch themselves, during the rehearsal process as much as the performances.

Room for improvement

The rehearsal building was cold, and there was always trouble locating room heaters. Some of the mothers were understandably quite unhappy on the occasions when we had not managed to make the crèche warm before they dropped off their babies and toddlers. Mags had preferred us not to provide tea or coffee because there was only time for a brief break, but after a couple of weeks the message came back that hot drinks were essential because of the cold room and weather. Vicky pointed out that:

People do come to WAST for the comfort of it, the physical comfort of it as well as whatever else they get out... I think, you know, for people like Sofia and they're destitute, number one is if it's a nice comfortable place they're going to come whatever you do, you know what I mean? It's a bonus isn't it, but you know probably, I don't know, it might have been worth saying hot food, would you want it? (Vicky, interview).

Consulting the women about the food would have been better than finding out at the end that the cold buffet had been tolerated rather than enjoyed, but it is also a difficult topic on which to find consensus. Lydia's view was that:

You can never do food to please everybody. If there is food, ok, there is food. Rather than just being without food. If it's not my type, ok, I'm unfortunate that day. But I don't want, no, to say this food is good, this one is not good. But you can never please everybody (Lydia, interview).

I have written pages on the troubles and dilemmas involved in providing suitable food when working with community groups, but space does not suffice. Needless to say, a conversation with Vicky would have helped, since she knows the women and understands their needs well. It would also have prevented the misunderstanding which meant Vicky came to the Zion Centre expecting a WAST event kindly supported financially by a partner organisation, but instead found an Arise and Shine event built around the WAST play. The volunteers were all wearing Arise and Shine T-shirts and it looked, to her, like a take over:

To me it was a WAST play that Arise and Shine was supporting to put on, you know, which doesn't do you any favours because actually it was an Arise and Shine project, but from our perspective... it was going to be about giving those women in WAST exposure... it was almost like you were organising all that and we were doing the WAST bit... like the two things were in competition to get some identity, which they shouldn't have been, but I mean CAN were the same (Vicky, interview).

She saw this 'branding' as a misguided attempt to claim recognition and glory, since:

the women at WAST, it's their life, whereas you and me, it's not our life, is it? And it's not CAN's life, you know, CAN is a project, Arise and Shine is a project, but WAST is actually women, and it's their lives (Vicky, interview).

However, this had exactly been our motive for promoting Arise and Shine - the group of women asylum seekers and refugees behind the event - rather than our organisation, the GAP Unit. Arise and Shine was also "actually women" and it included four members of the WAST Management Group who had been party to all the decisions. This failure of communication could have been avoided, however. Vicky was right to say:

I think as you say decisions were rushed, there was less time to consider impact and consultation as we would have liked ... I think at WAST we have to set some ground rules for partnership work to reduce misunderstandings and to look at how the play is used... it's all new to us.

Realising that the other women in *Arise and Shine* were also asylum seekers or refugees ameliorated her concern to some extent, while the audience and workshop feedback proved that participants were left in no doubt about the existence of WAST and that *How I Became an Asylum Seeker* was their play. The one bit of press coverage we managed to get – a freelance journalist’s blog – makes this clear:

Frances Laing. Writer. Blogger. Journalist.
'Behind the Lines'. News and commentary that don't normally get out. Blog est. April 6th. 2009
Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST). Zion Centre.
Manchester Wednesday 24th. March, 2010 March 25, 2010

I travelled to Manchester yesterday to attend an event organised by "Women Asylum Seekers Together" (WAST).

There were about 200 people there. We watched a play called "How I became an Asylum Seeker" by Lydia Besong and attended a workshop afterwards. As you can see from the WAST website, the High Court has recently ordered that Lydia is not be removed from the U.K.

I'm not content with writing a single blog post about this event – there is so much to say about it and I need to order my thoughts – wait for more



Women Asylum Seekers Together Banner. Wednesday 24th. March. Manchester

<http://franceslaing.wordpress.com/?s=WAST>

We made some changes for the event in Liverpool to, in Vicky’s words, “help support the ownership of the play back to WAST”: Lydia introduced the play (it was agreed I should still say a few words of ‘housekeeping’) and Mavis chaired the Q&A rather than Carolina, who had done it spontaneously in Manchester as we had forgotten a Q&A was needed for those not staying on for the workshops. During the Liverpool Q&A, asylum seekers in the audience joined those on the panel in sharing some distressing experiences. The week before I had visited a local asylum group to invite them to the play, and a young Rwandan woman had told me about losing her latest appeal and how helpless she felt. She was one of those who took up the invitation, and during the Q&A became very upset, weeping

angrily as she talked about being seen only as an asylum seeker, when she “used to be a person”. Vicky mentioned the impact on the actors:

It’s very difficult for the women sat there in the spotlight, feeling very emotional, and the thing in Liverpool you know, I thought was awful, in terms of people getting so upset, but you know- and they got upset but they didn’t mind it, you know, they didn’t seem to mind that they got upset (Vicky, interview).

When we evaluated the day it did seem that the experience, although difficult, had been powerful in a good way. Lydia’s assessment was “In Liverpool we had a smaller place, but even though it is a smaller audience, the intimacy was there and the impact really went”. Florence said it had been very striking for her that “in Liverpool people shared our emotional hurt because they didn’t realise our difficulties”. What had occurred had, I would argue, avoided being “suffering as spectacle” (Salverson, 2001:123) because the women were freely positioning themselves as indignant survivors of British inhospitality.

Summary

This chapter has comprehensively summarised the main ‘public sphere’ activity of Phase 2., looking at the political and psycho-social impacts and achievements of the theatre work. The final empirical chapter looks in depth at the mutual support function of the all-women Arise and Shine group.

Chapter 7. Women-only working

Refugee Council research in 2005 listed the main problems faced by women seeking protection in the UK as a consequence of asylum policy as: poverty and destitution; dispersal breaking up social networks; inadequate accommodation; health issues; maternity issues; detention and problems accessing information (Dumper, 2005: 11-13). The barriers to integration for refugee women documented by Refugee Action at its 2006 women's conference concerned:

- childcare
- standard of living
- lack of knowledge about the systems in place and opportunities
- isolation
- communication
- lack of confidence
- managing a home, work and other commitments
- transferring skills
- non-addressed psychological issues
- living with hostility
- lack of support from other refugee men and women
- ongoing process (status, HO paperwork, housing issues/benefits/ education etc.) (O'Neill, 2003: 213)

Both lists echo the findings of the first Arise and Shine gathering (p.251) and the group's suggested campaign targets for Phase 2. (p.81). My interviews with the participants developed similar themes.

Some of the women were living on vouchers at the time of the interviews and others were destitute and dependent on charity for food and accommodation. Sofia had been temporarily housed by the Boaz Trust with men who gave her no privacy or quiet. Rut's one room flat had had water running down the walls: "wet and smelly... even heater can't help on that damp". When forced to rehouse her after the building was shown to be structurally unsafe, the owner – a cowboy private landlord subcontracted by NASS - had tried to bully Rut into taking a top floor flat in a five storey block with no lift:

You are like nothing to them, the way how they speak... I say 'Please don't shout to me, I'm not signing for this flat because I can't with the baby.' He say 'NO! You have to TAKE IT! Because living free, otherwise I'm going to put you on the street.' I say 'Please put me, better than this flat. I will choose to be homeless'. Too difficult (Rut, interview).

Language was not a major barrier for most of those in the Arise and Shine group, but they were aware of the double disadvantages facing those with limited English. Rut had managed to get Refugee Action to intervene in her housing situation, but the very next day saw a pregnant woman being made to sign for the same property:

She can't speak English, even she can't speak my language, just I know little Arabic, so I say 'Please don't sign, don't sign'. He say 'What you are talking to her?' I say 'I am explain to her don't sign', he say 'Why you say like this? If she don't sign she gonna be homeless!' She scared, she say she take it because her date of due is past. I say 'Ok, you're going upstairs, how can you come down?' She'll be a prisoner in her own house... they was have big problems to take her to hospital, the ambulance people (Rut, interview).

Several of the group had endured periods of detention, and Naila had narrowly missed deportation by physically clinging to the barrier and to her children, although they got her husband onto the plane and she did not see him for two years (he fled to a third country), until she had won the family's asylum case. Lydia's two spells in detention triggered flashbacks to her imprisonment and torture in Cameroon, and the health problems caused to Sofia and her husband were covered on p.128. Naila looked back on being an asylum seeker as a time "when I got too much problem, immigration problem, Home Office problem, it's like one kind of mental stress and depression I got." She had to fight to motivate herself to go to WAST meetings: "I refused to go anywhere, my mind one time saying go, one time saying stop". For Lydia one of the most dehumanising aspects of the asylum system was being made to feel like a criminal at the reporting centre and referred to by number rather than name. She used the play to try to show what happens behind closed doors. UKBA refusal letters could send women into a state of panic or despair, and hearing news of what was happening to friends could have a similar debilitating effect. Tendayi talked of the long term impact of her story being persistently disbelieved: "When the Home Office says 'You are lying', next week 'You are lying', you end up believing 'Ah sure, I'm a liar'". Lorraine Pannett argues that "Possibilities for human flourishing are diminished by fear of being returned. They are diminished also when people are positioned, 'defined from the outside', as people who cannot be believed" (2011: 195).

Extended periods of enforced worklessness lead to apathy and loss of purpose for those who feel defined by their occupation and have a strong work ethic, like Maria:

Why I'm so bothered now and I keep telling people that why you see me depressed, now, is because I don't have job... Because I believe I'm wasting away, I've got a lot in me to give... that is number one thing that is affecting me. I hate- in the morning I open the window, I don't have something to do, it demoralizes me a lot. That is what is killing me (Maria, interview).

Rut also talked of feeling like a "patient... staying at home, no work, alone, with this small money... If you work you can get more money and for your mind also it's nice... help for other people and you help you for yourself too." The same is true of education. She was very happy when she received a place on an intensive English course, but after two weeks the college crèche staff told her she was not entitled to free childcare:

If we are *allowed* to go to school, we have to get childcare also. It really makes you bad you can't go to school, you can't do anything with your life... I was really crying... I have to leave that and I leave it. It's sad, it's a shame (Rut, interview).

Lack of recognition of qualifications and experience means that refugees, once allowed to work, often find themselves greatly overqualified for the jobs they can access. This can also have a damaging effect on morale. Discouraged from trying to resume her career as a teacher, Tendayi took up housekeeping and cleaning hotels. "Although I was doing that job I would cry *every* day, to say 'Look at me, a professional. If someone, by accident, could come and see what I am doing!' It was really humiliating, although I was *doing* it" (Tendayi, interview). Many decide that their sacrifice is for their children, and hope to see them achieve what they wanted for themselves. Many difficulties are not exclusive to asylum seekers and refugees, but their situation can compound them. Racism was a universal experience. One family living in a predominantly white area were ostracised by other parents at school and any attempt to make conversation rebuffed. At a neighbour's barbeque, an Arise and Shine member was told by a fellow guest that Africans were ruining the neighbourhood and should leave.

This chapter explores how being part of a women-only action group provided resources for coping with and recovering from these conditions of existence.

Arise and Shine as group for mutual support

You come to a meeting, you meet with people that are going through different situations. You are also going through your situation but before you meet people you think you are hopeless because there is no way out. And then I come here and I meet with people, I've met with this group I think- when did I first meet Carolina? 2007⁴⁶ I think. From that time, I think little steps, that sometimes you don't realise something has happened in your life, but there's an impact. And a situation comes, you just face it and you challenge it, sometimes without even thinking what you are doing, and then when you are sitting down: 'Oh, I did that! Wow! This is, you see, good!' And you see yourself rising to a level all the time, that's how I'm looking at myself. It's been very good for me, I've learned a lot of things from all the women (Elinah, Arise and Shine meeting).

Chenai spoke after Elinah, also to highlight the shared learning within the group "I really appreciate women, the small things that we think we are learning from each other. It might not be marketable, just those qualities that you give me as a group, they are really important for my life." For Fiona, Arise and Shine had been a place to meet role models - women she felt were facing greater struggles than her, yet stayed strong in the face of adversity:

Once I see somebody strong[er], than me, I ask myself, within myself, how come she can do it? It means that I can as well, if I try. So that's one of the things that I picked up from GAP Unit, from the women in Manchester. I always ask questions, and... sometimes if I listen someone who's got more problems than I do, it lifts me more, because it means that 'Hey, you're moaning here, that you're not, the worst'. So, someone may talk something which is far worse from what is my situation. So I stop moaning there and then. 'Since he's got worse than me, how come she's not moaning about it? And why am I constantly moaning?' So I begin asking myself questions, like a 'self-talk', until I'm out of it (Fiona, interview).

Susan was helped with her fear that she could be detained at any time - speaking when Sofia had just been released from detention and was back with the group as resolute as ever, she said:

The moment I have the problem of my friend Sofia, it will make me to be strong with mine as well, because you come out somewhere and I can compare: 'Ah, if Sofia can say that she go through this, go through this pain, I must go through it' (Susan, Arise and Shine meeting).

She articulated the benefits of having such a group around you, and the power of words:

Because staying at home, being alone, nobody can push me, otherwise I will just sit, be seated, all my mind, all my intelligence, like me, am I possible? But through mixing in

⁴⁶

Attending a Training the Trainer course which Carolina was running.

the groups as we are doing, that mixing and sharing some words, those words are the ones who push me, which will push me, then and having that confidence: 'No, if Sofia did go through it, Lydia managed it, if she's- she was explaining to me- so, I can as well!' That sharing with me, gives me the extent of pushing myself as well (Susan, Arise and Shine meeting).

Sometimes what the women gave each other was more than encouragement – Fiona for example received vital legal information from Sofia which led to her gaining Leave to Remain within three months, after a wait of six years:

She said that I can give in a fresh claim... Sofia was like 'What have you been doing all along? If I were you I would have gone for a fresh claim when I've just given birth to your son!' And I was like 'Oh my God! I was sitting on my case!' Because I wasn't informed! Sofia was so helpful, she said 'These circumstances changed long time ago! What have you been doing?!' (Fiona, interview).

Telling stories

Sutherland and Cheng, who worked with women asylum seekers in Canada, felt that "the opportunity to share and explore their personal narratives within a group setting was an experience that participants found very meaningful, in that it generated deeper insight and was empowering (2009: 296) and that "The discovery of similarities in experiences and interpretations made women feel better about their own experiences (as they learned that they were not alone)" (2009: 298). As Oakley found in interviewing women for her 1981 study, there were "many references to the 'therapeutic effect' of talking: 'getting it out of your system'" (1981: 50). Both Naila and Sofia mentioned in interviews the importance of telling your experiences to others in the same situation, so that they know they are not alone, and of encouraging others to share their stories because "if you not going to talk about it then that will affect your life... And once it is out, then you will know how to handle painful situations". According to Faris:

The process of normalising, reframing and validation of experience appears to have the effect of offering protection against negative attributions of self and experience as a woman and a refugee... Acceptance by other women emerges in the data as a key factor in redefinition of self, resulting in increased self confidence and self esteem (2006: 69).

Sofia explained that wherever she goes she comes across asylum seekers who are "down there" and she makes sure to speak to them, so that they can take hope from her strength:

I look at that person and I listen to the person's story and the person cry and cry, and then, I say to the person 'You know what? You are not alone, let me tell you about my

life'... And then they were like shocked, because sometimes people say 'Are you an asylum seeker? Are you sure you're an asylum seeker?' They will say it, 'Do you have you papers then?' I say 'I'm an asylum seeker like you!' (Sofia, interview).

Sofia is aware that she inspires other women and sees it as part of her mission in life. Influenced by both therapeutic and religious discourses, she argues that it is through speaking about problems that solutions are found. She also thinks that people must choose to believe in themselves and to disregard negative influences - while accepting that this is hard if people have been shaped by "negativity that has been put over them as children" (Sofia, Arise and Shine meeting). Her credo is that empowerment comes from "what you believe as an individual and what you choose in life... you first have to believe in yourself as an individual". The inner strength she summons is backed by her faith. She described the effect on one woman of meeting other asylum seekers who were holding onto their pride, as signalled by the care they took with their appearance:

One lady was telling me... 'the way you dress I always look at you, and think, I wonder what kind of work this lady do?' and then when I opened mouth to tell her I'm an asylum seeker... the woman said 'My goodness!' Even she didn't want to dress herself beautiful, she was just thinking she's a rubbish, 'because this is how they treat me, as a rubbish'... All the other women in WAST, she get empowerment from us, and today if you see that lady, she is beautiful! And then if I say 'You are beautiful', then she tell me, she hug me, she say 'Thanks to you! Because if you didn't empower me, I wouldn't feel like a woman'. So now they feel they are a woman because of empowerment (Sofia, interview).

Several times I had seen Naila comfort another woman by relating experiences of her own which were similar. During an Arise and Shine meeting she explained that this was why she had rung Sofia when she was in Yarl's Wood IRC:

I didn't know if she doesn't know about my story, so I speak only- it's not I speaking I feel relaxed, not for this, I wanted to make her aware, give some experience that she will think positive: 'Oh Naila, is this true? And she is here' [she wasn't deported], so maybe this one is like her first trip and after she'll keep like her hope for this and didn't despair (Naila, Arise and Shine meeting).

Another time, on the way back from performing the WAST play in London, one of the actors received the news that her cousin had been killed in a road accident, and Naila came up the bus to tell her that she knew what she was going through because of a car accident in Bangladesh in which several members of her family had died. However, during an Arise and Shine meeting she told a story, for comic effect and at her own expense, which acts as a reminder that groups are made up of individuals and not all individuals are alike, need

the same things or cope with things the same way. Every Friday for several years Naila said she had travelled into town – to attend the WAST drop-in - on the same bus as a woman with whom she was on first name terms. On each occasion she “tried to influence her to come WAST, to become member”; every week “talking like her everything positive, don't like stay in home, come here, talk with people, make use, like this.” Then one day the woman announced the good news that she now had Leave to Remain. However, when Naila saw her at an event queuing for her bus fare, and reminded her that as a refugee she was not entitled to do so, the woman confessed that she was still an asylum seeker. Naila was incredulous, wanting to know why she had said otherwise. “And she told me ‘Naila you are not my good friend. Because you always make me scared. When I meet you... I couldn't sleep, I couldn't sleep because you give me some stress.’ The woman believed (naïvely, according to Naila), that since she had been in the country for eight years she would eventually automatically have her asylum claim accepted, and had not wanted to hear information to the contrary. The group erupted in laughter at this story, which showed that as a peer you can come across as too empowered, can seem to have too much knowledge, and inadvertently add to another's burden of anxiety. I would argue that in sharing the story, Naila introduced a new level of criticality to our understanding of empowerment.

Organisational ethos

The above examples describe mutual support and learning among the Arise and Shine group, fostered by “a specific environment in which they felt safe, could interact with others in the same boat, experience commonality, and gain strength and validation from being listened to and heard and hearing similar stories from others” (Parsons, 2001:169). Praxis, a refugee organisation based in London, considers among its core values a solidarity based on “qualities of gentleness, openness, commitment to the other” and “recognition of the complexity of diversity” (Lukes et al, 2009: 30). This is a good description of GAP Unit's organisational and interpersonal practices, which were aligned to give “attention to the assets and resources embodied by all individuals, particularly in expression and manifestation of resilience, wisdom and knowledge”, as well as a belief in the “capacity of individuals to overcome hurtful life events” (Chang-Muy & Congress, 2009: 91). Meetings started with a welcoming exercise to allow everyone to say something about how things were going for them:

Maybe you just say what was nice in the past weeks or, or what's also there. For me, it cheers you up...It makes you forget about even if you have some other drawbacks,

you forget about them but you focus on the nice things that happened to you, and also we are all friendly and together with each one (Lydia, interview).

“What's also there” refers to difficult experiences: periods of detention and threatened deportation, bereavement, health problems or the hardship of eviction and destitution, to which others would respond with prayers, affirmation, expressions of solidarity and stories of their own to boost hope and resilience. Carolina would prepare popular education games, even when the main business of meetings related to theatre or Educate! work. The aim was to create a space in which women could air their fears, anger, concerns, anxieties and hopes and reflect, cry or laugh together in a warm, welcoming atmosphere. All of the simple, affirmatory exercises, designed to boost ‘self-esteem’ or reinforce commonalities and bonds among the group, were tools Carolina had developed while living and working among women in a squatter settlement in Venezuela. Reporting on participatory action research conducted with refugees, Praxis staff acknowledged that certain aspects had not gone well because of “a reluctance to engage in more creative approaches” (2009: 25) among its facilitators. “Praxis needs to have a broader pool of creative animators” (2009: 25), they concluded (with a note adding that this had now been addressed). It may be that there are many participatory practitioners working in the refugee and asylum sector, with access to a range of activities and tools, but the Red Cross, South Manchester Law Centre (SMLC), Refugee Action and other refugee projects in both Manchester and London have invited GAP Unit to conduct simple workshops or design group learning processes with their women’s groups since Phase 1. of Arise and Shine. Having these techniques and skills in-house would enhance the work of core teams within organisations, and indeed members of local Refugee Action and Red Cross teams have since attended Training the Trainer courses run by Carolina. Another important aspect of GAP Unit practice was the relative informality - some meetings were held in our own homes, for example, and there was no sense of a provider-client relationship. This might be what Lena Dominelli means when she lists “redefining professionalism” (1995:142) as among the goals of empowering community work with women. Hearing women introduce themselves at external events and meetings as being from the GAP Unit or as “being GAP”, Carolina suggested a Levinasian quality of hospitality might be said to be at work, making people feel at ease to step in, inhabit the organisation and make it their own.

Multi-cultural groups

During a post-performance Q&A session, the cast of *How I Became an Asylum Seeker* were asked why no men were involved in their group. The answer came back that most

refugee organisations are dominated by men, and tend to run along ethnic or national lines, whereas, “We wanted to be on our own as asylum seekers, not by nationality.” Communities of expatriates can be important for finding an ‘identity’ in the new society whilst holding onto a sense of connection to the homeland (Williams, 2006: 869).

They help preserve culture and values and where they are large and established allow people to continue with many aspects of their previous ‘way of life’. Rut, an Arise and Shine group member, moved back to Birmingham after she received Leave to Remain, in order to rejoin and immerse herself in the bigger Ethiopian community she had been part of before ‘dispersal’ to Manchester. A ZIWO member regretted that two years had passed before she discovered that there was an expatriate community in Manchester and a Zimbabwean church. Tendayi continually invested energy in connecting Zimbabwean women and creating social spaces and initiatives for them to come together. As well as ZIWO (with others), she had set up a Saturday club for Zimbabwean girls and a mother-in-law’s group with the specific purpose of dialogical deliberation. It was established so that mothers of a similar generation could discuss how best to support their married children (especially those in cross-cultural marriages) in light of the new influences and pressures on them and their own allegiance to different traditions and values. However, such communities are not necessarily only and always benign. Tendayi mentioned ‘cliques’ within Zimbabwean churches whose intimations of social superiority had chipped away at her optimism and resolve:

Killing your confidence... killing your ability. Imagine spending two years with those people? You'll be dead, but you'll be still walking! (Tendayi, research feedback meeting)

What had discouraged her in particular was fellow Zimbabweans insisting she would never make it as a teacher in the UK, perhaps drawing on their own experience. In Williams’ view, transnational networks “tend to be conservative and may reflect attempts to rebuild culture and a sense of ‘place’ in exile” (2006: 873). This is a generalisation, but it nevertheless recalls Rut’s experience in Birmingham of feeling undermined as a single mother, because of the stigma this carried in her socially conservative community. Williams also mentions high levels of intensity and of social obligation, which make it “difficult for refugees to refuse the requests of members of these networks even when the requests are hard to fulfill” (2006: 873). This also chimes with what I heard about Rut’s relationship with her community.

Diaspora groups can offer the comfort and ease of a shared mother-tongue, which for some provides respite from communication struggles in other contexts. But again, blanket statements are unhelpful. When asked if she ever sought out fellow Ugandans or speakers of Luganda, her native language, Fiona indicated that this had not been a priority for her. She had married a Malian man and had no Ugandan friends in Preston. In her view, a shared nationality (or even, I think the implication is, a shared tribal background) is no guarantee of commonality beyond the superficial:

Yes, I always wish to meet people who speak the same language as me. But still, because my language is the one dominating Uganda, those people will be coming from different tribes. By all means they'll have different culture and different food and everything. Still talking a bit of my language, they would not be the same as me, because Uganda's a big country. You may find someone from England and Ireland, they behave very differently, although they're in the United Kingdom. (Fiona, interview).

Some asylum seekers and refugees need or want to actively avoid people of the same national background. They have “reason to reject their group and are either exiled or exile themselves from these resources” (Cambridge & Williams, 2004: 100). Similarly, many migrants from and within Western countries choose to avoid falling into a ‘ghetto’ of fellow countrypeople when they move abroad. According to Sofia, women would sometimes arrive at the WAST drop-in, notice or overhear women from their countries and head straight for the exit. Her analysis was that they were worried they would face the same social stigma that had caused them to leave home, or fear coming face to face with people from the other side of a political divide or conflict. Lydia spoke of keeping a distance from fellow Cameroonians until she knew whether they were pro- or anti-Government, while Helena, a RMU member, was terrified of meeting new Rwandans in case they turned out to be Hutus. She was also wary of local Tutsi networks because they tended to encourage her to ‘move on’ from the events of her childhood, which she did not feel ready to do. A WAST member I interviewed for the organisation’s book of stories, who fled Pakistan with her husband after a taboo-breaking marriage, was initially housed in a largely Pakistani area of Manchester, which made the couple feel insufficiently anonymous. With reason, it turned out, because their local newsagent, seeing their picture in the paper, declared his intention to do his bit for the honour code and instruct contacts to paste up details of their whereabouts on lamp posts in their home city.

Support groups and voluntary sector or community-led services for women asylum seekers – in the Manchester area there are at least six – tend to have an international membership.

From their first days in the UK, those who attend start to meet women from different countries and cultures. It can be important, in addition to any diaspora connections, to have another type of network based on new relationships made during the asylum process, what Granovetter (1973: 1360) called a network of ‘weak ties’ which can be useful for remaking life in the new place. As it is not easy always to meet British people, and since the NASS system actively inhibits the integration of asylum seekers, contacts with fellow asylum seekers are often invaluable. Carla De Tona and Ronit Lentin confirm “migrant women’s tendency to form networks separately from men” (2011: 490). They quote the director of such a network in Ireland as saying that women “‘need their own space’, because men are empowered by patriarchal rules and their biases can undermine the work women do” (2011: 490). The respondent also ventured that:

because ethnicity-based groups are often ‘organised by men’, they are unable to address women’s issues. Moreover, ‘women are interested to learn or to get ideas about different cultures, and how a woman from another country thinks, and what kind of issues are there’ (2011: 492).

According to Ronit and Lentin, the network’s international nature “allows the group to build trust and confidentiality” (2011, 492), because, as a member put it:

in the same community everybody knows everybody, if somebody has a problem and talks about it, everybody knows about it. But when she talks about it with me, like me from another country, or because I am a member of an organisation.... she feels more relaxed and she is guaranteed that nobody will know about her (2011, 293)

Forming these intercultural bonds can also be an “act of undoing the institutionalised ties that bind” (De Tona & Lentin, 2010: 491) in the case of repressive expectations in traditional or religious practices and norms. When Faris interviewed a small group of women refugees and asylum seekers about therapeutic group work she had conducted, they, too:

reported that they valued the multi-cultural nature of the group and that diversity and cultural exchange in this sense brought about an experience of enrichment that engendered inspiration, learning and renewal (2008: 70).

Since GAP Unit began working with women asylum seekers and refugees, we have heard regular testimonies from women as to the value of meeting other female migrants enduring similar struggles and positioned in a similar way by the new society. When Refugee Action invited GAP Unit to speak about Arise and Shine to a group of Iraqi and Palestinian

refugees who had just arrived through the UN Gateway programme, the prospect of a multi-cultural women's gathering was met with more obvious enthusiasm than any other part of the presentation. A young Iraqi mentioned that she and her friends were encouraged by the visible presence of other minority women in their new neighbourhood, but were unsure how they might approach and get to know them. Women from another Refugee Action Gateway group, Bhutanese families who had come via camps in Nepal, also talked about their pleasure at meeting African women for the first time at the second Arise and Shine gathering. Religious difference never seemed to be considered a barrier to mixing and meeting. GAP Unit is known to focus on women's groups, which might circumscribe conversations to an extent, but I have not so far heard articulated an equivalent desire by women to associate specifically with refugee/asylum seeker men from different backgrounds. Sofia told me "I was just counting two weeks ago all the nationalities that we have and I found out that we have 29 nationalities in WAST". On another occasion a WAST member proudly mentioned that 64 languages were spoken among them. Others talked of their enthusiasm for World Café (multicultural food) events, and opportunities, such as refugee festivals, for showcasing the art, dance and music of their places of origin for the benefit of the British public and, just as importantly, for fellow refugees. Lydia said she had enjoyed the first Arise and Shine gathering:

because it brought women from differen- different nationalities, and also there was a map there, where you have to come and locate where you come from, you have to- I had to go and strain to see where Cameroon is, and this to show that Cameroon was present that day. It was so nice. And they had also a variety of food from different, different countries... I like it very much, because we came together like women. So you know when you are together you are very strong, so we became so strong. And also all the women singing and making other- so many things happened that day, it was so interesting (Lydia, interview).

As part of a discussion exercise, I asked the group '*What has it meant to you to meet women from all over the world since being in the UK? Has it influenced the way you think about being a woman?*' The question was prompted by participants' suggestions to this effect. The answers confirmed that they appreciated opportunities to share ideas with people from a diversity of cultures, which had "improved our knowledge and help us to be proud to be women" or shown them that "women power is more challenging and more power and few restrictions". One replied that "It is empowering to know that women all over the world go through similar issues. It gives me strength and courage". After the (written) points above were read out, Tendayi expanded on the theme:

What was really striking for me is that women have got universal challenges, when it comes to child caring, looking after the family, and looking after the husbands. We face almost similar problems. But even in the midst of all that, we are so determined, we are very strong as a wind (Tendayi, research feedback meeting).

Lydia agreed:

Yes, and wherever women are, they are just discussing their problems...they just come up with solutions for one another - that's the good thing about it (Lydia, research feedback meeting).

Fiona said something similar during her interview:

We have the *same* things which we are talking about, same problems. Yeah? We are from different countries and different backgrounds. But honestly, from an Indian lady to an African lady, we found the same answers. We are women with children and partners, who found the same problems that we are experiencing, the *same*. Yeah? (Fiona, interview).

Tendayi had reflected on the topic when we evaluated the play. Everyone selected a photo which for them captured something important about the project, and hers pictured Khumbalani, one of the WAST actors, talking to a workshop participant:



I've chosen these two women. It reminds me that whenever women meet they're most likely to be sharing about issues which affect them. So it seems to me these two women are sharing issues of life. Maybe they are talking about their families, or maybe about the inequalities among women. Maybe they asked each other something like: 'Are you working?' and someone said 'Oh no, I don't', and from that statement they now think 'Oh, I am not alone'. But

whatever is going on, women are across the universe. As long as you are both women you have one thing in common (Tendayi, play evaluation).

Although the women depicted have different positionalities – one White and British; one Black and stateless – Tendayi suggests that they share the important, common bond of gender. Lydia chose a picture showing the cast of the play joining hands in the final scene, just before they take a bow:



I chose this one because it's Women from Africa, Pakistan, Sri Lanka - in short women from all different nationalities. Why I chose it is because whatever is going on in the world today – no matter where you come from, women

from any part of the world – sometimes women have a very important role to play as far as change is concerned. Even like they are talking about war in Iran - if women see that- women say ‘My husband is a soldier but he won’t go to that war, I don’t want him to’, maybe if the fighters say ‘No, I don’t want to’, then maybe change will come. So that’s why women from different nationalities come together in the play and other things - like now we are here together. Maybe we don’t see a change now but it will come one day (Lydia, play evaluation session).

Here Lydia suggests that the collective power of women has a moral authority which can have far-reaching influence. This conceptualisation goes beyond finding common strategies for coping with oppression to drawing together solutions and alternative agendas. In her interview, she mentioned a refugee women’s event at a local museum, during which women from all over the world:

realised there was some common thing that was really interesting: we all have something to do with the calabash [a kind of gourd, which was on display]. So you see... you can have people you don’t know but maybe they’re from your country. And even if people they don’t know, but you can still share something in common with them. That will bring peace and harmony in the society, knowing other- even if this person is not from my country but we share something in common with her (Lydia, interview).

The Arise and Shine women were of different ages, nationalities and religions, had different levels of education and different immigration status, yet these examples show a profound sense of sisterhood on an ideational level - a cosmopolitanism which values specifics of cultural identity but claims a universalist vision. Global connections are read optimistically as potentiators of harmony. This disposition accords with Nira Yuval-Davis’ notion of a ‘transversal politics’ based on “dialogues that recognize women’s situated differences and strive to find or forge common values from divergent positions... crossing borders of ethnicity, nationality, positionality and place” (Archer, 2004).

Women only

All of the interview participants thought it essential that Arise and Shine was a group for women. The non-negotiability of this was brought home clearly by Fiona’s passing reference to a conversation she had had with a gay man who had been accepted into RMU, the other women's group she attended:

He wanted to be rescued from deportation and he thought that the group I go to in Manchester would help him. I told him, 'You know what? It would, but it's just for women. I don't think they will help' (Fiona, interview).

When the group was asked whether they thought a similar project for men, led by men, would be a good idea, it caused the following short-lived misunderstanding:

- Carolina:** Maria, you wanted to say something?
Maria: Yes, for me particularly, I'm very sorry to say, I wouldn't want Arise and Shine to diversify. I'm not saying it's not going to be a good idea, I want to, but for now we can bring our- that's- that part of ourselves, we can't-
Hannah: [explanation that it was a question in the abstract, not in reference to our group]
Maria: Oh, then we are safe here!

Relief was audible in Maria's voice as she was reassured that Arise and Shine would remain women-only.

Gender is considered one of the three categories or 'social ontologies' (along with race and class) which have the most universal effects and patterns of discrimination attached to them. In most societies, male: female remains a major axis of differentiation, a power and value-laden binary opposition. The experience of female asylum seekers/refugees is consequently different in specific ways from that of male asylum seekers/refugees. The reasons encompass prevailing societal and familial gender roles and relations before coming to the UK; differently gendered reasons for seeking asylum; the effects of transposition to British society, with its different set of gender norms; and the often damagingly gender-neutral nature of practices within the immigration system. Despite their shared predicament as asylum seekers and refugees, for reasons I will now explore in more detail, the presence of men would have presented a serious "barrier to interaction" (Hudson et al, 2007: 25).

There are things when we are together like women, we can easily share them. But when it becomes mixed, we will start- some women will not be able. Especially like women who are coming from different backgrounds. But if you see that GAP Unit is women-only, there will be that openness, there will be- people will feel free, maybe to air out their mind and so on, knowing that we are all women (Lydia, interview).

Because women, we still lag behind... women of my background wouldn't have really much say, especially us who were married or those who were having partners, so sometimes you don't want to take it to your partner straight, you want to bring in other women first, to see whether there is any problem you are experiencing is the same as they have. So I found it that it's the same everywhere, so I- I found it very good in that

there were no men there, because maybe they will think of their own argument... men will always want to argue it out on their way. So with us women only, we had to know 'What are we suffering, how can we bring ourselves up?' Yeah, and I found it very, very good. I wanted it just to be like that! [laughs] I didn't want to meet men there, I never, no, no, no, no! Because maybe men will take it like I'm talking bad about my partner. But since they are women, I found it that some of the problems I experience, they express the same, especially those who have partners (Fiona, interview).

It is important [that Arise and Shine is women-only] because you have worked with women from different, er backgrounds. There are some issues you need to discuss as women only. Which, if men are there you will not be able to discuss them. Because, some issues will be dealing with power, because the society is er, if I might use this word, patriarchal, so even in that set-up, still, women have a place. So it is very important that it is a women-focussed only (Tendayi, interview).

Because um, being women-only, we tend to appreciate ourselves. We tend to come out of our shell, we're not like pretending, we're not like 'Oh! I don't want to say something', you are not embarrassed, you can say everything, you can share your tears, you can laugh together. Yeah. So, which is quite good about it being women only. You tend to bring out the best out of you, you are not like 'Oh, I don't want them to think that I am this or I'm that' (Maria, interview).

Fiona indicates that as a group of women it is possible to discuss topics which could not be raised with men present, especially if the men were their partners. Issues to do with relationships with men did not come up regularly in the meetings, but may have been discussed informally during breaks and it was probably the feeling that they *could* mention these topics without being judged by or insulting men that was important to her. She describes wanting to find out what other women think about things, to develop her own opinions in order to better hold her own with her partner when he tries to "argue it out in his own way". Since several said they came from cultures in which women are expected to defer to their husbands, there is a desire to confer and share tactics for resisting control.

Not all of the women in the group experienced these relationship dynamics to the same extent, but all were conscious of the situation of 'women in general'. In her own marriage there was a lot of equality, yet Lydia stated that "some women" cannot talk easily in front of men, "especially...women who are coming from different backgrounds". Both she and Sofia would often answer interview questions on behalf of WAST women in general, reflecting a collective orientation and automatic concern for the many women they come into contact with through the organisation. They were conscious that some women positioned them as role models, while their own role models, as we discovered through a group exercise, were chosen for their selflessness and dedication to others (this was true of most of the group).

In front of men, according to these extracts, women might feel unable to fully inhabit and appreciate themselves, and be inhibited in their emotional expression – something commonly reported in studies (though not something I believe I have experienced personally). There would always be things to keep back, to avoid embarrassment or negative judgment. Fiona is concerned that she could not discuss her relationship in front of other men because they might “take it like I’m talking bad about my partner”, suggesting that men, in her experience or her assumption, band together and assume a collective monitoring role in defence of their position of power, judging standards of behaviour and deference.

When the audience member mentioned previously asked about the absence of men from the WAST play, Mavis also volunteered an answer. She explained that men do ask to join their groups, but they tell them to follow their example and set one up of their own: “We did it and so can you, we can help you”. A more jokey answer came from another of the cast: “The boys, they will just say ‘I love you’ and want to make more and more babies!”, to which someone added, “Also us girls, a lot of us have our boys at home”. This has two possible meanings, perhaps simultaneously. One, that the interests and well-being of men – their own husbands and sons – are deeply and inextricably linked to their own. Second, that living with menfolk necessitates having their own groups to escape to.

Gender-related pressures on women asylum seekers and refugees

Without exception, the Arise and Shine women were from countries where faith plays a strong role in social (and therefore, for a majority, personal life) and where it is often taken for granted that extended family and local community or tribe are at the heart of social structure. A degree of formality characterises the ‘habitus’ of most of the women, which would have been more recognisable in the UK before the social revolutions of the 1960s. Automatic respect for elders, attention to correct forms of address and other aspects of social etiquette which cannot be taken for granted in an inner city British context lubricate social contact between migrants from diverse backgrounds. It is important not to generalise and simplify, but the women themselves describe gender relations in their previous countries as ‘traditional’ or ‘patriarchal’. This includes Malawi (where Mavis is from), which is superficially matrilineal.

As one would expect to find in any group of UK-born women, some of the Arise and Shine members who had partners were responsible for all or most of the domestic work and childcare at home, in addition to any jobs, education, training or voluntary commitments. One participant found it amusing that I had known her for two years before realising she had a husband living with her, although his absence from her tales of family life was largely explained by his own limited existence, working long, late shifts to support the family. However, she was making sure to train her sons well in domestic chores and in the kitchen, keenly aware that gender roles “depend on the era in which you grow up”.

More often than not the women had responsibility for upholding values and maintaining relationships; for holding family together and reweaving the fabric of community. When her husband’s mother died in Zimbabwe, Tendayi in Manchester was expected to keep an open house in Manchester for several months, feeding and attending to streams of friends and acquaintances who came to pay their respects – a duty which was visibly exhausting. In an email following the death of another member of the Zimbabwean community, she mentioned that:

as usual I had the task of co-ordinating the Zim Comm and hosting friends and relatives from as far as Sheffield, London and Greater Mcr. Organising buying of food, cooking and serving and singing, leading with prayers and dances. I have worked 24hrs yesterday not even a blink. I have just woke up a while ago, so that I can make a few calls before I go back (Tendayi, by email).

Three of the Arise and Shine women were single mothers of pre-school children, experiencing all the usual stresses that face lone parents living in poverty, but with the added challenge of not being able to access childcare services and being adrift without family support in a unfamiliar culture. Those with school age children had concerns about the quality of their education and the impact of racism, social stigma and of having to navigate between different cultures, always trying to foresee and forestall problems before they arose.

None of the Arise and Shine women identified as lesbian or bisexual, but several were aware of the struggles faced by those they knew through WAST and LISG who had claimed asylum on grounds of sexuality. In 2012, Women for Refugee Women published a report called ‘Refused’, based on research carried out with their members by a number of women’s asylum support groups, including WAST Manchester. Of the 72 women interviewed across these groups (of whom 67 had been refused asylum), 66 per cent had

suffered some kind of gender-related persecution, 48 per cent had experienced rape and 16 per cent had been subjected to sexual violence while destitute (Dorling et al, 2012: 5). Inevitably, the Arise and Shine process involved women who had been affected by these issues. Childbirth and pre- and post- natal requirements - negotiating the British system – are also part of the gendered experience of migration. Those who become pregnant usually lack the extended family environments which would often have supported them ‘back home’. In Fiona’s experience, women regularly encounter prejudice within UK maternity services, where the rights of asylum seekers are not well understood and opinions can be influenced by myths that migrant women either have too many children or get pregnant deliberately to help them to stay in the country (Lentin & McVeigh, 2006: 101).

Sometimes when we call the NHS, people, when once they listen our accent, they hang on [put them on hold]. But when someone’s speaking the same accent as they do, they listen quicker...I knew that my baby was coming, but someone was asking me whether the waters have broken, and I told her ‘Look here, this is not my first child, I know the baby is coming’, but she couldn’t believe me until Louise rang the ambulance and then the ambulance came... When I was asked my immigration status it was really hard... the midwife was looking at me like she doesn’t know what is an asylum seeker. The manager from RMU had to explain what is my status and it was very, really hard for me to get out of the hospital (Fiona, interview).

When women from cultures which limit their activities outside the home arrive with their male partners, their sociality can be quite restricted, especially if they are not surrounded by a community in exile which shares their language and customs. I met women through WAST, but not in the Arise and Shine group, who had been confined largely to the domestic sphere, either following cultural norms, because of fear and lack of knowledge of where to go or because their partner required it to be that way. De Tona and Lentin heard from migrant women who said they felt trapped as:

child-rearers who give up their lives for the sake of the children due to unaffordable childcare, and unaffordable [third-level] professional education that can enable them to get good jobs to sustain them economically. As a result [they experience] loss of self-worth and self-esteem, and continuous dependency on government assistance or on their male partners (2011: 494).

In the Arise and Shine group, two of those with young children were single mothers, so childcare restrictions represented the greatest trap. A few were subject to a dynamic whereby only if a partner felt she had done her duties by him and the children was she free to engage in her own activities. All who were re-joined by their husbands after a time apart (due to him being abroad or in detention), while glad to be reunited, had started to

experience some level of control on their behaviour and limits on their independence, as their partners attempted to reassert a dominant position in the relationship. As Takhar points out in relation to South Asian women living in Britain, “the state of being empowered, personal and/or collective, is representative of a challenge to male power, dominant ideology and acceptable forms of behaviour” within the more ‘traditional’ communities” (2011: 346). In contrast to the situation described by De Tona and Lentin, the Arise and Shine women acknowledged that women’s transferable skills tend to make it easier for them than for their husbands to find work, or to find work which is better paid. Some men resign themselves to this or adapt easily to managing domestic affairs (as Lydia’s husband Bernard did when she was busy with campaigning and WAST-related activities), but for others, accepting their wives as the main earner comes at considerable cost to their sense of their place in the world, causing difficulties for the whole family. New and different problems are always arising:

Because what I’ve realised since coming over here is, er, back home our husbands were the breadwinners, but now the situation is er turned around, over here women are the breadwinners. Because, er most of the Zimbabwean women are the ones who came here first, then their husbands followed, so it’s like a power exchange thing (Tendayi, interview).

In many Zimbabwean families of Tendayi’s acquaintance, men had been reunited with their wives only after being granted asylum or a gaining work permits. The men then needed to grab any job they could find, which usually meant low paid, low status employment, while the women, who had established networks and developed more of an overview of the possibilities, were freer to pursue training and other options to try to rebuild their careers. The result, in relationships where men had previously been the higher earners, could be delicate to negotiate, she suggested:

So, in itself, simultaneously there is what? Power. Even if you don’t say it, power, now, (laughs) and so it disturbs the men’s ego, quite a lot. So it is important to have a discussion⁴⁷ to say ‘How do we go about this situation we find ourselves in? And how can we continue to support our husbands? Even now they are doing cleaning jobs, they are still our husbands’ (laughs) (Tendayi, interview).

A study in Australia interviewed over a hundred male and female refugees from Ethiopia, South and North Sudan, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia and Iraq to discover how people’s history

⁴⁷ Having a discussion means getting together with other women in the same situation explicitly to think the issue through and come up with solutions.

prior to seeking asylum and their new social, economic and cultural context influence their perceptions and experiences of domestic violence. The view from both genders was that “cultural change associated with identity loss and loss of status as head of the house for men, and change associated with opportunities for women in employment and a more liberal lifestyle, was causing personal and relationship problems” (2006: 38). A 2006 United Nations report stated that “The strains of moving to a new environment, unemployment, inadequate wages and racism can lead to frustration that finds its outlet in the abuse of female partners” (Alcalá, 2006: 39). When men use their partners, and sometimes children, to maintain a grip on their sense of masculine entitlement and control, it creates another layer of problems for women. Judge writes that “Although there are evidently real issues with relational breakdown in the context of upheaval” there is “a danger of determinism in seeing the alternative masculinities that might arise as problematic (2011: 24), something she attributes to “academic work which tends to see the upsetting of patriarchal norms that often accompanies displacement from more ‘traditional’ cultures to liberal western societies as inevitably producing non-productive, criminal or violent male behaviour” (2010: 24). It is important to remember that “the advantages of maleness are contingent and patriarchal norms do not benefit all men” (Judge 2010: 24) as well as recognising that the changes that arise are sometimes very liberating for the women involved. Elinah and Chenai wanted to point out that they had been unhappy to see men in their communities enduring, in their view, mistreatment and humiliation from wives who were enjoying a new economically and socially powerful positioning.

Groups like Arise and Shine give women a chance to come together share and discuss these gender-related experiences (in addition to opportunities they organise themselves, as Tendayi’s comment above indicates). Coming together as women does not mean taking refuge in sameness in order to avoid change; rather, “the commonality of experience shared by the women in the group experience”, forms, as Faris acknowledges, “a basis for differences to be heard and included in the meaning making processes of the individual women concerned” (Faris, 2008: 30). Through dialogical exchange they incorporate new strategies and perspectives even as they collectively affirm their resolve to resist the erosion of values they hold dear. As in any group, aspects of personal identity are flexible and under construction, and this includes what it means to self-identify and be identified as female. Gender issues were never explicitly foregrounded within Arise and Shine, but the fact that we were all women informed every aspect, from the dynamics and style of

interaction within the group and the experiences people wanted to share to the specific topics which members chose to highlight in campaigning and advocacy.⁴⁸

There is another dimension to what such a group can provide - the rebuilding of social networks and even recreation of a substitute family if, as in the case of several Arise and Shine members, women have left behind children, husbands (if still living) and other relatives. Addressing friends as sisters, aunts, mothers and daughters can be a cultural affectation or part of a formal age/respect-based system of address, but the way Fiona referred to Louise, the founder of RMU support group as “our mother”, seems to exceed this. Arise and Shine members often used family-related terms to describe the group and how it nurtured them:

- What I’ve found personally, GAP has gone an extra mile. And without realising I’ve found that GAP is now part of my family.
- We are here to day from different nationalities, but we are so tied up... like... you are close to your own blood sister.
- I am here today to network with all my feminist sisters, that has become a special part of my family in my heart.
- To meet my family and friends, i.e. people who are always there with me in prayers.
- This is my family where I can share issues freely, listen to others and support them where possible.
- Even by the name of the Arise and Shine, so we rise from the mother, like shining, because of you people.
- It’s really amazing how Arise and Shine has managed to bond us together as one family, you will really feel that we are part of a family and um we support each other and I really appreciate it, I hope that spirit of unity will continue.

A feeling of family is created in exile when you have people around you who you feel you can turn to “during times of need” as Lydia puts it, and who will respond with warmth and familiarity.⁴⁹ The comfort of food offered in hospitality is part of this – it does not matter whether it is the food your own family would have made for you:

⁴⁸ The public sector workshops educated participants as to the gender specific grounds for seeking asylum as well as pointing out aspects of the asylum system which impact particularly hard on women, including lack of access to child care, poor maternity services and vulnerability to sexual exploitation (there are many other examples given in the literature).

⁴⁹ There is a strand of anthropological research addressing ‘fictive kinship’.

Actually during times of need- I want to say thanks... I will use my own example. When I was down there, all of you were there with me. Right now I'm sitting here, I can eat Venezuela food, English food, Malawi food - all houses. Even right now if I want to. To say 'Ok I'm going to Carolina now', she says 'Come this way, come on, there's a house here'. If I call Tendayi, she will say 'Come'. If you have a place, tomorrow I will come (Lydia, Arise and Shine meeting).

As Pannett notes, after Smart et al (1999: 369), "Within the family, thoughtfulness might be expressed as thinking about food not as general sustenance but in terms of the other person's preferences... time and proximity foster thoughtfulness towards the specific needs and preferences of others, in asking for thoughtfulness in non-family settings" (Pannett, 2011: 186).

What women's groups can achieve

Arise and Shine did not engage in 'feminist conscious-raising'; its focus was on the immigration system and on changing public attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers. Asylum seekers need to devote their energies to day-to-day survival and to fighting the HO and they may have no idea how long they will remain in the UK. Arise and Shine members were focussed on the need to amend the unfair asylum system, while (following the women's lead) Carolina felt that, looking inwards, the group should also be a space for mutual support rather than explicit critical reflection and feminist analysis. However, the effects of patriarchal power are intrinsically bound up with other oppressions that shape women's lives as migrants (whose reasons for seeking asylum are frequently linked to their gender, for example escaping forced marriage or fear of (further) sexual violence). As Faris also recognised in her work, "a group specifically for refugee and asylum seeking women can provide a forum for the subjugated voices of women and issues relating to women's rights to be brought forth" (2008: 69).

As discussed above, for some women, male-domination is exacerbated by migration through the re-entrenchment of patriarchal values among their partners or the wider diasporic community, or when the conditions of asylum require women to further compromise their autonomy through sham marriages or submission to sexual exploitation to fend off destitution. For others, new possibilities are opened up. In the Australian article on domestic violence cited above, Rees and Pease write that "whilst many of the men felt disempowered by the changes to their status, there was a perception that many women become more aware of their rights and more empowered", having found "greater independence and opportunities than in the country of origin" (2006: 38). A woman might

feel more able to pursue her own interests - in relation to work, study, family division of labour, marital status, residential situation or engagement in community or public life - when she sees others around her making similar choices and when there is societal approval and institutional support. At other times emigration prompts women to reconsider what their own interests might be.

For Fiona, Arise and Shine was specifically a space where she could talk freely and seek advice, including for negotiating freedom within her marriage. For others, Arise and Shine was probably not their primary forum in this respect. However, they were conscious that it is through women's groups such as WAST that many migrant women start to perceive as contingent and alterable gender norms they had previously taken as fixed. Sofia explained:

Women come into this country from different countries, and we are having different cultures. Because in Africa, women is not allowed to speak up for themselves. And what I think is good, when they come into this country and they participate in other women's groups, that is where they learn how to stand up for themselves, it is where they learn how to be *empowered*, because they didn't know, because they was being, how can I say? Manipulated by the dominant men (Sofia, interview).

Her concern was for women who have grown up seeing that their mothers "don't talk much to your dad and don't answer him back", yet who:

come to Britain and this is where women, um how can I say? They *learn*, how to stand up for themselves. Even now, in WAST, we have this problem where women is like shocked and they say 'No, I didn't know that I have a right! I don't know-' but anyway just tell them, 'No, you have a right as your right and as a *person* - that is not right what your husband do to you or anybody do to you - you have to stand up for yourself and speak up for yourself' (Sofia, interview).

She went on to generalise about many women in WAST she had seen "come out of their shells" thanks to the examples set by the women around them:

I see many women in WAST who now, who never could speak when they come to WAST, now they stand up, they talk, they ask questions, they are not afraid. They will say- they will call and say 'Please is there anyone in WAST who can go with me to Dallas Court? Because I am afraid', which they never did before. Before they was in their corner, afraid. And cry. And now they speak up for themselves, they go out, they campaign and believe me, when we start with the campaigning in WAST, little women, but because of empowerment, now we have more than 30, 40 women, I think, 30 or 40 women who have campaigns (Sofia, interview).

She added that having a volunteer (Vicky) who was a trained advisor and advocate in the field of domestic violence was an added advantage:

they learn when they come here and the men abuse them and then they come to WAST and then we can refer them to abuse organisations, where they can get further help... which is a very, very good thing (Sofia, interview).

Shaffer (1998: 2128) has pointed out that while they recognise that their lot is unequal, sometimes both men and women will perceive gender inequalities as natural, not as unjust. 'Doxa' is the term Bourdieu uses to refer to "aspects of tradition and culture which are so taken-for-granted that they have become naturalised and exist beyond discourse or argumentation" (Kabeer 1999: 441). In his view, "as long as the subjective assessments of social actors are largely congruent with the objectively organised possibilities available to them, the world of 'doxa' will remain intact. The passage from 'doxa' to critical consciousness only becomes possible when competing ways of 'being and doing' become material and cultural possibilities, revealing the arbitrariness of the given social order" (1999: 441).

As GAP Unit we had previously facilitated many community 'gender awareness' workshops on the social production of gender roles, but with the Arise and Shine group, reference to male and female characteristics or roles never prompted such analysis. In popular education as Carolina practices it, you start from 'where people are', and while new perspectives can be introduced to see if they resonate and shed new light on a group's experiences, it has to be done very carefully. The views of facilitators tend to carry more weight, and may not be discussed critically, defeating the aim for all to feel they are equal actors in the process. It is inappropriate to step in and challenge the shared wisdom of a group (and anyway, Arise and Shine, with its advocacy focus followed by twice-yearly catch-ups, had no chance to evolve in this direction). In one of the later group sessions, Carolina introduced exercises which for me reinforced an essentialised notion of womanhood. For example, the group was divided in two; each group was given a pre-prepared flip-chart with a picture of an African woman on it and asked to write down as many words as possible to describe what it meant to us to be a woman. I queried this with Carolina, who said that when a group are oppressed it makes sense to create opportunities to speak about their reality. On top of asylum or integration-related pressures, they worked tirelessly to support their partners, children, communities and other groups (not a generalisation of all female refugees and asylum seekers but true of every member of Arise and Shine), while being under-appreciated and assigned second-class status by men. So, as the positive responses to the activities showed, opportunities to mutually affirm their

strength as women, appreciate themselves and celebrate one another *as women* are worthwhile. One participant, after each group had presented their list of words, said that for all the struggles and trials of womanhood, she was so glad and grateful that God had made her a woman. It reassured me when Carolina concurred that had it been raised, the group would probably have agreed that men are also capable of being inspiring, courageous, wise, nurturing, enterprising and so on.

So what about men?

During the research feedback meeting the group was asked: *‘Would male asylum seekers benefit from a group like Arise and Shine, run by men? If so, would it do similar activities or something different?’*

Answers on flip-chart paper from each sub-group:

- Yes - they would benefit a lot. They may do similar things but they will do things pertaining to men
- Yes - something different
- Yes - they can empower one another by sharing their feelings which they find very difficult to talk about. They will be more encouraged to open up towards their partners, their friends, their family and wives to explain what is bothering them if they belong to these kind of groups

The answers were read out to prompt further discussion:

Carolina: So the benefit is not only for them, but also for the families

Many voices: Yes

Carolina: Anything else you want to say? About-

Hannah: Anybody got any thoughts about how easy it would be to set something like that up?

Tendayi: Yes, it won't be easy because men they've got their own ego. So.

Many voices: Laughter

Sofia: No, but I think some men, as us all here, we women know, when we do plays they say “Why is it always women, women, women?” Why not the whole-

Tendayi: But there is a difference between liking and committing themselves. Yes they like it, in our community they say ‘Oh’ - you remember? - he was saying ‘Ah, we want to do a men's group like this’. Talking! And doing! [are two different things]

Sofia: They will find a woman now to organise it, because this is how they are, the dominant male, they don't want to start it themselves, they want someone to do it for them

Hannah: In a way that's the point, so say there was a man from Venezuela and, you know a British man, who had contact with NWTWC, could they do similar things?

Tendayi: We would have to bring them there!

Many voices: Loud laughter

Hannah: We would contact you and-

Elinah: It's like in cultures, like African cultures, men don't normally want to get involved when they have to talk. They don't want that commitment, they just don't want anything. But when it starts happening as somebody else has done it, they can easily skip in there and take control

Many voices: Loud laughter

Elinah: Yes, they're very good at that

Many voices: More laughter

Elinah: You would have to bear with them until you get them there. But they want it. Mmm, that's the bottom line, they do want it.

Hannah: Because once you have ten men in a room meeting regularly, they can't all be in control. In the end its going to have to become democratic

Elinah: No, they will, when they are there on their own they can organise themselves, but it's setting up things like that, which is a bit difficult for them

I would like to have followed this up and found out what sorts of things they thought a men's group might do differently, but despite the humour about men's lack of ability to organise themselves and propensity to hijack women's efforts, the group agreed that everyone can benefit from gender-segregated discussion and reflection. Parsons says that empowerment-based practice with women is "fostered by commonality and being listened to and heard and hearing similar stories from others" (2001: 69). This fits with my observations of Arise and Shine, but is sharing stories and listening really something of particular interest and benefit to women? In this thesis I use the term 'women' interchangeably with 'participants', 'people', 'interviewees' and so on, not to emphasise their gender specificity but because it is an accurate, relevant label for the individuals I am describing. Parsons worked with women's groups, so it is reasonable for her to draw confident conclusions only about what works well in such settings. However, as Riger points out, "linking some behaviours to women and others to men obscures the fact that behaviour itself has no gender and can be manifested by either sex" (1993, 286).

According to Peterson and Hughey (2004), a study in 2000 (by Itzahaky and York) discovered that among community activists in Israel, "Women with higher empowerment scores tended to participate more inside organizations and were more likely to participate in organizational decision-making processes, whereas men with higher empowerment scores were more likely to participate in the community as representatives of other residents". This led them to conclude that "women and men may differ in the ways they achieve empowerment" (2004: 534) . But this is the worst kind of research in which a phenomenon which is taken to exist is used to justify its own existence.

Parson's conclusions, in more detail, are that:

empowerment processes for women arise from belonging to a community based on commonality and interdependence, not independence. This experience is consistent with the idea that women's development occurs in and through the healthy expression of emotions in relationships with others (Miller, 1986). Sullivan (1994) noted that considering empowerment to be a collective or communitarian phenomenon is consistent with feminist and non-Western worldviews. She agreed with Riger (1993), who criticized traditional discussions of empowerment as being associated with masculinity and centered on autonomy, rather than on community and connection with others. Riger suggested a perspective that moves empowerment beyond the unrestricted exercise of personal choice to an appreciation of collective good and social responsibility. The voices of these women support the importance of the collective in empowerment models for work with women (2001:177).

However if, according to Riger, both 'sense of community' and instrumental forms of empowerment "are integral to human well-being and happiness and to well-functioning communities" (1993: 287), then this must be true of men as well. In fact, she says as much. She outlines Bakan's notions of 'agency', which for him "manifests itself in the urge to master" and refers to "the individual acting in self-protection, self-assertion, and self-expansion"; and his notion of 'communion', which refers to "an individual's sense of being part of a larger whole" (1993: 285) and his or her motivation to strive "co-operatively to attain a sense of harmony with others" (1993: 285). She links these with Talcott Parson's equivalent concepts of 'instrumental activity', focussed on "achievement and accomplishment outside the immediate social group" and 'expressive actions', "directed at the interpersonal interactions that exist within the group" (1993: 286). According to Riger, Bakan saw agency and communion as "separate, independent dimensions capable of coexisting within one person" (1993: 285), while Parsons "stressed the need for both expressive and instrumental roles in both individuals and in social groups" (1993: 286). The interviewees I asked for their definitions of empowerment indeed offered a mixture of the two ([Table 7.](#)). A division along gender lines makes no sense, although of course "the political histories in which experiences and perceptions of agency are formed and reformed" (Wray 2004: 3) have influence at the level of society as well as the individual. This does not mean that GAP Unit should not restrict itself to working with women (in fact we don't, but we do specialise in it) or that my research needs to comment on the situation facing men in order to be valid. Women continue to come off worse in the 'gender settlement' in most societies and have their perspectives and lives overlooked in research and other forms of knowledge production.

Table 7. Arise and Shine women's definitions of empowerment (from the interviews)

<p>Social collective When together, work like a team... the strength you can get from being in unity</p> <p>It's knowledge as well, it's about sharing information</p> <p>Empowerment is something that you learn from other women, you can not empower yourself, only for yourself</p> <p>Empowerment cannot be something that I do on my own... empowerment is from a united group.</p> <p>The more you listen to other people's stories, the more books that you read, that is empowerment, it is like something that you longing for to get from somebody else. 'How did you overcome this obstacle?' 'How did she find the situation?' 'How did they win this campaign or that?' - that is all about empowerment.</p> <p>To be empowered is to go out and talk with other women - and just to tell your story there is an empowerment for someone else</p>	<p>Autonomy/Independence The ability to stand up for what you believe in and the confidence to speak out</p> <p>Making someone independent, making someone powerful, not physical power, making someone capable of acting on his own. Like if I come to your house today, maybe I'm always coming to knock at the door for something, so you say that 'Ok, I will help you how to go about it independently rather than coming to me'</p> <p>One day I was just on the bus, I picked up a Metro paper: how I empowered myself. On the front page there was this advert for Huddersfield University... I enrolled... that's how I claimed my power back</p> <p>To talk about empowerment is to talk about women who can stand up for themselves, help themselves</p> <p>I think it's all about getting back the power which you had before, or which you have never used [...] or [...] which you had and somebody took it away from you</p>
--	--

The following accords exactly with our experiences at the GAP Unit:

Women are likely to need a place where they feel accepted, understood, and supported; can interact, share emotions, and give help to others; and receive help and support for themselves. The atmosphere or environmental culture may be a critical variable in work with women. In addition, there are some specific behaviours and helping strategies that the women in this study found useful in their change and development: having a voice; being heard and respected; having a helper who openly demonstrates a belief in them by asking them to do for themselves, challenging them to take risks, and encouraging them to give to others (Parsons, 2001: 175).

It would be interesting to see how a similar group for men would play out.

This chapter concludes with some comments of aspects of GAP Unit's practice which might be useful for allies to consider.

Frequency of activities, and cost

The Arise and Shine meetings were never frequent. At the height of the project we met every few weeks, in addition to the workshops and events we were organizing, but most of the time it was every few months, moving to twice a year after December 2010. I asked Fiona if it was a problem that we got together so infrequently but she saw it rather as an advantage:

Whenever it came, I was ready prepared, but I don't think if it was frequent I would manage... I found it very useful that there was a gap between- from one session to the other.

The time and energy needed to travel between Preston and Manchester was part of it, but she also explained the importance of the 'gap' in term of having to:

digest all what I've asked the women... to digest it proper, when I can carry it on board. So the next meeting would find me when I've already digested what I've got from the first meeting... I was trying to arrange other questions for the next meeting, what can I ask these women if I meet them?... Because I had plenty of time till the next meeting. So I wait for myself to see whether I can implement what I've got in the first meeting, and how, how bring it practical" (Fiona, interview).

This made sense to Carolina, remembering her work with communities in Venezuela. People have busy lives, and sometimes doing things too regularly can make them a chore, rather than something to anticipate and look forward to. It is good to know that the pace can be slow and that meeting only sporadically will not automatically undermine a sense of continuity or intensity. Good to know, because the costs can mount up. As the interviews also revealed, the provision of travel expenses, childcare (either a crèche or individual subsidy) and refreshments, ideally in the form of hot, home cooked non-British food (much better received than cold sandwiches!) is very important in this kind of work. Room hire can be costly in the city centre, which was important in our case because women were travelling in from other places.

Reimbursing expenses

The topic of bus fares was one of the things Lydia raised when asked what would put her off working with certain organisations:

Some of the organisations I work with, I realise that they know we are asylum seekers but they seem to be blind to certain things that we go through... at least if you don't give the asylum seeker the lunch - it may be a sandwich - you need to know that she paid transport to come, so you *need to*. Because they are giving their service for nothing, they are not paid, but if it was somebody to be paid that eight hours, you would pay for it. So at least they can give you the bus fare. But it was not really coming in that way, they were like, not happy doing it (Lydia, interview).

The issue goes beyond the economic, to one of personal pride, as her next comment showed:

Everybody has a pride. It's like, you know it's something that you need to do, but you always wait for me to ask. So, and I have that, my own pride. I feel...why should I be asking this small money? (Lydia, interview).

Tendayi, too, contrasted MRSN and GAP Unit with NGOs (in particular the Women And Aids Support Network) she had volunteered with in Zimbabwe. She had realised in retrospect, after experiencing the “transparency” of GAP Unit and others, that they had not been very open with their volunteers about how things worked, nor “trusted” them with information beyond the superficial. Her exact complaint concerned withholding of volunteer expenses:

As much as they were there to help women in general, but there are some things they were not very open about. Of which now, my involvement with GAP and MRSN, I can say ‘Oooh, so here they didn’t tell us the full story! They used us’. Because you know what, especially on bus fares. I am very sure they were given an allowance, to say ‘The women you invite, they should be given bus fares’, but we were never given bus fares. Yes... That is the feeling, I go to say, ‘Ah! Women should be given bus fares. They should be fully informed’, yes. But they were just informing us *as they wish* (Tendayi, interview).

Offering travel money as a matter of course, rather than waiting for people to ask for it, recognises volunteers’ efforts and prevents the relationship being one of patronage. It demonstrates an understanding that their economic situation is outside their control, despite which, many people feel a sense of shame that they are not earning their living. Knowing the organisation Lydia had in mind, I am aware that it relies on volunteers and is unlikely to have an expenses budget. Travel costs can be significant, especially if you are working with a group. But those who collaborate with asylum seekers should build travel expenses into their general funding bids as a matter of course, or seek small grants specifically for this. One of the impacts of public sector cuts is the reduction of resources of this kind, which will restrict asylum seekers’ ability to be involved in groups and volunteering.

Seeking and responding to feedback

Regular ongoing evaluation is essential to the spirit of openness and learning within Freirian practice. Carolina was surprised, coming to the UK, to find that many third sector organisations shy away from negative criticism – the best way of learning for the future - and appalled when all criticism was watered down or deleted when she was hired as an external project evaluator by a local branch of a national NGO. With Arise and Shine we tried to respond and adapt as we went along, as Chapter 6. touched on in relation to the collaboration with WAST. We quickly learned that it is better to end a meeting with food

rather than begin with it, even if it gives a chance for people to arrive at different times, while Fiona advised me that I needed to give clearer directions to venues. We tried to hold Arise and Shine meetings in the same city centre venue each time, but this wasn't always possible, and I think I also assumed that because someone had been there once, they would easily be able to find it again despite not knowing the city. Fiona showed the error of this :

The way you direct wherever we are going to meet, it's not a proper direction. Someone is trying to direct someone who is coming from Preston, like someone who is already staying in Manchester (laughs). And saying 'Go on this- bus number so and so' - it's not said where it is that number bus goes (Fiona, interview).

Nothing ever goes completely smoothly, and mistakes during Arise and Shine arose mainly through lack of communication and rushed decisions. For example, for our first play performance, to save time I adapted CAN's version of the programme, just replacing dates and logos. Vicky was shocked to see that instead of a proper cast list there was just an unspecified list of the actors' names (without roles). I had also been surprised but left it because I assumed it had been agreed in that format (and because the design lacked space for extra text). It turned out that Vicky had never seen a copy of the previous programme. I hastily redesigned it. Also, the main publicity for the play was a full colour invitation sent as an attachment by email to target organisations, the draft of which, after changes, had been signed off by the Arise and Shine group, Yasmin, Vicky and the actors. As an afterthought, Carolina commissioned a version with less text to use as a poster, but not wanting to put her busy niece (who was working for free) through the 'design by committee' process a second time, we did not consult as widely. We had enjoyed the coincidence that of all the photographs sent to Irene for the poster, she had inadvertently chosen one of the actor (Lydia) who had also written the play. The Arise and Shine members liked it and each took a few to distribute, but a week later we heard that some of the actors had reacted angrily to seeing the poster at WAST. I went to the next rehearsal to apologise for not consulting them and explained that the posters were optional extras since the audience was being recruited through phone calls and the original flyer. They had assumed we had arbitrarily substituted the design they had approved, containing images of the whole cast, with this one depicting Lydia alone, which for some had compounded a sense that Lydia was getting too much credit for what was a collective WAST endeavour. I was contrite, but was at least able to explain that the design they had approved was always intended as the main publicity, and that Lydia's image had been pure coincidence. The situation was diffused, but the rest of the posters were recycled.

Risks and challenges

Following a presentation on the project, I was asked if it had not been a risky exercise to put women in situations which were not fully under our control and which could have been upsetting or exposing. I had explained that a few of the women had felt nervous prior to the schools visits, and that it had been emotional for Fiona and Sofia to be asked about their children, a topic they rarely allowed into their own thoughts let alone discussed with strangers.

I put the question to Fiona, who said:

No it wasn't risky, it wasn't risky.... It wasn't at all. Because, when we were with Jessie Mock [GAP Unit associate], she told us, 'Feel free to say just what you want to say, what you don't want to say, don't say it'. So that's why in the *beginning*, I couldn't say-talk about my daughter, until I felt confident enough to talk about that. Yeah. We were not forced to talk about what we didn't want to talk (Fiona, interview).

Fiona had been faced with a decision to leave her 'comfort zone', and decided to do so. In the same way that the play had been a test of stamina and courage for the actors, the talks in schools were a challenge, but restorative as a direct consequence of this. Fiona felt she had 'recovered' her daughter through the process, while it had made Rut realise with pleasure that her English was good enough to communicate her experiences and make her perspectives understood. With hindsight, however, it may not have been a good idea to visit a 'pupil referral unit' – a learning centre for young people who have been excluded from mainstream school for behavioural reasons. The small class sizes meant that for the same cost as addressing 160 students at Bury High School, under ten got to take part. Also, Rudo, the volunteer that day, did not have as positive an experience as those who visited the other schools. The session happened with a small group with a high teacher: pupil ratio, and the staff present were pleased with the way the young people had participated and reacted towards the visitors, but Rudo (used to strict, formal Zimbabwean schools) could not read their behaviour in this way, and was not rewarded with the same warm reception, thoughtful questions and even hugs that greeted those who visited the other schools. She did not regret going, but felt quite flat about it. A debrief immediately afterwards would have been beneficial⁵⁰, not least since it was not until the end-of-project evaluation meeting

⁵⁰ Fiona too, picked up on the fact that, unusually for GAP Unit, there was no scheduled debrief on the day they went to Bury, either. a quick verbal evaluation happened on the bus but they should have been taken to a cafe for a hot drink and something to eat, "to value out what we've said... to talk what we've talked... Just to sit down, relax deeply, before you get your journey" (Fiona interview).

that the GAP Unit colleagues who had accompanied her were able to pass on, for example, the fact that a girl who had walked out of the lesson had apologised afterwards, saying she had been very interested but was being provoked by one of her classmates. Positive feedback in terms of reciprocal respect and empathy, and the sense that they had really made a difference to how the young people thought about refugees, was a significant factor in the success of the project elsewhere. In retrospect we should have planned rather than hoped for this, and given the range of available alternatives, should probably not have taken the project to the referral unit. Nevertheless, it does seem worth taking risks occasionally. As a report on 'bridge building' for the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) states, willingness to take risks - by organisations as well as by individual participants - is important in community activities because it "expands participants' boundaries and experiences" (Harris & Young, 2009: 11). As Tendayi put it:

Being given the opportunity, being trusted to say 'You can do this, you are able to do this' - when wherever we have gone, the message was like 'You cannot do it' - that is another impact of confidence raising and saying 'Actually I can do it'... It's like a growth but you will see it, erm, as we go, the confidence we are gaining, and we are raring to go (laughs).

Continuity of involvement

A 2009 Joseph Rowntree Foundation project co-ordinated by researchers at Birmingham University aimed to "build the capacity of migrant and refugee community organisations (MRCOs) to collect evidence from their communities to help influence policy and service provision" (Phillimore et al, 2009: 4). Leaders and volunteers from several of these small community organisations received training in peer research, qualitative and quantitative research and the principles of community organising, including "different forms of power; the difference between local, national and global politics/structures; understanding how policy is made in the UK; community politics; community renewal strategies; lobbying and approaching policymakers and service providers; " etc (2009: 4-5). The official project evaluation concluded that there had been empowerment "at the level of the individual and their MRCO" (2009: 6) but that the greatest benefits were to the community researchers themselves, whose "role as interviewers working for the university gave them status and earned them respect within their own organisations" (2009: 33) and gained them skills, confidence, qualifications and in many cases paid employment . The evaluation report admits that the success of certain individuals might have come at a cost to the city's refugee network and individual MRCOs, since many of empowered and trained-up volunteers were launched into careers and no longer around to engage with their

communities (2009:33). Undeniably, being equipped for greater political involvement meshes well with being ready for the labour market. Vickers, looking at the community and voluntary sector involvement of asylum seekers, found a trend by which “even those who have been active in collective struggle as refugees without status cease to practice active solidarity once their personal situation is secured” (2010: 252), offering the explanation that “At an individual level, for many participants demobilisation appeared to result from a combination of intense material pressures to become self-supporting, which left little time for anything else, and emotional exhaustion after a long and traumatic struggle” (2010: 253). Riger, however, notes that:

Those not in a position of autonomy and choice must focus on connection and communal goals to survive. Accordingly, whether individuals act in an autonomous manner or operate in a communal mode reflects their relative position in the social structure. The implication is that once those lower on the hierarchy have moved up, they may move from a relatedness mode to operate on principles of autonomy and individual agency (1993: 288).

Fiona, having felt empowered by Arise and Shine , once she got her Leave to Remain, was keen to concentrate on her goal of finding a job, reuniting her family and supporting her children through the education system.

Situations which foster community may be the opposite of those which foster empowerment. Community may exist most cohesively when people experience a shared externally generated fate such as a crisis or disaster, or a condition of poverty or oppression... The psychological sense of community that is advocated as a goal by Sarason (1974) and others may be a function of interdependence on a material level. Ironically, when interdependence is no longer necessary, then the psychological sense of community may disappear as well (Riger, 1993: 288).

Chenai was aware of this when she commented that she had not expected to join a women’s group when she came to the UK because “I thought there was plenty of individualism in UK and no time for it, thought it was for poor people” (Chenai, Arise and Shine meeting). She had a “change of mindset in the face of reality” – she had been expecting to be living a fairly isolated life, working hard and perhaps meeting a few people through church, but instead found herself destitute and homeless and found that women’s and other refugee groups were her lifeline. They provided a social life, network of support, sense of purpose, a chance to learn and use her skills, a way to keep occupied and avoid stagnation and a chance to help others; they also allowed her to gather a portfolio of evidence of community involvement, which might assist her asylum application. However, while many women inevitably withdraw into family life or employment when they receive

refugee status, it is not a straightforward equation. After all, several Arise and Shine members were refugees, and like many refugees they thought about the wider community in tandem with their own family's advancement and their paid employment. Tendayi and Elinah set up Zimbabwean groups and clubs to help preserve their culture. Pride in the family and concern for the community as a whole prompted them to want to better their circumstances through effort and mutual help, and some of the Zimbabweans were confounded by the passivity of their neighbours in the district of Manchester in which they lived, asking if I could explain their seeming lack of ambition to 'pull themselves up' and help one another as a community to do so. Their ethos of entrepreneurialism and self-reliance is reminiscent of the 'wartime spirit' which the British media and political establishment are fond of invoking. While for Elinah and Tendayi it is associated with a society tied together by complex webs of kinship, belonging and obligation; in an advanced capitalist society like the UK it fits conveniently with the notion of 'advanced liberal rationality' - associated with moving responsibility to local levels, replacing the 'social' by the 'community', and shifting responsibility away from the State towards individual subjects. Ironically, if Conservative rhetoric had not been based on engendering fear of and a sense of native superiority to immigrants, they might have seen more cross-fertilisation of ideas in support of a Big Society- type resilience among the new and existing inhabitants of the urban neighbourhoods targeted for 'dispersal'.

As it is, when I spoke to Chenai, Sofia and Elinah about what changes when people get their status, they said there are some women who you feel fairly sure will disappear and concentrate on their careers and families, but others who fall out of contact accidentally because they become so busy, have to quickly leave their accommodation and forget that if they change their phone they'll need to pass on their new number. They expressed regret at losing touch with people they had known through WAST, Arise and Shine and other forums and campaigns. Sofia, who is highly unlikely to disappear from anyone's view when she finally gets Leave to Remain after her (so far) six year wait, said that she sometimes watches the DVD of the WAST play, and:

I realise how much it meant to me. I will keep all the leaflets and watch that film, all the footage of the struggles with my grandchildren, and I will tell them 'That is what your grandmother and her friends were doing back then, that is how we struggled'. It will be an important part of my history and I will cry thinking about those women. I want to do a big party when I am 50 and invite all the women we fought alongside. But some have already lost contact (Sofia, lunch meeting).

Elinah added, pragmatically, that:

We need to look at it a different way - we just need to be proactive and announce to people that if they change their mobile numbers they should tell everyone. It is sad to lose contact. It is important these links don't just fade away (Elinah, lunch meeting).

Chapter 8. Conclusions

Framing my case study has been the understanding of empowerment, common to Freire-inspired community work, that it has a psycho-social and a political dimension and is achieved through collective action against specific conditions of oppression. The practice bore this out. During each phase of Arise and Shine, coming together with other women, collectively analysing their situation, formulating demands and taking action to get these heard, was experienced by the participants as restorative and generative of new conceptual and social resources. Chapter 3. considered the project in relation to the model of accultural integration proposed by García-Ramírez et al, which, drawing on liberation psychology, emphasised “the capacity of newcomers to reconstruct themselves in new contexts according to their interests, values and needs” (2011: 89), “to resist and repel the asymmetries of power” (2011: 89) and for “involvement in transformative civic actions” (2011: 93). Being part of a group process in which important life experiences were shared and valued by fellow participants; which created opportunities, such as the gatherings, for reinforcing and celebrating threatened identities; and which encouraged formulation and articulation of personal and group interests, was revealed as productive of renewed stamina and hopefulness in the light of intersecting axes of oppression: their status as non-citizens and/or non-Western, racial Others, and their gender. Nancy Fraser talks of the need for people suffering oppression to “join collectively to produce a self-affirming culture of their own” (2003: 24). As I have shown, for most members the Arise and Shine group was one of several arenas, including RCOs, faith groups, campaign teams and refugee forums, contributing to a sense of multicultural solidarity and oppositional identity. Fraser continues: “Having refashioned their collective identity they must display it publicly in order to gain the respect and esteem of society at large. The result, when successful, is ‘recognition’, an undistorted relation to oneself”(2003: 24). ‘Awareness raising’ was how Arise and Shine as a group chose to perform the political dimension of integration: interventions in the public sphere to demand recognition on their own terms and to assert their fundamental equality. As well as making themselves visible as “equal subjects of justice” (McNevin, 2010: 143) and educating audiences about the asylum system, these actions at ‘citizenship level’ generated knowledge and insights for the participants into the dominant society and ‘how things work’ which were useful for their own personal strategies for re-making life in the UK. This is the kind of practice-relevant knowledge generated by my exploration of the specific activities undertaken: applied theatre and

workshops (Phase 2); and visits to schools and education staff workshops (Phase 3). Narrative (sharing stories of personal experience) was central both to the intra-group bonding and to the women's public challenges to misrecognition.

Core debates and methodologies

The philosophy and techniques of Freirian practice underlie most CD and it is not uncommon for female migrants to be the recipients of/participants in such interventions. My study has documented new perspectives by applying previously entertained debates to a unique context, coming up with distinctive syntheses and conceptualisations. It has been an account of practice-based research, meaning that:

firstly the research is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of the practice and practitioners; and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners (Gray, 1996: 3).

As a practitioner with the GAP Unit, the methodology familiar to me was the popular education pedagogy of Paulo Freire. It guided the Arise and Shine project as well as my study of it, informing the methods used and the nature of the questions and problems investigated. Carolina summarises:

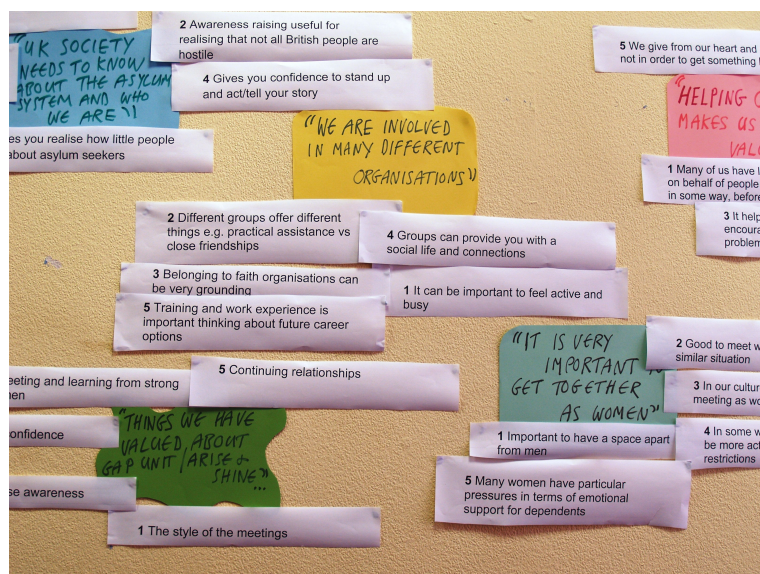
In popular education you start by identifying the issues, problems, needs, expectations of the group ... the aim is for people to critically examine together their lives/conditions and take collective action to change those conditions... As popular educators we have first of all to listen to what people are 'saying', listen to their problems, their experiences, their ideas... We are learners but we are also there to facilitate a learning process where the main thing is for them to understand that their experiences are worth learning from (Carolina, by email).

Listening - in the evaluations and reflections which are central to Freirian practice, and in the interviews - was at the heart of the Arise and Shine project and of the research strategy. An important aim was then to extend the advocacy process by sharing the women's knowledge and experience with new audiences. How I have gone about implementing Gray's dictum, incorporating conceptual tools and theoretical resources from a variety of disciplines (from sociological theory to activist praxis),⁵¹ represents my contribution to knowledge of practice-led research. I took advantage of the nature of case study to "provide an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance" (Denscombe, 2007: 35) and to "explain *why* certain outcomes

⁵¹ I was guided by insights from feminist, post-colonial and other emancipatory theories which complement and extend those of Freire, and by discourses, political loyalties and repertoires of thought acquired through my own 'praxis' as a participant in anarchist groups.

might happen – more than just find out what those outcomes are” (2007: 36), and some of some of my learning resulted from reflection on Carolina’s methods and rationale, given our different set of formative influences. Rather than faithfully reproducing the normative language and tropes typical of CD literature, I have imported ways of looking from other disciplines, for example retaining an awareness of (if not alluding directly to) the discursive construction of subjectivity.

As Denscombe argues, “practice driven research in local settings hardly lends itself to conclusions with universal application” (2007: 130). It was for this reason that I struggled with the idea, promoted by my supervisory team, that the research should generate not just practice but policy recommendations. However, without making claims to generality, findings can “‘ring true’ in other settings... readers of case study research [including policy makers] can judge whether or not the analysis presented sounds convincing, based upon what they know of similar situations and circumstances” (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2010: 12). Women’s denunciations of the asylum system, iterated over the four years (captured in the Phase 1. workshops, the first gathering, the play and education workshops, the ‘WAST demands’ and various Arise and Shine meetings), usefully corroborate the findings of recent more in-depth studies (such as Atfield et al, 2007; Bloch, 2009; Dorling et al, 2012; Mulvey, 2013; Muggeridge & Chen, 2011; Querton, 2012). Their suggestions for humanising the asylum process for women – through simple acts like more friendliness, respect and willingness to listen, as well as through the repeal of punitive, exclusionary measures - echo the recommendations of these and numerous campaign and research reports.



As part of my attempt to be accountable to the group, I arrived at five statements with explanatory substatements which I felt it was possible to generalise from the data I had gathered, and in October 2011. I presented them back, in the hope that the women would (do a combination of)

confirm, contest, amend or add to the summaries. In their two groups, they reported that they endorsed the statements in their entirety. Where they went into detail it was to restate the points I had made, and although I tried to provoke dissent, the answer came back “No, we all agreed that what was said there was quite clear. One of our points was it was summarised in a very clear way, where we can understand and we relate - those who have been interviewed, and those who haven't, all relate to that and it shows that it's a very clear summary of the actual thing”. Although the first person plural presentation of the information might have had a seductive effect, it is probably fair to conclude that they concurred with the conclusions or at least did not disagree with anything strongly. Given this, it was important to reproduce the list here (although it has also shaped the whole thesis structure, to an extent):

“We are involved in many different organisations” (discussed in Chapter 4.)

- 1 It can be important to feel active and busy
- 2 Different groups offer different things e.g. practical assistance vs close friendships
- 3 Belonging to faith organisations can be very grounding
- 4 Groups can provide you with a social life and connections
- 5 Training and work experience is useful for thinking about future career options

“Helping others makes us feel valued” (discussed in Chapter 4.)

- 1 Many of us have long been active on behalf of people who are oppressed in some way, before coming to the UK
- 2 We only enjoy volunteering with organisations which genuinely care about their service users
- 3 It helps women very much if you encourage them to talk about their problems
- 4 Giving and receiving makes you feel good
- 5 We give from our heart and soul, not in order to get something back

“It is important to get together as women” (discussed in Chapter 7.)

- 1 Important to have a space apart from men
- 2 Good to meet with other women in a similar situation
- 3 In our cultures we are used to meeting as women
- 4 In some ways women's groups can be more active here in the UK – fewer restrictions
- 5 Many women have particular pressures in terms of providing emotional support to dependents

“We need to educate British people about the asylum system and about who we are” (discussed in Chapters 3. and 6.)

- 1 Makes you realise how little people know about asylum seekers – motivates you
- 2 Awareness raising was good for realising that not all British people are hostile and racist
- 3 The awareness raising had a genuine impact on the children/play audience
- 4 Gives you confidence to stand up and act/tell your story
- 5 Hearing directly from asylum seekers makes the most effective awareness raising

“What we have valued about GAP Unit/Arise and Shine” (discussed in Chapter 7.)

- 1 The style of the meetings
- 2 Meeting and learning from strong women
- 3 Opportunities to gain confidence
- 4 Opportunities to raise awareness
- 5 Mutual trust

Key findings

1. Benefits of awareness raising

From its inception the Arise and Shine group were motivated by their desire, as people at the mercy of institutions, policy regimes and public indifference, to correct the stories that dominant discourses seek to impose on them and to influence, in particular, anyone with any power to improve things. They considered themselves the ideal people for this task as it worked against the usual lack of contact between asylum seekers and the general population and their normalised absence from media debate. Comments received showed that individuals who saw the play agreed:

“First-hand information from the people affected directly, not from reading the newspapers”

“I am already aware of the issues but the human connection was important”

“For me you HUMANISED the noun ‘asylum seeker’. Thank you.”
(Feedback slips from Zion Centre, 24/3/10)

There were direct, practical outcomes such as the new service for asylum seeker mothers initiated in Tameside, but the main impact was the ‘cascade’ effect of the awareness raising. One school instituted an annual workshop with asylum seekers as part of its Year 9 Human Rights Day. Further invitations were taken up (by WAST and Arise and Shine) from various organisations, and individuals committed (many in writing) to pass on what they had learned.

People can take on board what they've seen in the play and what they've *heard*. And take it further... some people are public sector, others are private sector, you don't know who will carry what to where... I don't think someone will come out of the play and just keeps everything in the head, no. I think you'll have somebody else to tell about it, yeah, wherever possible (Fiona, interview).

It was difficult to recruit anyone with significant political power to the events; those attending had no authority to end enforced destitution or amend national childcare policy. Nevertheless there are many “minor decisions where some play of power can be realized through discretion and individual agency” (Pannett, 2011: 189) by sympathetic officials.

When I took a group of asylum seekers to a voluntary sector event in 2009 marking the incorporation of EU Human Rights legislation into UK law, they were ignored because the law did not apply to them. They went away feeling alienated and invisible to all the friendly-looking third sector people buzzing around representing their different ‘equality streams’. Greater awareness and sensitivity on the part of the professionals might have led them to find a way of including the women, even if just to express solidarity and regret at the non-universality of so-called ‘human’ rights. The benefits to the women of the awareness raising were:

- Becoming aware that not all British people are hostile to asylum seekers, allowing greater optimism regarding the possibility of integration.
- Taking strength from the empathy of audiences – having experiences honoured and validated; feeling respected and appreciated.
- Sense of achievement from doing something effective and politically useful.
- Seeing new places, meeting new people, finding out more about British society
- Facing personal challenges, learning new skills (acting, writing, public speaking etc.) and emerging more confident
- The therapeutic value (for some) of owning and speaking about difficult experiences – letting go of shame.

Talks in schools, and applied theatre, were discovered to be fairly common forms of refugee advocacy, and the outcomes from *Arise and Shine* explain why. Visiting schools, the women enjoyed the warmth and empathy of the children, the idea that they were educating the next generation and the insights it provided into the education system. Theatre, which ultimately has the bigger reach but takes far more time and resources, was shown to be an effective advocacy approach due to the embodied contact and empathetic connection achieved with the audiences. In 2003, refugee Shahin Shafaei performed a one-man piece about detention in venues across Australia including “rural settings with initially hostile or sceptical audiences” (Burvill 2008: 237), always integrating after-show discussion. For Burvill, “in Levinasian terms, even an angry response is a response, an encounter with alterity, much better than a refusal to engage”(2008: 238). To do the same with *How I Became an Asylum Seeker*, however, could have been quite damaging for participants. Here, the positive effect of a warm reception and a good dialogue was at least as important as the extent of the audience learning. For participants it offered “minutes of happiness” as well as “the chance to participate artistically and socially in the practice of freedom” (Neelands, 2007: 316). WAST performed *How I Became an Asylum Seeker*

several more times around the North West, as well as at Riverside Studios in London, before letting the DVD version continue its legacy.

2. The importance of other forms of advocacy and engagement

Chapters 4. and 5. showed that as well as awareness raising, Arise and Shine members were involved in national campaigns, lobbying and local engagement forums, all of which imply an “advocacy logic that moves away from aid and care for dependent deserving victims, back to reinstating membership in a common political body and inclusion on the grounds of a commitment to a democratic political culture” (Judge, 2010: 31). Those who were in the asylum system were focussed on speaking out about that, on their own and others’ behalf. They thought that NGOs and campaign coalitions should try to maximise possibilities for people subject to immigration control to represent their own causes, and to minimise the number of British people doing so for them, in their absence (there was evidence of the English and Scottish Refugee Councils embracing this approach; acknowledging that much depends on people’s trajectories before and after arrival in the UK and recognising the importance of targeted empowerment initiatives to increase the pool of potential advocates). Arise and Shine members, the CD workers and some of the RSI staff and volunteers I spoke to believed strongly that with the right support and opportunities women’s confidence and skill levels rise readily. Chapter 4. captured some of the different ways in which women are being encouraged to stand up for their own interests, including through the delegation of responsibilities, training (including art and sports-based activities), being supported to share and discuss problems, accompanied to conferences or protests and introduced to local campaigns and forums. In London and in the dispersal areas (including South Yorkshire, Glasgow and Greater Manchester) where there has been a strong CD presence and commitment to the empowerment of refugees, a legacy of groups and engagement structures exist as a resource base for asylum seeker self-organisation. They are places where asylum seekers can access services and vice versa, and they can enfranchise individuals to represent refugee interests in the wider community. O’Neill’s research acknowledges these benefits:

Where the horizontal (grass-roots, face-to-face work by refugee support organisations, arts and cultural organisations) and vertical processes (local and regional policy making) of social inclusion are linked, there is greater scope for the sustained social inclusion, and support of refugees/asylum seekers and their families (O’Neill 2010:221).

Participation in local structures helps create the webs which secure displaced people in their new environment: “We were in Salford for the thing with Community Pride and we saw a list of the groups who had been part of that and GAP Unit was there and for me it was really good”, said Sofia, speaking of an event which, in bringing various partners together had revealed their links and shared histories, with the effect of strengthening her web. Newman sees ‘contact zones’, such as multi-agency forums, as “potentially generative of new subjects positions in which subordinate groups come to view themselves through dominant discursive repertoires, and in which dominant groups come to encounter ‘the other’ and may be transformed in the process”. At a local, strategic level, policy makers need to grant individual asylum seekers and refugees, RCOs and refugee infrastructure networks the same access to decision making forums and partnerships that other organisations enjoy (where they still exist). As well as giving them and their communities a ‘voice’, insights gained in these ‘contact zones’ can help people better navigate life in the UK, while for a minority, the experiences and skills acquired are a useful step towards professional roles.

During the New Labour period resources were more plentiful for creating and sustaining refugee networks and other ‘bridging’ and ‘cohesion’ structures. Dedicated resources and expert CD staff posts are now rapidly disappearing from the third and public sectors, in tandem with the advice and welfare services which have provided generic or tailored support. It falls to RSI and RCO staff and volunteers to help, leaving them with less energy and time for the advocacy and other outward-facing activities which are so beneficial for integration. There are still charities and networks determined to keep empowering work and campaigns alive, but both local and national Government should wake up to what is being rapidly lost and act decisively to reverse it.

Vickers (2010: 244) observes that while Putnam’s social capital theory equates ‘bridging’ contact with greater trust and co-operation between marginalised communities and the state, the opposite effect may occur, since through engagement, previously trusting migrants may develop greater scepticism and realism about policy making and the limits of state actors’ commitment to the values they wish to uphold. At the same time, for those more used to outright state repression, the liberal state can have much to recommend it. Some of the Arise and Shine women had been refugees for a while and for them one of the frustrations had been a lack of obvious means of accessing democratic processes as equal citizens. As well as civic action within their communities, they wanted to participate in

broadier debates, mix with and learn from fellow citizens/residents and contribute their views and insights on all issues close to their hearts – not just refugee issues. There are few enough people in the UK, fewer still women, who are enthused by formal participatory and representative politics. Decision makers should be aware that there is a pool of well-educated women from across the world seeking opportunities for civic engagement and an invitation to ‘the table’ (provided they are made to feel welcome and respected). The Arise and Shine participants have now been in the UK for between six and ten years. Elinah, who has made visits back, said she has realised she is now more English than Zimbabwean. Tendayi feels neither: while she will never be a native here, she told me that the way she thinks, reasons and perceives the world has shifted irrevocably. Recalling the notion of situated knowledge, Campbell and Wasco note that:

by living out their lives in both the dominant culture and their own culture, members of stigmatized groups can develop a kind of double vision, and hence a more comprehensive understanding of social reality (2000: 781).

The ability to ‘look both ways’ does not just grant resources for personal survival (and alienation from one’s natal knowledge and culture can also cause sadness), but allows people to contribute ideas and perspectives from other contexts and see with clarity things which are blind spots for insiders. As theorists of deliberative democracy have been quicker than politicians to recognise, migrant women have great potential to enrich democratic debate. For Seyla Benhabib (whose vision, transcending relativism and universalism, is one in which different cultures, themselves polyvocal rather than fixed and coherent, freely negotiate and renegotiate ‘universal’ rights), genuine participatory democracy “necessitates the presence in the public sphere of the narratives of marginal communities... founded on an ethics of communication in which participants have equal voice” (O’Neill & Harindranath, 2006: 44), and there is no reason why this should not include asylum seekers and other citizens in waiting.

My research also has implications for the way migrant group interests are conceptualised by public and third sector agencies. The traditional categorisation of ‘communities’ by nationality, ‘race’ and religion continues, by and large, to privilege older, male, often socially conservative ‘community leaders’ as spokespeople. Not only does the women’s enthusiasm for political engagement challenge stereotypes of female migrants as dependent victims, but gender has been revealed as a policy-relevant point of identification of at least equal validity and importance, one with integrative potential for the way it forms bonds across ethnic, language and religious boundaries, and between different types of migrant.

This is the feminist project – delegitimising or de-reifying unhelpful borders and promoting pluralism, alliance and communication.

3. The importance of women's multi-cultural groups

For people living precariously on the edge of society, with the effects of exclusion and instability reaching into even their closest relationships, providing “environments and locations where they will be welcomed and not feel threatened” (Navarro, 2006: 13), safe places where they can feel ‘at home’ is an important task for allies. Arise and Shine showed that being with women in similar situations meant learning how others had dealt practically and emotionally with particular experiences, and developing discursive strategies for making sense of, and resisting incorporation into, unwanted aspects of the new environment. If we understand identities as “stories that people tell to themselves and to others about who they are, who they are not and who/how they would like to be” (Yuval-Davis, 2009: 58), which are co-constructed with and against others, drawing on personal and collective memory, history and all of the discursive resources available within the surrounding culture, we can see that the availability of a collectivity with which the individual identifies - people who are negotiating the same issues of displacement and hostility and sharing the same place in the gender order - is helpful. It allows them to maintain favoured aspects of culture and talk through problems in a way which some find therapeutic to tell, and others find educational to hear.

Arise and Shine group participants had been in the country for different lengths of time but all had been profoundly and negatively affected by going through the asylum system. Activities which encouraged them to focus on their personal strengths and qualities and to give and receive positive endorsements from one another – often referred to as ‘self-esteem’ work – met with appreciation. Arise and Shine was a place to meet role models, and women took courage from seeing others go through dreaded experiences, and survive. ‘Becoming political’ through the Freirian process of talking about problems and identifying their structural cause was important for some of the women. For others it was having an outlet for their anger and a place to channel their already thought-through ideas of what needs to change. Engaging in action together – having a shared purpose and a focus on the injustices of the asylum system - enriched the group process. For Tendayi one of the crucial aspects was that Arise and Shine was that:

GAP took us on a holistic nature, they didn't focus on one, on their campaigns that is strategic only, but all the whole, all what affects us - physical, social, emotional, spiritual, everything (Tendayi, interview).

ZIWO members, who already had their women's group and Zimbabwean churches to provide cultural reinforcement, appreciated having a structured space in which to share their doubts, achievements and struggles and receive empathetic acknowledgement, praise, encouragement and suggestions from others, including the facilitators. The fact that a host society group had showed welcome and interest was important, contrasting with the usual need to struggle to create their own solutions. An atmosphere of welcome was key to the success of the women's gatherings as well, with attention to details such as the map, food, and drums 'touching' them in different ways and contributing to a sense of being given permission to relax and 'be themselves'. Because of external hostility, such a group can act as a refuge, somewhere where their cultures and forms of sociality are respected and shared. That Arise and Shine was described as a 'family' by women recognised the intimacy and care which is hoped for from a family environment. The process was 'owned' by the participants; they were not clients but active members, making decisions and taking on tasks regardless of language barriers.

The effects of patriarchal power are intrinsically bound up with other oppressions that shape women's lives as migrants, whose reasons for seeking asylum are frequently linked to their gender. As well as the difficulties of navigating society at large, a women's group allows the struggles of the private realm to be aired and solidarity found. As a space located between the public and the private realm, it can nurture abilities to deal with both. The multi-cultural nature of the group was appreciated by participants, who enjoyed being together as women of the globe, who, due to their gender roles, face "universal challenges" (Tendayi, Arise and Shine meeting). Forming alliances across religious and cultural difference was seen as an important dimension of integration: "The Home Office want us to integrate, so that is how we integrate" (Sofia, interview)⁵². Another strength of the group was uniting women with different levels of experience and confidence and at different points in the 'asylum journey'. It meant they could support one another from different

⁵² Daley has suggested that integration in the UK is a vexed question, since it is not always obvious what is the local dominant culture into which you might need or choose to integrate – especially in areas (those most often chosen by NASS) where the population has been in flux for decades due to immigration, emigration and the cycles of demolition, redevelopment and attempted social engineering known as 'regeneration'. One of Daley's respondents raised the question of 'integration into what?', telling her: "This area has very few host community groups so I think the local communities, which are mostly either established migrant communities or new communities, are influencing each other more than they are influenced by the wider [host] community that is very, very unseen" (2009: 166).

points of vantage. The same is occurring in GAP Unit's Step Up groups, which include British-born women from ethnic minorities as well as newcomers with fluent or no English and anything from basic education to postgraduate qualifications.

4. Empowering practice

Feedback from participants gave rise to (or confirmed) various aspects of practice knowledge for GAP Unit.

Practical considerations:

- Having children cared for separately, away from the group, allows mothers to fully concentrate and contribute. Either child-minding money should be given up front or a crèche provided.
- Refreshments - ideally hot food, home-cooked food, are essential. Women each brought a dish to Arise and Shine meetings while at other events a participant cooked for all in return for expenses. For many people food only becomes a meal once it involves meat, so meat dishes should be included (something I acknowledge reluctantly as a vegetarian).⁵³
- A warm meeting space can be an important respite from the damp, cold, uncomfortable places many NASS-housed and destitute asylum seekers are living in.
- Reimbursing travel expenses is essential
- Even if people understand little English (and there is no one to translate for them) they will benefit from being part of the group process and from taking on appropriate tasks.

Group work recommendations:

- Well-structured, varied sessions opening with a warm up exercise (for example, an opportunity to share current challenges or recent achievements) and ending with evaluation.
- Ensuring everyone feels able to contribute to discussion and feels heard and valued.
- Respect for religious sensibility, without necessarily making this explicit, to favour freedom of expression.
- Not asking intrusive questions about people's history or asylum cases – participants should choose what they wish to share.
- Not seeing women asylum seekers through a prism of vulnerability – once trust is established, supporting them to leave their comfort zones and to challenge themselves. Understanding that women are at different stages and need different kinds of support, but that all, over time, benefit from small, non-coercive opportunities to exercise agency and move beyond a passive service user role.
- Ensuring there is a thorough debrief after all actions and events, especially when these have been challenging. Sitting down afterwards with refreshments to talk through

⁵³ I am less happy about providing meat to groups who are not living in poverty, but Carolina and I disagree about this.

how people felt and feel, what was achieved, what could have been better, should be a reflex action.

- Soliciting feedback and encouraging critical engagement among participants.
- Open and honest communication, sensitivity to individual needs and a demonstrative caring approach are the necessary indicators of ‘genuineness’.

If empowerment and integration ultimately lie in political action of some kind, host community allies (who may include settled migrants) are needed to provide contacts, liaise with partners and power holders and achieve access to other resources. GAP Unit was able to use its third sector status to gain the collaboration of arts venues, councils and schools, and to link participants in to NWTWC. Experienced facilitators who can design a well thought-out group process and deliver training which is sensitively tailored to the needs of a specific group, are also invaluable. There is a role for one-off or occasional sessions for existing groups, as the Phase 1. workshops showed and the following comment from Sofia illustrates:

What I think also you can do also for WAST, maybe for the future Hannah, is like having workshops for us women, where you will ask maybe strong women, not British people, but say like maybe strong women in WAST... people who you know is strong, to come and motivate these women and to help them... how to come out of their shell (Sofia, interview).

When asked if that would not happen anyway at WAST (since she was suggesting herself and other members as the ‘invited’ speakers), she said:

Yes, that is what we do but there is never a chance, I mean where you can as one person come... like sometimes you need just a workshop for women, where you bring some women just to tell them about how to empower themselves.

Qualifications

There was a change of Government and policy on asylum and migration ‘evolved’ over the course of the project, but most of the priorities identified remain sadly relevant. In May 2013, it was announced that the UKBA would be taken back inside the HO and split into an immigration/visa service and a law enforcement command. This is unlikely to have positive consequences for asylum seekers and other migrants, especially given the Home Secretary’s intention to “bring in legislation...to make it far easier to carry out asylum and immigration deportations”(Travis, 2013).

Building the thesis around analysis of Arise and Shine created the question of what additional contextual material to incorporate. In the end my general (non-comprehensive)

overview of the local refugee sector, the section drawing least on primary data, was relegated to an appendix in favour of material more closely related to the participants' experiences. My primary concern, in attending to the specificity of the small group, was to emphasise participants' commonality and diversity, interrupting oversimplified dominant constructions and representations which attach to women from the majority world. Trying to do justice to the preoccupations of a diverse group of individuals and my own wide-ranging concerns has contributed to a sense of having embarked on lots of short journeys in different directions, none of which could be pursued very far. Many debates have been touched on briefly and I am aware of a few abrupt shifts of gaze and theoretical register. Also, being a snapshot of a particular project and group it does not claim to be a balanced account of a gendered experience of the UK asylum system (less still one that is situated in terms of supranational debates and policy on migration). There is very little on the issue of the quality of HO decision making, for example, since integration issues were what members predominantly brought to the Arise and Shine campaign. Although the Arise and Shine group included non-refugees, the struggles of those in the asylum system have occupied centre stage in the thesis. Against my intentions, this may have had the effect of rendering other kinds of migrant less visible and their cause less valid. It could, however, be argued (with provisos) that:

The enduring impact of enforced reliance on the state, no-choice in practically any aspects of their lives and the culture of disbelief in relation to decision-making have impacts that no other migrant group will experience....Other migrants on other types of visas always have the option, whether a desirable one or not, to return to their country of origin. This is not available to refugees (Mulvey, 2013: 154).

Enduring preoccupations

Critics of refugee advocacy who contend that the responses of receiving populations to inward migration⁵⁴ are too often sidelined, might want to level this accusation at this study. It is perhaps a shortcoming that I have neither sought to locate my position (on migration and social relations nationally and transnationally⁵⁵) in terms of worked through, realpolitik solutions, nor framed it in entirely philosophical terms. Ray argues that "UK citizens' complaints of being insufficiently prioritised over asylum seekers build on real

⁵⁴ I asked a Zimbabwean health worker who works with refugees if asylum seekers are placed at greater risk of racist abuse by the fact that most NASS housing is in deprived urban areas. She was nonplussed by the question, saying that racism is more prevalent among middle class professionals and service providers.

⁵⁵ There has not been space for detailed examination of the contemporary politics of race which inform Britain's immigration policy and treatment of asylum seekers: a multiculturalism which, in Pitcher's words squares "a nominal liberalism and egalitarianism" with "the brutal fact of racist practice" (2007: 176).

feelings of neglect” (2012: 24) which need to be taken more seriously. However, I would endorse his solution of more constructive engagement with local communities, and with more space would have mentioned the City of Sanctuary (CoS) movement (which has a fledgling presence in Manchester) which he praises for the way it “encourages local people to be welcoming... by increasing their self-reflection and increasing their involvement with newcomers” (Ray, 2012: 20). Darling writes that CoS takes a “grassroots approach to political change” and that one of the ways it achieves this is through “school visits by refugees and asylum seekers”. Since this was one of Arise and Shine’s activities, I realise we too could claim Darling’s description (of CoS) as “enacting the right to equal participation within the life of the city for those taking sanctuary... beyond the bounds of the sedimented norms of membership, hospitality, and protection”. Arise and Shine was about assisting women to take their place in society, and for all the statist, third sector political register of much of the work, it was underpinned by the women’s own politics of ‘rightful presence’; their claim to legitimate presence on an account of equality, as human beings. Darling suggests that making asylum (or sanctuary) “a matter of political struggle... to make presence legitimate”, conjures “historical and geographical relations of injustice” and calls into question “the limitations of existing institutionalised rights”. In other words, CoS, at least in some moments, aspires to encouraging members of the host community (in the deprived areas of concern to Ray) to perceive commonality with refugees in terms of their own need to resist oppression and economic dispossession.

This thesis has highlighted the importance of CD in enabling migrant women to assume a place in the public sphere, and lamented the increasing loss of structures and practices which nurtured this under New Labour. But there is some irony in empowering women to integrate into and adjust to a system based on systematic exploitation, in which the individual refugee’s right to stay is set against the mass exclusion of others, the entrenchment of nationalist thinking and the increasing militarisation of borders. During my PhD, writers and thinkers in the field of CD have been reflecting seriously on how the profession could reassert an oppositional approach in its work with communities, in view of the fact that always ‘starting from where people are at’ limits CD to short term ameliorative action and prevents fundamental challenge to the status quo. At a TSRC conference at GMCVO, Marilyn Taylor (2012) posited that a shared vision of where we want society to be in 20 years should perhaps now guide and drive CD work. I found this exciting, while being unsure if shared visions are ever possible. I have sometimes felt unsuited to community work, having become identified at an impressionable age with the

more revolutionary end of politics; a sense of urgency regarding the need to combat capitalism and climate change not always sitting well with popular education which “opposes the ‘vanguardism’ idea, the idea of ‘the illuminated’” (Carolina, email). My anti-state leanings contrast, too, with the GAP Unit’s “orientation towards the official political stage” (Zavos, 2010: 307). However, from feminism I have learned that complexities should be “courted rather than avoided or approached as ‘problems’ to be ‘solved’” (Clark, 2006: 243). Despite their precarious position, migrants should not be viewed as anti-majoritarian, ideal potential recruits for radical causes. As allies we can keep up the radical struggles while supporting refugees in their own priorities. Through dialogue and debate multiplicity is enhanced, positions shift and everyone (in my experience especially the activists) becomes wiser. The strength of GAP Unit’s work is in recognising the political significance of “informal identity practices, every-day interactions, inter-personal relationships” (Zavos, 2010: 307), while Arise and Shine satisfied one of the injunctions for a re-radicalised CD: that it “assume[s] the possibility of an affectionate political solidarity beyond borders, and problematise[s] the notion of borders itself” (Ledwith, 2011: 43).

Areas for future research

The situated nature of this study was brought home by a conversation with a friend whose female (mainly Somali) ESOL students in London have mostly never attended primary school, so that some of the Arise and Shine women’s demands – for qualifications to be recognised, for access to higher education, for more opportunities for civic action – were novel examples to her of the barriers facing refugee women. I tried to find a statistical breakdown of the education and class profile of asylum seekers in the UK, to put my findings into demographic perspective, but was unsuccessful in this.⁵⁶ Tracking down such data (either for new arrivals or existing refugee populations), or doing the primary research, would be interesting, despite geographical variation and the erratic nature of migrant flows.

Another interesting area for further research would be to capture the women’s reflections on and interpretations of British society in the light of their dialogical transversal perspectives. Some of my participants were skilled at communicating their perceptions and could shed light on aspects of society and culture which we take for granted; either for its

⁵⁶ Debora Singer of Asylum Aid sent my request to the Women’s Asylum Charter Google group, but no statistical information was forthcoming.

own sake or with a view to improving community relations and introducing innovation into governance. Chapter 7. questioned to what extent men-only groups similar to Arise and Shine, designed to help men conceptualise their needs and interests and take collective action, could be empowering and beneficial. This is another fertile area for exploration.

Concluding remarks

It has felt important for this thesis to show the toll that the UK asylum system takes on people who come here seeking safety, and to point out the consequences of treating asylum seekers in this way. They are grotesque for individuals (especially for the increasing numbers being detained, fast-tracked and deported without access to legal advice) and it is destabilising for society to have people subsisting as non-citizens, destitute or not, for long periods. They are also costly, since under such conditions people become ill, depressed and unable to work long-term, or end up in jobs far below their capabilities, despite arriving highly skilled and motivated. A more humane asylum process would, in Mulvey's words:

be better for those going through the asylum system, but would also have longer term positive impacts on society generally as refugees would integrate more fully and more quickly. This would also be cost effective for the government if refugees were enabled to rebuild their lives and begin to contribute to society, as they desire to do. The present system seeks to both control and infantilise refugees and this has enduring effects on their independence in the future (2013: 156).

Although we lost touch with Fiona and Rut moved to Birmingham, many alliances forged through Arise and Shine have continued to strengthen. Maria's son will be seven this year, so she will finally become legally resident. She was hoping to train to be an Operating Department Assistant, but since GAP Unit's Step Up course she has been investigating other options and is shadowing and assisting with the current Step Up training, which Elinah, Carolina and I co-facilitate. The previous cohort were taught by Tendayi and Jo (Manchester WISP coordinator during Phase 1.), with Naila and Lydia cooking lunch for the sessions. Naila plans to set up a catering business and Lydia has applied for a BA in Youth and Community Studies at MMU, where my DoS Carol Packham would be her tutor. Sofia, who is on the verge of getting Leave to Remain⁵⁷ plans to start an MA in social policy at Salford University, where she enjoyed the Apprentice course so much. Tendayi, in the nicest twist of all, will be embarking on a PhD with my other academic supervisor, Professor Erica Burman. Having heard about a doctoral scheme for 'non-

⁵⁷ Sofia and her husband won their latest appeal and the HO declined to challenge it. In theory, they are safe. However, UKBA's latest trick is to take anything up to six months to acknowledge the change in circumstances. So they remain on Section 4, having to report weekly in Salford (despite living in Bolton) and trying to make plans rather than get depressed at the ongoing state of limbo.

traditional' students, she submitted a proposal to the University of Manchester for a comparative investigation into the education of boys in Britain and Zimbabwe. Erica, who had just left MMU to take up a professorship in the education department, recognised the name Tendayi Madzunu from this thesis, and called her for interview.

Postscript

This postscript chapter is the result of a process of critical reflection on the boundaries between activism and academia, and the differential demands of these with respect to the production of knowledge. The elapse of a few months after the finalisation of the text provided the critical distance needed to examine the way issues and tensions across these borders may have affected the contribution to knowledge made by this thesis.

The Take Part CBC's CASE Studentships were envisaged by its founding academics, in dialogue with partners, as a way of training up new researchers with third sector-applicable knowledge and skills, for their own career advancement and for the future gain of the sector. At the same time, the organisations hosting the students were to benefit from the projects undertaken through staff and / or volunteer involvement in the research process (through the building of relationships and skills); through the generation of internally instructive findings; and/or through the production of a body of evidence which would allow them to better demonstrate (to funders and others) the nature of the issues they deal with, the effectiveness of their work or the current or potential demand for their services. Some of the CASE studentships were set up like consultancies, with the research questions decided by the hosting third sector organisations and a student recruited to carry them out. Research methodologies were presumably not dictated but neither was there necessarily an expectation that the resulting work would be highly theorised or abstracted from the language familiar to policy makers and those involved in running the organisations. Thus, the academic requirements were articulated as being for research orientated in quite an instrumental direction. While wanting students to probe difficulties and dilemmas encountered during their placements, the CBC was seeking policy- and practice-relevant conclusions and recommendations formulated within the realist frame which characterises most writing on and within the third sector. A 2013 edited book, *Community Research for Community Development*, the empirical chapters of which each reflect on a different project within the CBC, sums up quite well the aims and purpose of the PhD Studentships. It sets out to "...to consider ways in which research has contributed to community development policy and practice in the case in question... to illustrate issues of wider relevance for community development more generally... [and]... to demonstrate the relevance of research processes that are themselves rooted in community development principles, geared towards the goals of empowerment and social justice" (Mayo et al, 2013: 16).

My persistent preoccupation at the start of the PhD was to decide how and if working with the GAP Unit could ever be more to me than a relatively benign means of earning a living. I had always found the community sector unsatisfactorily a-political in contrast to the priorities, habitus and tactics of the radical protest movements I had been part of. It had been a difficult adjustment to make, from a focus on anarchist autonomies and direct action to the status-quo compliant, reformism of reviewing gender equality policies or helping community groups get constituted or ‘discuss their issues’. However, nor was I convinced of the long-term efficacy of some of activism I had been involved with. I hoped studying might help me gain new political direction, and the supervisory team was not averse to my original plan to make some kind of comparison between third sector and social movement activities. At one point I was intending to investigate how the concept of ‘empowerment’ was understood in different contexts, but the more I read about empowerment and power concepts, the more elaborate - and vague - my plans became. It was when I was floundering with all this that I discovered that Carolina had a clear vision for my project - a ‘systematisation’ of Arise and Shine. Whether she steered me to it or just waited for me to arrive at it, I’m not sure, but at some point it was presented as inevitable that the function of my PhD was to extend the advocacy process of the Arise and Shine, take the women’s words out into the world, document our practice and situate it in relation to the political and other factors influencing GAP Unit. It would be a realist account foregrounding the ‘voices’ of the participants, focusing theoretical frameworks around philosophies of popular education (including liberation psychology) and the theory-making emerging from the women’s own situated perspectives. It would be a work of advocacy involving, ideally, extensive participant involvement and verification to mitigate the possibility of “ventriloquism” (Bowman 2012: 6); in effect, an extension of Freirian group work methodology into the research. For Carolina, ‘benefiting GAP Unit’ meant using the research process to strengthen the women we were working with - drawing on their ‘folk wisdom’ in the way her own MA thesis, *God is in the cookies: Theological wisdom of women of the barrio* (New York, 1994), had drawn on the testimonies of the women she had worked with in Venezuela.

Voice debates

There was collective agreement that my study should be located in the feminist, emancipatory research tradition and the supervisors all helped me in different ways to understand the different reflexive levels of analysis required to attempt to do justice to a

group of known research participants. I was encouraged to let the women ‘speak for themselves’ (i.e. quote them verbatim) as much as possible, an approach which was validated when, after sending each of them relevant pages of the draft to check, a number of the women expressed appreciation at seeing the extracts from our conversations and the uses made of them. The texts which emerge from the community development field commonly employ a discourse of ‘voice’, reflecting the goals of practitioner-academics to feed marginalised perspectives, proposals and demands into debates from which they are typically missing, and to sensitise power-holders to the consequences of the actions and decisions they take (e.g. Batsleer 2011, Camino 2000, De Tona & Lentin 2011, Dinham 2007, Naples 1992, Percy-Smith & Burns 2013, Rooke & Kendall 2013, Watts 2013). Constructing case studies, conducting interviews and quoting illustrative examples from people’s narratives is an effective strategy, often with the strong, emotive appeal needed at a time when there is so much to defend and fight for.

Inevitably, though, I encountered debates around the crisis of representation (Alcoff, 1991:9), which put question marks round the possibility of ‘giving voice’ to the researched. One issue was the way my framing of questions, hearing of answers, selection of examples and acts of translation and interpretation will have determined what is finally communicated (Burman, 1992; Gillies & Alldred, 2002). I attempted to mitigate these inevitabilities by checking back with participants, yet it was me (in conscious ways and no doubt unwittingly, too) who was in control of the arguments made, if not of how they would be received⁵⁸. Then there was the fact that, like Alldred, by “not specifying otherwise and by employing a comfortable, conventional language style, I produced an implicitly realist warrant for the account even though I did not always seek to present the account as necessarily objective. Therefore, I reinforced an objective-realist epistemology” (Alldred, 1999: 186). In other words, I endorsed the illusion of the authentic, stable, integrated psychological subject in the way I sought to incorporate the women’s words.

That reality is discursively constructed has significant explanatory appeal for me, as stated in Chapter 2 (p.42). However, being sceptical about the existence of objective facts should not debar us from presenting “local empirical accounts... without objectivist foundations” (Alldred, 1998: 157), especially when we are attempting to represent the particular voices of particular, named participants. Most of us experience a sense of continuity in relation to

⁵⁸ It surprised me, for example, when more than one reader summed up this thesis as being “all about the participants’ voices” – while it does include plenty of quotes, I see it as ‘about’ lots of things!

being a particular, embodied person (Davies & Harré, 2007: 59), so in some ways it matters little whether or not we reveal that what a person is saying is “produced from what was culturally available to them, rather than from a private reserve of meaning” (Alldred, 1998: 155) After all,

A particular strength of the post-structuralist research paradigm... is that it recognises both the constitutive force of discourse, and in particular of discursive practices, and at the same time recognises that people are capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices (Davies & Harré, 2007:46).

In places in the thesis, there may sometimes be uncritical deployment of terms and concepts, such as the commonplace Freirian notion that people should be treated “as experts on their own lives” (p.88). Again there are two sides to this. I wanted to show that the women we worked with were proactive, politically aware people claiming a strong will to contribute to mainstream society; and to communicate their experiences and perspectives concerning advocacy and different strategies for survival, reinvention and integration. To have repeatedly emphasised the partial nature of their stories is unlikely to have boosted the challenge posed by their situated knowledge to the status quo. On the other hand, I agree with Alldred that “discursive approaches, by rejecting the possibility of escape from the cultural web of meanings, direct our attention to the consideration of what ideas we unwittingly reinforce” (Alldred, 1998: 164), and it may be that my (largely) realist approach did condition me to seek a generalised picture of ‘what worked’ rather than to out the contradictions, and what did not ‘fit’.

Is the account produced overly celebratory? Even in research which does not aim to be neutral, but to do justice, the researcher has a responsibility to guard against bias, or “a skewed view that is presented in such a way that the audience for the research is not in a position to allow for it” (Griffiths, 2009: 16). Did I allow bias to creep in by “looking only for confirming evidence and overlooking or ignoring disconfirming evidence; or by reporting only some of the results and suppressing others” (Griffiths, 2009: 16)? After most of GAP Unit’s events and activities I tend to move seamlessly into compiling an inventory of possible mistakes, unlike Carolina, who first notices what went well. My initial instinct as researcher was, in fact, to look for problems to dissect and discuss, but over the first year I began to see the importance of cultivating a positive outlook and talking up the best in people and situations. Freirian community workers are known also as ‘animators’ for a reason - an ability to project and transmit energy and enthusiasm is part

of the role, and I took inspiration to a large extent from the many Arise and Shine members who had a facility for finding joy in small things and lifting the spirits of the group. There is always potential for strong, articulate individuals to disproportionately influence the ambience, norms and collective meaning-making within a group, and for even positive ‘group think’ to be coercive as people feel they must conform to a particular emotional repertoire or style of interaction. However, Arise and Shine was self-selecting and the women did not have to keep coming (some did drop away). It was often mentioned that being at the meetings cheered them up, and it seemed to be a common strategy to name blessings and smile (or sing a song) as a way of setting aside a low mood. I can’t know to what extent people told me what they thought I wanted to hear (if they did, they weren’t aware that I would have been more interested in criticism!) but the views expressed in the interviews and the evaluations at each stage of Arise and Shine were overwhelmingly positive. My natural cynicism was thus somewhat undermined by this feedback and I stopped looking primarily for flaws and to deconstruct the project. The Freirian method is to listen to and give credence to what participants have to say, and most of what was said was positive. I would occasionally (in conversation or in early written drafts) critique some aspect of our practice, only for Carolina to challenge my perspective or explain something I had misinterpreted, converting me to her way of thinking and thus neutralising the problem. Chapter 6. covers some conflict and misunderstandings which occurred during the WAST collaboration, which I had written about initially at much greater length. However, I agreed when Carolina pointed out that going in detail through concerns raised by Vicky, a fellow ally, when the participants themselves may have expressed different or contrary opinions, would have unbalanced the account.

I may have written at times as though CD processes are self-evidently transformative, which they are patently not in all cases. Some of the examples of successful projects presented at a national Take Part ‘showcase event’ I attended were distinctly underwhelming given the amount of money put into them: a park tidied up; a community shop got off the ground in a rural, middle-class community; some participatory budgeting of the most tokenistic kind. Empowerment often accrues to a few individuals who go on to become community representatives or advance in work or training, rather than transforming structures in lasting ways. As Emejulu notes, key aspects of CD are often under-theorized (Emejulu, 2011: 387), and despite its intentions to challenge inequality and injustice, it can easily just reinforce the status quo. Ethnographic, practice-based and practice-relevant work surely uncovers important information and guidance and offers an

essential counterweight to the scientific, quantitative sociological research which still receives the greatest attention from policy makers. Yet writing about CD (my own included) is also often riddled with normative terms and bland generalisations, and is rarely as inspiring (for me) as writing which is politically prefigurative or which attempts to deconstruct and destabilise ordinary ways of looking. The forced migration / refugee studies literature and feminist, critical race and post-colonial writing on multiculturalism and belonging in which I became immersed, is, by contrast, often richly grounded in philosophical ideas.

For example, this thesis talks about ‘the state’ and ‘the public sector’ as though such terms are transparent, but as critical geographer Nick Gill points out, we remain “spectacularly unclear as to what the state is” (Gill, 2010: 632). Approaching the state from the Foucauldian perspective of the micro-level of everyday practices, he shows it to be “both a material force and illusionary creation”; a “‘regime of truth’ that can mobilise free and volitional actors to perform ‘state’ practices and promulgate ‘state’ logics”, so that “even if we reject the state as a pre-social entity, we are still faced with the fact that a great many social practices are undertaken *in its name*” (Gill, 2009: 9). Structuralist notions of the state struggle to account for the forms of state power experienced by asylum seekers, such as “the deployment of stealth, confusion, change, mismanagement and legal/jurisdictional ambiguity” (Gill, 2010: 639), but Gill sees this chronic uncertainty and chaotic instability as not only accidental but critical to its functioning; a form governmentality “serving to keep people insecure, passive and pessimistic and to reiterate the indifference and power of the state” (Griffiths, 2013: 280). His notion of ‘presentational state power’ captures the way that the social world is presented to its responsabilised intermediaries “in ways that seek to elicit uses of their discretion which conform to the notion of a world that is divided into state and society” (Gill, 2009: 26). Its power is contingent on their perceptions and loyalties - hence the value in reaching out to public sector workers with the WAST play, to offer alternative presentations of the asylum seekers in their care. The Arise and Shine group had recognised this reality, and acted on it, and this thesis has documented the process. However, theorising it as Gill does, using Foucault’s concept of governmentality to open up ways of thinking and talking about the state, might have strengthened the illocutionary force of my account.

I was happy for the emphasis to be on the women’s perspectives and theory making, rather than it being an exercise primarily in feeding my ‘data’ into specified theoretical

frameworks. On the other hand, I have presented their ideas in relation to existing theoretical and conceptual resources, if not in a systematic way. The intention was to weave their words together with my commentary and select from their stories in ways which offered them up to scrutiny without devaluing or detracting from their own meanings. At various points I experimented with methodologies which would have increased the theoretical complexity of the work – applying positioning theory (Harré & van Lange hove, 1998), Foucauldian micro-analysis of power (Doná, 2007) or Herman’s dialogical self theory (Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Hermans & DiMaggio, 2007), for example. Positioning analysis was tempting because I was shown by a visiting scholar from Melbourne (Christine Redman) how I might analyse the interview and other transcripts I already had, and layer them up by having further conversations with each interviewee to reveal more about the women’s changing position in relation to British society as a consequence of their engagement in Arise and Shine and other groups. I decided not to as it would have broken my original contract with the women - that I was studying the project rather than them as people and that I would make as few demands on their time as possible, since they had not signed up to be part of a research project when they joined Arise and Shine. Coming for at least two more interview-type meetings merely so that I could have data for positioning analysis was more than I wanted to ask in those circumstances.

As well as wanting to keep close to the participants’ words in order to honour them as individuals rather than treating them as sources of anonymous data, I chose to write in a simple, non-ludic style so it would be accessible to them as potential readers. This was a slightly vexed issue as I was not convinced that many intended to read it (I think one, possibly two, might do so at some point). My fellow student China Mills wrote that she would hear a particular respondent’s voice in her head, saying “this critique all sounds lovely, but the people you are writing about must be able to read this, what use is it if people can’t understand?”, to which she concluded “She has a point” (Mills, 2012: 51). But she did not allow the concern to constrain her writing stylistically or limit her engagement with theory. I’m not sure whether it was a valid constraint for me to impose on myself, though I think if one or two women had told me afterwards that they had tried to read the thesis but found it alien and impenetrable, I would have felt awful.

I brought in other writers’ explanatory ideas, in some chapters more than others. However, I have continued since to encounter texts which have spoken to aspects of the work in new

ways. One example – demonstrating how theory can crystallise rather than complicate - is Jenny Slater's (2012) account of her involvement in an advocacy project for young people with learning disabilities. Just as I was a bit sceptical of the value of Arise and Shine back in 2009, when it seemed that nothing substantive could be achieved by the process, she started out wondering what the point of the 'Voice' project was, since few tangible outcomes were evident and the support staff seemed to be doing most of it themselves. To explain how she learned to see it differently, she borrows metaphors from Deleuze (via other authors):

Hickey-Moody and Wood (2008: 13) use the phrase "imagining otherwise" to describe how a Deleuzian perspective opens up the potential for the unknown. They adopt Deleuze's use of 'sad' and 'joy', defining sad as passions which reduce and joy as passions which increase the connective power of acting. Following this, a pedagogy allowing us to 'imagine otherwise' is one which embraces 'joy' by encouraging performative desire... Deleuzoguattarian thinking is not necessarily about empowerment, but "challenging and supporting (rhizomatically)... productive desire" (Goodley, 2007: 16)... As my relationships with those involved grew, I saw that staff took their member-led ethos seriously... doing what I had failed to do at the beginning of my time with Voice, considering the young people's desires as productive and valuing this over any tangible outcomes of the Youth Parliament..."our interests are not in formulating clear aims - stratifying the desert - but in openly embracing the becomings of relationships" (Goodley, 2007: 20) (Slater, 2012).

Thinking about sadness and joy, rhizomatic becomings and performative desire in relation to Arise and Shine might have led to a more engaging style of account, possibly just by tapping into my own imagination and desire to produce more writerly work.

Attention to discourse

I reflected on the ways in which Arise and Shine was shaped by policy discourse, but perhaps did not scrutinise the performative work these and other discourses might have been doing *within* the project to produce particular versions of citizenship and gendered subjectivity. For instance, as a queer, childless woman, I might have wanted to say more on the gender norms operationalised within the group, as an example of the judgements involved in working across difference. There is not much more to add to the commentary on p.185, however, where I explain that being an ally does not mean forging a common identity with those with whom you are in alliance – the idea at the heart of Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, and idea of 'coalitional agency' described by Carrillo Rowe (2009) in her inspirational work on relationships across 'power lines'. The heteronormativity and implicitly universalising conception of womanhood based on maternal frameworks (still the default in British society, and most others, too) was the natural consequence of the

women's reference points for social structure and role allocation. That gender roles shift over time and space is tacit or explicit knowledge for most people, especially migrants with their intimate knowledge of at least two societies. As Tendayi noted (when a group of us were chatting after a meeting): "It depends on the era when you grow up". She mentioned that her sons have to do their share of the housework, in marked contrast to their father's generation, and that although she herself would only ever wear skirts, she remembers seeing falala (bell-bottoms) for the first time as a young woman and thinking, "If I can have a baby girl, I will allow her to wear them!" (Which I recalled the day I first met her social worker daughter, and she was wearing jeans).

If any individual had voiced (or we had otherwise detected) discomfort at the heteronormative assumptions, it might have become relevant to grapple with the notion of the social construction of gender – an idea not everyone necessarily accepts, nor which meshes neatly with, for example, Biblical understandings of God-ordained male and female complementarity. On the other hand, humans are quite capable of holding contradictory viewpoints: "Most people, most of the time wittingly or unwittingly accept that their beliefs about themselves and their environment are full of unresolved contradictions which one just lives with" (Davies & Harré, 2007: 59). In an article for *Community Development Journal*, Akwugo Emejulu ventures that feminist CD should be a process of critiquing the "existing micro- and macro-social relations that reproduce certain identities that ascribe to women and men unequal social roles", and should occupy itself with "transforming the norms, values and politics that perpetuate these gendered inequalities" (2011: 379). She calls out writers on CD for mobilising false sense of gender unity, as in the statement "'We believe women suffer oppression as a result of being women and that it is good for women to organise on their own' (Dixon et al., 1982: 60)" (Emejulu, 1999: 381). *Arise and Shine* was powerful precisely for the sense of unity in action which arose from shared experience and migrant positioning, and, as Heather Rakes astutely identifies, the accountability of the ally requires "understanding that we are differentially vulnerable, both to the figuration of universal subjectivity and to its dissolution" (Rakes, 2013). However, I would agree with Emejulu that CD processes can be important spaces for revealing the way identities are "structured and ordered by dominant ways of interpreting reality" (2011: 380). Several of *Arise and Shine's* participants intended to become increasingly active in the public sphere, and had the project gone on longer they might have wanted to discuss issues arising from collaboration and coalition with broader networks of women. This might have included questioning

gendered essentialisms, which, like any inflexible dogma, “can hamper our ability to effectively construct political identities that support democracy, equality and social justice” (Emejulu, 2011: 384). Differences connected to race, nationality and political ideology might well have had more salience and immediacy within such coalitions, of course. Another strategy would have been to follow Aitken and Burman (1999) in attending to the convergent and divergent identity claims and multiple positions occupied by all of us in the group, and especially to performative shifts of identification which occurred as the research relationship developed.

There will have been other discourses in play that I was unable to pick up on, due to my cultural inability to recognise them as such. However, one common trope discernable in our Arise and Shine discussions, among facilitators and participants, was the idea that ‘a trouble shared is a trouble halved’, which can be traced to different sources including religious discourses of confession and contemporary therapeutics. Talking to and comforting one another is aeons-old hominoid behaviour, but the globalisation of Western thought has additionally interpolated us as ‘psychological subjects’ who construct ourselves and our relationships through ‘psy-therapy’ discourses which have floated from professional knowledge-bases into popular wisdom. GAP Unit designed exercises to get people sharing ‘issues’ or naming ‘role models’, and talked of ways to support our own and others’ ‘self-esteem’ - notions which seem so helpful for explaining experience to ourselves. Psychologisation (Rose, 1999; de Vos et al, 2010), Alldred notes, is an ideology in the true sense of “working continuously through the mobilisation of popular notions of ‘common-sense’... naturalised as consensual meanings and uncontentious truth” (1999: 7). I did not want to appear to be claiming superior knowledge and positioning myself outside of the shared repertoires of the group, and thus did not seek to identify and analyse discourses in this way, although I did note religion as a major shared discursive resource. It does however, shed light on the function of organisations such as GAP Unit to see them in terms of the promulgation of particular discourses – furnishing people from elsewhere with what they need to make sense of and operate intelligibly within new discursive environments. A good illustration of this was GAP Unit’s Step Up! courses, which Tendayi, Elinah and Maria helped to facilitate in 2012 and 2013 and which were attended by, among nearly 50 others, Naima, Lydia and Mavis. We aimed to do what Jobcentre Plus fails to do by helping women get to grips with the different elements of job seeking, including where to look, how to prepare a CV, how to apply and what to expect from an interview. Several attendees said the most important aspect had been learning the need to

abandon a lifetime's schooling in humility and modesty and instead aim to 'sell themselves' at each stage of the process. For some individuals, describing and listing personal attributes and achievements was a strange and difficult reversal to perform. We gave them language for describing their skills and qualities to their advantage, which for a majority (who saw nursing, nursery, community and care work as offering their best chances of (low paid) employment) meant relational qualities of self-management, care and compassion - the "historically-constituted stereotypical attributes of women" (Parker, 2013: 14)⁵⁹. There could be few better demonstrations of the way organisations such as ours help to enrol migrants into the patriarchal, neoliberal order. The feedback from participants – many of whom gained friends and confidence, found work or restarted their education as a result – was full of grateful testimony. While it feels somewhat disingenuous to include this paragraph, I agree with Parker that it is important not just to celebrate human agency but to question the conditions in which it operates and the political, economic and institutional structures condition it (2013: 12).

Politics

I had felt wary of crossing the divide between activism and academia, probably rightly, as my allegiances did begin to shift. At the beginning of the Studentship I read some very uncompromising, radical theses and thought I should try to use my opportunity to do similar rather than produce more bland, CD 'received wisdom'. Wondering about the efficacy of Freirian methodology in a neoliberal context (fearing its easy recuperation to the capitalist system) I looked into radical pedagogy and came to the work of Paula Allman (e.g. 2001, 2010) and Peter Mayo (e.g. 2009, 2011), and their claims that the practice of critical education automatically leads learners to a recognition that capitalism lies at the root of their oppression. Their methodology is based closely on Freire and Gramsci, but the parallels with Arise and Shine became unhelpful because ours was neither a pedagogical project nor collaborative research. As facilitators we did not intend to transmit our own analyses and ideology but to create a space for the women to support one another and take action. I sometimes wished that Arise and Shine had been set up as PAR⁶⁰; that we and the women had come together with the explicit common purpose of exploring their reality and

⁵⁹ Stories in the news at the time about systemic abuse and neglect in British wards and care homes was the instigation of a conversation about how African women like themselves are the new hope of the NHS, due to their sense of vocation and genuine ability to love and care for the vulnerable.

⁶⁰ This is not to say that action-oriented research methods cannot be used instrumentally to accompany technical-rational, rather than critical, emancipatory aims. They can equally be a glorified form of consultation and used, finally, "to further the ends of the researcher rather than the ends of the researched" (Griffiths 2009: 5)

learning together through collective action. A responsibility to centre the study on their concerns and values would then have been undisputable from the start; likewise my role to “develop the analysis, to make connections to wider social and political processes and situate the project in the critical social science literature” (Fine et al., 2008: 173). PAR practitioner Caitlin Cahill remarks that she finds it easier to proceed with writing and analysis if a project is grounded entirely in collectively produced knowledge (Fine et al., 2008: 173) and I think I would have found the same (especially had I had more narrative material than just some shortish answers to a few very directed questions from me). As it was, I did want to foreground the women’s contributions, but had to elaborate frameworks around them. Largely I followed themes I had identified from the interviews (as outlined on p.201) with some contextual information inserted. But my own interests, for example in the politics of asylum advocacy, come through in the topics addressed, especially in the appendices.

Something I learned on joining a reading group around Allman’s (2010) *Critical Education Against Global Capitalism*, was that she, and some of the academics in the group, decisively rejected the post-structural turn in feminism. I was introduced to the work of Teresa Ebert, Himani Bannerji, Sara Carpenter and Shahrzad Mojab, feminists who hold to a Marxist, materialist understanding of power and oppression and what to do about it, and who accuse the postmodernist refusal of enlightenment thinking (for its colonialist nature) of blocking the view to a better future. I was briefly open to persuasion, but the problem was that all around me I saw the practical consequences of an ideological left which, due to its faith in fundamentals, acted in exclusionary ways and seemed to find it hard to coexist with or accommodate diversity. This in turn prevented me from seeing how their revolutionary visions could ever lead to anything but impasse. An example of what I mean occurred at an open Workers Liberty students meeting in Liverpool which I attended because the topic was ‘Open Borders’. I had come from a reading group discussion of an article by actor network theorist Bruno Latour, in which he criticised Ulrich Beck’s work on cosmopolitanism for presuming that a) we know what the world is to which we would aspire to belong as a common humanity, given that “the assumptions of naturalism have been shown... to be unshared by vast numbers of humans” (Latour, 2004: 458); b) it would be possible to agree on criteria with which to judge ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and c) that cosmopolitanism would be less dangerous than any other hegemonic project. Through this

article I had finally understood the fallacy of the enlightenment discourse of progress⁶¹. So on to Liverpool, where an activist-academic had been invited to explain her stance on internationalism. She began by attacking identity politics and multiculturalism for creating cultural relativism, failing to acknowledge “universal standards of justice and morality” and (more germanely) damaging class politics by ignoring socio-economic conditions. She promoted instead Lenin’s vision of a homogenised, socialist international monoculture, defending his motto of “no privilege for any cultural group” on the basis that it would be impossible to give equality to all groups. Homophobia and Muslim headscarf-wearing were the examples given of oppressions to be fought. In answer to a question about faith schools, it was explained that since adequate provision could not be made for every minority, there should be no separate schooling. This encounter, coming just after the reading group, and not long after chatting with Tendayi about her granddaughter’s school, set up by African parents to preserve their Christian and cultural heritage, marked a decisive end to any flirtation with ‘red feminism’. A Nigerian student at the meeting tried to argue in favour of faith schools, saying that his friends and family feel desperate at seeing their children get lost in a mainstream which scorns their morality system. He was told that it is fine to practice your culture in the home but that institutions such as schools have a responsibility to make sure all children have access to objective facts and ‘universal values’. The idea that the young man’s worldview was as ‘true’ for his community as their atheist, rationalist, scientific worldview was to them, was impossible to get across, even with the Latour article in my bag to quote from.

The post-structural turn, with its attention to identity and intersectionality and the partiality of truth, while not providing an easy rallying point for mass movements, at least understands that consensus on the basis of class position is unworkably simplistic and that solidarity with the oppressed means being alongside them as they determine their own liberation (Anderson, 2005; Bowman, 2013). It does not presuppose that everyone who is oppressed will shortly arrive at the same conclusions about the cosmos. However, as a consequence of adopting this perspective, under the cover of a realist account, I cannot deny that this thesis ends up just where the Marxist feminists such as Allman might have predicted - endorsing modest reformist practice; giving tips on how to empower individual

⁶¹ However, as Alldred, points out “That I experience post-structuralist writing as ‘revealing’, reveals myself as formed through modernist discourses of knowledge and enlightenment” (1999: 269). It is certainly disturbing, and for me barely possible, “to accept the idea that society is not ‘progressing’ towards one’s vision of social justice and that one’s actions do not bring it even slightly closer” (1999: 268).

women and help them integrate into mainstream society, rather than trying to recruit and mobilise for anti-capitalist, environmentalist struggle.

Freirian group work may reinforce hegemonic constructions of citizen subjects and enrol people into dominant (Western) forms of subjectivity. It may also give access to collective and individual forms of empowerment, and promote greater democracy and justice. These are the ironies which post-structural feminist theory helped me to understand are unavoidable (see p.43), ironies which must be accommodated and negotiated case by case. While I wanted, in the thesis, to argue the on behalf of alliance-based CD work like Arise and Shine, I have not steered away from the difficult ironies, such as the potential for asylum seeker solidarity work to reinforce the characterisation of non-refugee migrants as undeserving and unentitled.⁶² On balance, a feminist politics based on relationality and coalition (Carrillo Rowe, 2009; hooks, 1986; Lorde, 1984; Lugones, 2003; Mohanty, 1984; Moya, 1997; Russo, 1991) seems the most productive way forward, and there are in fact many strands within anarchism (both as theorised (e.g. May, 1994; Mueller, 2003; Newman, 2003) and as practically lived) as well as within the Freirian and CD tradition, that have long understood the importance of localised action, of small acts of resistance, and of accompanying others on their own journeys of liberation. This is why, as David Harvey has pointed out, “cultural politics [including postmodernism]... connects better with anarchism than with traditional Marxism, with its simplistic humanism and economism” (quoted in Howie, 2004: 1).

Given post-structuralist, feminist understandings of subjectivity as fluid (Hollway et al, 1984; Alcoff, 1991; Lather, 2007), I would end by stressing that, over the four years of studying GAP Unit’s practice, my perceptions were constantly changing and so (also given the problems of selective and retrospective recall) it is hardly possible to claim to remember how I positioned myself in relation to the project and the participants before we got into the cycle of interviews and discussion. Similarly, and reciprocally, in my seeking to understand and learn from Carolina’s practice, it is likely that our conversations may also have (invisibly) influenced the way she now justifies and explains elements to herself. From this perspective on researcher subjectivity, it is inevitable that there will have been intra-psychic investments distinct from and potentially in conflict with my outlined

⁶² Since submitting the thesis I was contacted by a Swedish researcher looking for organisations in the North West which provide advice and solidarity to ‘illegal’ migrants in the informal economy, to compare with the groups and networks she is involved with in Stockholm. I was ashamed to be able find nothing at all – even the former No Borders activists still active in immigration politics in the city were involved exclusively with asylum seekers/refugees.

political commitments, which in turn will have influenced what I was able to explain or admit in this postscript, and iteratively I may have lain further new meanings over the work in writing this chapter. Hence (perhaps here echoing Derrida (1976)?) this postscript, rather than only coming after, must also be a supplement in a different way. Our narratives are always evolving in new directions as our repertoires of discursive resources change and expand.

References

- Abma, T and Schwandt, T. A. (2011). The practice and politics of sponsored evaluations. In Somekh, B. and Lewin, C. (ed) *Theory and methods in social research*. London: Sage.
- Ackerly, B. and True, J. (2008). Reflexivity in Practice: Power and Ethics in Feminist Research on International Relations. *International Studies Review* 10, 693–707.
- Adams, R. (2003). *Social Work and Empowerment*, 3rd edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Aitken, G. and Burman, E. (1999). Keeping and crossing professional and racialised boundaries: Implications for feminist practice. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 23, 277-297.
- Alcalá, M.J. (2006). *A Passage to Hope: Women and International Migration*. UNFPA. http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/pdf/en_sowp06.pdf [Accessed 3.2.13].
- Alcock, P. (2010). *The Big or Civil Society*. BVSC, the Centre for Voluntary Action in Birmingham. <http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=QoelMR3tbqc%3D&tabid=507> [Accessed 20.1.13].
- Alcoff, L. M. (2008). The Problem of Speaking for Others. In A.Y. Jackson, and L.A. Mazzei (eds) *Voice in Qualitative Inquiry: Challenging conventional, interpretive, and critical conceptions in qualitative research*. London: Routledge, 117-137.
- Alcoff, L. M. (1991). The Problem of Speaking for Others. *Cultural Critique* 20, 5-32.
- Ali, S. (2006). Racializing research: Managing power and politics? *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29: 471-486.
- Allred, P. (1998). Ethnography and discourse analysis: dilemmas in representing the voices of children. In J. Ribbens and R. Edwards (eds) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: Public Knowledge and Private Lives*. London: Sage, 186-203.
- Allred, P. K. (1999). *Fit to Parent? Psychology, knowledge and popular debate*. Doctoral thesis, University of East London.
- Allman, P. (2001). *Revolutionary Social Transformation: Democratic Hopes, Political Possibilities and Critical Education*. Westport CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Allman, P. (2010). *Critical Education Against Global Capitalism: Karl Marx and Revolutionary Critical Education*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Allen, A. (2008). Power and the Politics of Difference: Oppression, Empowerment, and Transnational Justice. *Hypatia* 23:3, 156-172.
- Amas, N. and Price, J. (2008). *Strengthening the Voice of Refugee Community Organisations within London's Second-tier Voluntary Sector: Barriers and opportunities*. London: City University, (ICAR).

Anderson, T. (2005). *Solidarity Activism, Identity Politics and Popular Education*. www.kooriweb.org/foley/news/story18.html [Accessed 1.11.13].

Ang, I. (2003). I'm a feminist, but... "Other" women and post-colonial feminism. In R. Lewis and S. Mills (eds) *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. London: Routledge, 190-207.

Antoni, G. D. (2009). Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivations to volunteer and social capital formation. *Kyklos* 62: 3, 359-370.

Anzaldúa, G. (1983). Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers. In C. Moraga and G. Anzaldúa (eds) *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings of Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table, 165-74.

Arrowsmith, J., Roycroft, K. and Packham, C. (2011). *Community Pride: Need, opportunity, impact*. Manchester: CAEC.

Ashdown, J. (2002). *Nonconformity in Hackney - an historical exploration*. <http://www.storyman.org.uk/papers/urban/Nonconformity%20in%20Hackney.doc> [Accessed 10.12.12].

Assiter, A. (2000). Feminist epistemology and value. *Feminist Theory* 1, 329-345.

Asylum Aid. *Women's Asylum Charter*. <http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/pages/charterbackground.html> [Accessed 23/5/13].

Atfield, G., Brahmabhatt, K. and O'Toole, T. (2007). *Refugees' Experiences of Integration*. Refugee Council / University of Birmingham http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/7066/Integration_research_report [Accessed 23/5/13].

Balfour, M. (2010). Refugee performance: Encounters with alterity. *Journal of Arts and Communities* 2:3, 177-195.

Batsleer, J. (2008). *Informal Learning in Youth Work*. London: Sage.

Batsleer, J. (2011). Voices from an edge. Unsettling the practices of youth voice and participation: arts-based practice in The Blue Room, Manchester. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 19: 3, 419-434.

Batsleer, J., Burman, E., Chantler, K., Pantling, K., Smailes, S., McIntosh, S. and Warner, S. (2001). *Domestic Violence and Minoritisation: supporting women towards independence*. Manchester: MMU Women's Studies Research Centre.

Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29, 697-712.

Birch, M., Miller, T., Mauthner, M. and Jessop, J. (2002). Introduction. In M. Mauthner, M. Birch, J. Jessop and T. Miller (eds). *Ethics in qualitative research*. London: Sage, 14-32.

- Bloch, A. (2009). Barriers to the labour market: refugees in Britain. In S. McKay (ed) *Refugees, recent migrants and employment: challenging barriers and exploring pathways*. London: Routledge.
- Bögner, D., Chris Brewin, C. and Herlihy, J. (2010). Refugees' Experiences of Home Office Interviews: A Qualitative Study on the Disclosure of Sensitive Personal Information. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36:3, 519-535.
- Bowell, T. (2011). *Feminist Standpoint Theory*. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/fem-stan> [Accessed 21.01.13].
- Bowman, P. (2013). Solidarity for ever. *Irish Anarchist Review* 8, 3-5.
- Briggs, J., Parks, L. and Mendiwelso-Bendek, Z. (2013). 'Many hands make light work': *The Contribution of Volunteering to Community Cohesion*. Taking Part? Research Cluster Report <http://www.takepartresearchcluster.org/publications/takepart-research-publications/> [Accessed 4/1/14].
- Bristol Refugee Rights (2012). *30 June 2012 demo*. www.bristolrefugeerights.org/what-we-do/campaigns [Accessed 10.12.12].
- Bryant, M-L, (2006). *From Foucault to Shange: A Multidisciplinary Study Exploring the Nature of Empowerment Through an Analysis of Theatres of Resistance*. Masters dissertation, University of Oregon.
- Buchanan, S., Grillo, B and Threadgold, T. (2003). *What's the story? Results from research into media coverage of reugees and asylum seekers in the UK*. London: Article 19.
- Bucholtz, M. (2000). The politics of transcription. *Journal of Pragmatics* 32: 1439-1465.
- Bullen, E. (2008). *The Basement, Manchester*. <http://socialcentrestories.wordpress.com/2008/04/29/the-basement-manchester> [Accessed 2.2.13].
- Burman, E. (1992). Feminism and discourse in developmental psychology: power, subjectivity and interpretation. *Feminism & Psychology* 2:1, 45-60.
- Burman, E. (2003). From difference to intersectionality: challenges and resources. *European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling* 6:4, 293-308.
- Burman, E. (2012). *Feminist perspectives on researching violence against women and children*. Keynote paper at FEMIGRA congress, Barcelona, 9-12 February 2012.
- Burns, D. and Walker, S. (2005). Feminist Methodologies. In B. Somekh and C. Lewin (eds) *Research methods in the social sciences*. London: Sage, 66-74.
- Burvill, T. (2008). Politics begins as ethics: Levinasian ethics and Australian performance concerning refugees. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 13:2, 233-243.

Cambridge, P. and Williams, L. (2004). Approaches to advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers: A development case study for a local support and advice service. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 17:1, 97-113.

Camino, L.A. (2000). Youth-Adult Partnerships: Entering New Territory in Community Work and Research. *Applied Developmental Science* 4:S1, 11-20.

Campbell, R. and Wasco, S.M. (2000). Feminist Approaches to Social Science: Epistemological and Methodological Tenets. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28:6, 29-50.

Capacitybuilders (2010).
www.eastdurhamtrust.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=641&Itemid=58&date=2010-04-01 [Accessed 20.1.13].

Carrillo Rowe, A. (2009). *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances*. Duke University Press.

Chang-Muy, F. and Congress, E.P. (2008). *Social Work with Immigrants and Refugees: Legal Issues, Clinical Skills and Advocacy*. New York: Springer.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods. In N. K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 509-535.

Choksi, A., Berenjian, M., Achirwa, H. and Nakuti, D. (2008). *The development needs of refugee communities in Leeds, Bradford and South Yorkshire*. Leeds: Jantela.

Chung, A.Y. (2005). Politics Without the Politics: The Evolving Political Cultures of Ethnic Non-Profits in Koreatown, Los Angeles. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31:5, 911-929.

Clark, J. (2006). *Discourses of Transition in South Africa: A Critical Feminist Analysis of Black Women's Life Narratives within the Cultural-Political Project of Nation*. Doctoral thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Cohen, S. (2003). *No One Is Illegal: Asylum and Immigration Control Past and Present*. London: Trentham Books.

Coll, K. (2004). Necesidades y Problemas: Immigrant Latina vernaculars of belonging, coalition and citizenship in San Francisco, California. *Latino Studies* 2, 186-209.

Conlock, A. and King, A. (2012). *Demographics of Asylum Seekers in Greater Manchester 2012*. University of Manchester and Community Arts North West.

Craig, R., Kerr, D., Wade, P. and Taylor, G. (2004). *Taking Post-16 Citizenship Forward: Learning from the Post-16 Citizenship Development Projects*. London: HMSO.

Dahlerup, D. (2006). Do Women Represent Women? Rethinking the 'Critical Mass' Debate. *Politics & Gender* 2, 491-530.

- Daley, C. (2009). Exploring community connections: community cohesion and refugee integration at a local level. *Community Development Journal* 44:2, 158–171.
- Davies, B. and Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves. *Journal for the Theory Of Social Behaviour* 20:1, 43-63.
- De Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2007). *The Good Research Guide*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. (1997). *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. London: Sage.
- Derrida, J. (1976). *Of Grammatology* (trans. G.C. Spivak). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- De Tona, C. and Lentin, R. (2011). ‘Building a Platform for Our Voices to be Heard’: Migrant Women's Networks as Locations of Transformation in the Republic of Ireland. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37:3, 485-502.
- de Vos, J., Gordo Lopex, A. and Psouridakis, S. (eds) (2010). Psychologisation under Scrutiny. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* 8, 1-236.
- Deveaux, M. (1986). Feminism and empowerment: A critical reading of Foucault. In S. Hekman (ed), *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*. Philadelphia: Penn State Press, 211-241.
- Dinham, A. (2007). Raising expectations or dashing hopes?: Well-being and participation in disadvantaged. *Community Development Journal* 42:2, 181-93.
- Dixon, G., Johnson, C., Leigh, S. and Turnbull, N. (1982). Feminist perspectives and practice. In G. Craig, N. Derisory and M. Loney (eds) *Community Work and the State: Towards a Radical Practice*. Routledge, London.
- Dominelli, L. (1995). Women in the community: Feminist principles and organising in community work. *Community Development Journal* 30: 2, 133-143.
- Doná, G. (2007). The Microphysics of Participation in Refugee Research. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20: 2, 133-143.
- Dorling, K., Girma, M. and Walter, N. (2012). *Refused: The experiences of women denied asylum in the UK*. London: Women for Refugee Women.
<http://www.refugeewomen.com/images/refused.pdf> [Accessed 3.2.13].
- Dumper, H. (2005). *Making Women Visible: Strategies for a more woman-centred asylum and refugee support system*. London: Refugee Council.
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/5592/WomenstrategyMarch2005.pdf [Accessed 3.5.13].

- Dustmann, C., Frattini, T. and Theodoropoulos, N. (2010). *Ethnicity and Second Generation Immigrants*. CReAM Discussion Paper 04:10. http://www.cream-migration.org/publ_uploads/CDP_04_10.pdf [Accessed 21.1.13].
- Eder, K. (1993). *The New Politics of Class: Social Movements and Cultural Dynamics in Advanced Societies*. London: Sage.
- Edwards, R. and Mauthner, M. (2002). Ethics and feminist research: Theory and practice. In M. Mauthner, M. Birch, J. Jessop and T. Miller (eds) *Ethics in qualitative research*. London: Sage, 1-14.
- Ellsworth, E. (1997). Double Binds of Whiteness. In M. Fine, L. Weis, L.C. Powell and L.M. Wong (eds) *Off White: Readings on Race, Power and Society*. London: Routledge, 259-69.
- Emejulu, A. (2001). Re-theorizing feminist community development: towards a radical democratic citizenship. *Community Development Journal* 46:3, 378-390.
- EOC (2007). *Overview of the gender equality duty*. http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/PSD/1_overview_of_the_gender_duty.doc [Accessed 3.3.12].
- Eschle, C. and Maiguashca, B. (2010). *Making feminist sense of the global justice movement*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield.
- ESRC (2010). ESRC Taking Part? Capacity Building Cluster <http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/lbs/research/communityorganisation/esrcbc/> [Accessed 20.1.13].
- Etherton, M. (1988). Third world popular theatre. In Banham, M. (ed) *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 991-992.
- Etherton, M. and Prentki, T. (2006). Drama for change? Prove it! Impact assessment in applied theatre. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 11:2, 139-155.
- Faris, A. (2006). *Community approaches to working with asylum seeking women*. Masters thesis, University of Glamorgan.
- Ferguson, K.E. (1991). Interpretation and Genealogy in Feminism. *Signs* 16:2, 322-339.
- Fine, M. (2006). Bearing Witness: Methods for Researching Oppression and Resistance - A Textbook for Critical Research. *Social Justice Research*, 19:1
- Fine, M., Tuck, E. and Zeller-Berkman, S. (2008). Do you believe in Geneva? Methods and ethics at the global local nexus. In N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln and L. Tuhiwai Smith (eds) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*. London: Sage.
- Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research* 2:2, 209-230.

- Firth, P. (2012). Talk at TSRC event: *Working with the Grassroots: Learning from Community Organisers, Community Development and Community Engagement*. Manchester, 28/6/12.
- Flax, J. (1992). The end of innocence. In J. Butler and J.W. Scott (eds) *Feminists theorise the political*, London: Routledge, 445-63.
- Fonow, M.M. and Cook, J. (1991). *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*. Indiana University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry* 8:4, 777-795.
- Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. *Social Text* 25:26, 56–80.
- Fraser, N. (2003). Rethinking recognition: Overcoming displacement and reification in cultural politics. In B. Hobson (ed) *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements: Contested Identities, Agency and Power*. Cambridge University Press, 21-35.
- Fraser, N. and Honneth, A. (2003). *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso.
- Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2nd revised edn. London: Penguin.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Frisby, W., Maguire, P. and Reid, C. (2009). The `f' word has everything to do with it: How feminist theories inform action research. *Action Research* 7:1, 13-29.
- Fyfe, N.R. (2005). Making Space for 'Neocommunitarianism'? The Third Sector, State and Civil Society in the UK. *Antipode* 37:3, 536-57.
- Gall, T.L., Charbonneau, C., Clarke, N. H., Grant, K., Joseph, A. and Shouldice, L. (2005). Understanding the nature and role of spirituality in relation to coping and health: A conceptual framework. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne* 46:2, 88-104.
- García Coll, C. and Marks, A.K. (2011). *The Immigrant Paradox in Children and Adolescents: Is Becoming American a Developmental Risk?* Washington: American Psychological Association.
- García-Ramírez, M., de la Mata, M., Paloma, V. and Hernandez-Plaza, S. (2011). A Liberation Psychology Approach to Acculturative Integration of Migrant Populations. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 47, 86–97.
- Gaza, R.T. and Gallegos, P.I. (1985). Environmental influences and personal choice: A humanistic perspective on acculturation. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioural Sciences* 7:4, 365–379.
- Gilchrist, A. (2004). *The Well-Connected Community: A networking approach to community development*, Bristol: Policy Press.

- Gill, N. (2005). New state-theoretic approaches to asylum and refugee geographies. *Progress in Human Geography* 34: 5, 626-645.
- Gill, N. (2009). Presentational State Power: Temporal and Spatial Influences Over Asylum Sector Decision Makers. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34:2, 215-233.
- Gillies, V. and Alldred, P.(2002). The Ethics of Intention: Research as a Political Tool. In M. Mauthner, M. Birch, J. Jessop and T. Miller (eds) *Ethics in qualitative research*. London: Sage, 32-53.
- Gilroy, S.I. (1996). *The embody-ment of power? - Women and physical activity*. Doctoral thesis, Open University.
- Glennie, A. (2011). *Migration and climate change: old assumptions and new ideas*. IPPR. <http://www.ippr.org/articles/56/8117/migration-and-climate-change-old-assumptions-and-new-ideas> [Accessed 1.2.13].
- Goodley, D. (2007). Towards socially just pedagogies: Deleuzoguattarian critical disability studies. *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 11:3, 317-334.
- Graham, D. (2004). Radical Alternative Manchester. *Vegan Views*, 103: 11. www.veganviews.org.uk/vvmags/vv103.pdf [Accessed 20.1.13].
- Granovetter, M.S. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology* 78:6, 1360-1380.
- Gray, C. (1996). *Inquiry through practice: developing appropriate research strategies*. Keynote speech at International Conference on Art and Design Research: No Guru, No Method? UIAH, Helsinki, 4-6 September 1996. <http://carolegray.net/Papers%20PDFs/ngnm.pdf> [Accessed 3.5.13].
- Griffiths, D.J., Sigona, N. and Zetter, R. (2005). *Refugee Community Organisations And Dispersal: Networks, Resources And Social Capital*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Griffiths, M. (2009). *Critical Approaches in qualitative educational research*. www.bera.ac.uk/critical-approaches-in-qualitative-educational-research [Accessed 10/11/13].
- Griffiths, M. (2013). Living with Uncertainty: Indefinite Immigration Detention. *Journal of Legal Anthropology* 1:3, 263-286.
- Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E. (2010). Affective Value: On Coloniality, Feminization and Migration. *EIPCP*. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0112/gutierrez-rodriquez/en> [Accessed 21.01.13].
- Hall, S., Massey, D. and Rustin, M. (2013). After neoliberalism: analysing the present. In S. Hall, D. Massey, and M. Rustin (eds) *After neoliberalism: The Kilburn manifesto*. London: Lawrence & Wishart <http://lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/pdfs/manifestoframingstatement.pdf> [Accessed 4.6.13].

- Hamburger, Y.A., Mckenna, K.Y.A. and Tal, S.A. (2008). E-empowerment: Empowerment by the internet. *Computer in Human Behaviour* 24, 1776-1789.
- Hanrahan, M. (2003). Challenging the Dualistic Assumptions of Academic Writing: Representing Ph.D. Research As Embodied Practice. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung* 4:2.
- Harding, S. (1993). Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is Strong Objectivity? in L. Alcoff and E. Potter (eds) *Feminist Epistemologies*, New York/London: Routledge, 49-83.
- Harré, R., and van Langenhove, L. (ed) (1998). *Positioning Theory*. Oxford, GB: Blackwell.
- Harris, J., Hutton, C., Lukes, S. and Sexton, S. (2012). *The impact of the Basis Project*. Refugee Council and Refugee Action.
<http://www.thebasisproject.org.uk/Resources/The%20Basis%20Project/Documents/Basis%20Project%20-%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report%20-%2028%20June%202012.pdf>
 [Accessed 13.5.13].
- Harris, M. and Young, P. (2009). *Bridging community divides: The impact of grassroots bridge building activities*. IVAR.
http://www.ivar.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/ivar_bbreport.pdf [Accessed 4.4.13].
- Hekman, S. (2004). Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited. In S.G. Harding (ed) *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. London: Routledge, 225-243.
- Hermans, H.J.M. and Kempen, H.J.G. (1998). Moving Cultures: The Perilous Problems of Cultural Dichotomies in a Globalizing Society. *American Psychologist* 53, 1111-1120.
- Hermans, H.J.M. and Dimaggio, G. (2007). Self, identity, and globalization in times of uncertainty: A dialogical analysis. *Review of General Psychology* 11, 31-61.
- Hickey-Moody, A. and Wood, D. (2008). *Imagining Otherwise: Deleuze, disability and Second Life*. Paper presented at the ANZCA08 Conference: Power and Place.
- Hill-Collins, P. (1990). *Black Feminist Thought*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Hill-Collins, P. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Hodkinson, P. and Hodkinson, H. (2001). The Strengths and Limitations of Case Study Research. Paper presented to 'Making an Impact on Policy and Practice' conference, Cambridge, 5.12.01.
http://education.exeter.ac.uk/tlc/docs/publications/LE_PH_PUB_05.12.01.rtf
 [Accessed 3.3.13].
- Holloway, J. (2010). *Crack Capitalism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Holloway, J. (2011). An interview with John Holloway. *Shift magazine* 13.
<http://libcom.org/library/interview-john-holloway> [Accessed 14.5.12].

Hollway, W., Venn, C. Walkerdine, V., Henriques, J. and Urwin, C. (1984). *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity*. London: Methuen.

Home Office (1999). *Asylum Seekers' Support*. London, HMSO.

Home Office (2005). *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*. <http://www.northwestsmp.org.uk/images/stories/documents/pdfs/asylum/IntegrationMatters.pdf> [Accessed 20.4.13].

Hooker, J. (2011). *Post-politics*. Wikipedia submission. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-politics> [Accessed 20.4.13].

hooks, b. (1986). Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women. *Feminist Review* 23, 125-38.

hooks, b. (1993). bell hooks speaking about Paulo Freire – the man, his work. In P. McClaren and P. Leonard (eds) *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter*. London: Routledge, 146-155.

Howie, G. (2004). *After Postmodernism: Feminism and Marxism revisited*. Paper for Marx and Philosophy Seminar on 'Marx and Gender' 4 December 2004, London School of Economics. <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3033/3061> [Accessed 11.12.13].

Hudson, M., Phillips, J., Ray, K. and Barnes, H. (2007). *Social cohesion in diverse communities*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Humphries, B. (1997). From Critical Thought to Emancipatory Action: Contradictory Research Goals? *Sociological Research Online*, 2:1 <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/2/1/3.html> [Accessed 21.10.13].

Hunt, L. (2005). *Women asylum seekers and refugees in West Yorkshire: opportunities, constraints and the role of agency*. Doctoral thesis, University of Leeds.

ICAR (2012). *Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Media Briefing*. http://www.icar.org.uk/Asylum_Seekers_and_Media_Briefing_ICAR.pdf [Accessed 10.12.12].

In Place of War (2012). www.inplaceofwar.net/projects/conflict_zones/great_britain/ice_and_fire/in_their_own_words [Accessed 6.1.12].

Isin, E.F. and Nielson, G.M.(2008). *Acts of citizenship*. London: Zed Books.

Jamieson, L. (2005). Theorizing Identity, Nationality and Citizenship: Implications for European Citizenship Identity. Part 1. of the *State of the Art Report: orientations of young men and women to citizenship and European identity*. http://www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/youth/docs/State_of_the_Art.pdf [Accessed 15.4.13].

Jara Holliday, O (2012). Systematization of experiences, research and evaluation: three different approaches. *International Journal for Global and Development Education Research*, 1. <http://educacionglobalresearch.net/issue01jara> [Accessed 10.1.13].

- JCWI (2013). Blog post: *The All Party Parliamentary Group investigates* www.jcwi.org.uk/blog/2013/02/14/all-party-parliamentary-group-investigates [Accessed 12.4.13].
- Jeffers, A. (2008). Dirty truth: personal narrative, victimhood and participatory theatre work with people seeking asylum. *Research in Drama Education* 13:2, 217-221.
- Jeffers, A. (2011). *Refugees, Theatre and Crisis: Performing Global Identities*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jennings, S. (1992). The nature and scope of dramatherapy: Theatre of healing in M. Cox, (ed) *Shakespeare Comes to Broadmoor*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 229-251.
- Jennings, S. (1994). *The Handbook of drama therapy*, London: Routledge.
- Johnson, H. (1992). Public action and women's empowerment: experiences from Latin America. In M. Wuyts, M. Mackintosh and T. Hewitt (eds) *Development Policy and Public Action*. Oxford University Press, 147-172.
- Jones, D. (2013). *Whose values? Migrants and a 'British way of life'*. Thought paper, University of Birmingham School of Education. <http://jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/thought-pieces/jonesd-whose-values-2013.pdf> [Accessed 20.9.13].
- Jones-Correa, M. (1998). Different paths: gender, immigration and political participation. *International Migration Review* 32:2, 326-349.
- Jubany, O. (2011). Constructing truths in a culture of disbelief: Understanding asylum screening from within. *International Sociology* 26: 74-94.
- Judge, R. (2010). *Refugee advocacy and the biopolitics of asylum in Britain: The precarious position of young male asylum seekers and refugees*. Oxford: RSC Working Paper Series No. 60.
- Kabeer, N. (1999). *Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment*. *Development and Change* 30, 436-464.
- Kaptani, E and Yuval-Davis, N. (2008). Participatory Theatre as a Research Methodology: Identity, Performance and Social Action Among Refugees. *Sociological Research Online*, 13: 5 <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/13/5/2.html> [Accessed 5.6.12].
- Keevers, L. (2009). *Practicing social justice: Community organisations, what matters and what counts*. Doctoral thesis, University of Sydney.
- Kelly, J. (2007). Reforming public services in the UK: bringing in the third sector. *Public Administration* 85: 4, 1003-1022.
- Kidd, B., Zahir, S. and Khan, S. (2008). *Arts and Refugees: History, Impact and Future*. London: Arts Council England <http://www.phf.org.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=392> [Accessed 3.3.13].

- Laing, F (2010). *Arise and Shine. Self-advocacy. Asylum Seekers*. <http://franceslaing.wordpress.com/page/2/> [Accessed 10.10.12].
- Landau, L.B. (2007). Can We Talk and Is Anybody Listening? Reflections on IASFM 10, 'Talking Across Borders: New Dialogues in Forced Migration'. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20:3, 335-348.
- Lapadat, J., and Lindsay, A. C. (1999). Transcription in research and practice: From standardization of technique to interpretive positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry* 5:1, 64-86.
- Lather, P. (2007). *Getting Lost: Feminist efforts toward a double(d) science*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Latour, B. (2004). Whose cosmos, which cosmopolitics?: Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck. *Common Knowledge* 10:3, 450-462.
- Laurie, N., Bondi, L. (2005). Introduction. In N. Laurie and L. Bondi (eds) *Working the Spaces of Neoliberalism: Activism, Professionalization and Incorporation*. Blackwell: Oxford, 1-7.
- Ledwith M. (2011). *Community Development: A Critical Approach*, 2nd edn. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Ledwith, M. and Springett, J. (2010). *Participatory practice: community-based action for transformative change* Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Lentin, R. and McVeigh, R. (2006). *After Optimism? Ireland, Racism and Globalisation*. Dublin: Metro Éireann Publications.
- Leudar, I., Nekvapil, J., Hayes, J. and Baker, J. T. (2008). Hostility themes in media, community and refugee narratives. *Discourse and Society* 19:2, 187-221.
- Linden, S. *Interview with Ice and Fire director*. <http://iceandfire.co.uk/blog/page/2/> [Accessed 21.01.13].
- Lorde, A. (1984). The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 124-133.
- Lugones, M.(2003). *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions*. Latham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lukes, S., Jones, V. and San Juan, Y. (2009). *The potential of migrant and refugee community organisations to influence policy*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/migrant-refugee-community-organisations.pdf> [Accessed 4.4.13].
- Lutz, H. (2011). Lost in translation? The role of language in migrants' biographies: What can micro-sociologists learn from Eva Hoffman? *European Journal of Women's Studies* 18:4, 347-360.
- MacKenzie, R., Forde, C. and Ciupijus, Z. (2012). Networks of Support for New Migrant Communities: Institutional Goals versus Substantive Goals? *Urban Studies* 49:3, 631-647.

- May, T. (1994). *The Political Philosophy of Post-structuralist Anarchism*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Mayo, P. (2009). Flying Below the Radar. Critical Approaches to Adult Education. In M. Apple, L. Gandin and W. Au (eds) *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Education*, Routledge: New York, 269-280.
- Mayo, P. and English, L. (2012). Adult Education and the State. Gramsci, the Historical Materialist Tradition and Relevant Others. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA)* 3:1, 11-27.
- Madison, D.S. (1993). 'That Was My Occupation': Oral Narrative, Performance and Black Feminist Thought. *Text and Performance Quarterly* 13, 213-3.
- Maguire, P. (1993). Challenges, contradictions, and celebrations: Attempting participatory research as a doctoral student. In P.Park (ed), *Voices of change: Participatory research in the United States and Canada* Westport. CT: Bergin and Garvey, 157-176.
- Malkki, L. (1995a). 'Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 495-523.
- Malkki, L. (1995b). *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. University of Chicago Press.
- Maydell, E. (2010). Methodological and Analytical Dilemmas in Autoethnographic Research. *Journal of Research Practice* 6: 1
<http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/223/190> [Accessed 210.1.13].
- Mayo, M. and Rooke, A. (2006). *Active Learning for Active Citizenship*. Together We Can. www.gold.ac.uk/media/active-learning-report-A41.pdf [Accessed 20/1/13].
- Mayo, M., Koessler, G., Scott, M. and Slater, I. (2012). *Accessing social justice in disadvantaged communities: dilemmas for Law Centres in the context of public service modernisation*. London: Goldsmiths.
- Mayo, M., Mendiwelso-Bendek, Z. and Packham, C. (2012). Learning to take part as active citizens:emerging lessons for community organising in Britain. *Voluntary Sector Review* 3:2, 179–95.
- Mayo, P. (2003). A rationale for a transformative approach to education. *Journal of Transformative Education* 1:1, 38-57
- McGregor, J. (2011): Contestations and consequences of deportability: hunger strikes and the political agency of non-citizens. *Citizenship Studies* 15:5, 597-611.
- McNevin, A. (2010). Becoming political. Asylum seeker activism through community theatre. *Local-Global* 8, 142-159.
- McNiff, J. (2010). *Action Research for Professional Development: Concise advice for new and experienced action researchers*, 3rd edn.
www.waikato.ac.nz/tdu/pdf/booklets/24_AR.pdf [Accessed 20.1.13].

- McNiff, J. and Whitehead, J. (2011). *All You Need to Know About Action Research*, 2nd edn. London: SAGE.
- Mezzadra, S. (2011). The gaze of autonomy. Capitalism, migration and social struggles. In V. Squires (ed) *The Contested Politics of Mobility: Borderzones and Irregularity*. London: Routledge.
- Millner, N. (2011). From 'refugee' to 'migrant' in Calais solidarity activism: Re-staging undocumented migration for a future politics of asylum. *Political Geography* 30, 320-328.
- Millner, N. (2012). *Habits of Political Dissensus: Rethinking Solidarity Activism Through The No Borders Network*. Doctoral thesis, University of Bristol.
- Mills, C. (2012). *Globalising Disorders: Encounters with Psychiatry in India*. Doctoral thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University.
- Mohanty, C.T. (2004). *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Montero, M. (2009). Community Action and Research as Citizenship Construction. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 43, 149-161.
- Morris, M. (2002). *Participatory research and action: A guide to becoming a researcher for social change*. Toronto: CRIAW/ICREF.
- Moya, P. (1997). Postmodernism, 'Realism' and the Politics of Identity: Cherríe Moraga and Chicana Feminism. In M.J. Alexander and C.T. Mohanty (eds) *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. NY: Routledge, 125-151.
- Muggeridge, H. and Chen, M. (2011). *Unsustainable: the quality of initial decision-making in women's asylum*. London: Asylum Aid
www.asylumaid.org.uk/data/files/unsustainableweb.pdf [Accessed 3.2.13].
- Mueller, T. (2003). Empowering anarchy Power, hegemony, and anarchist strategy. *Anarchist Studies*, 11:2, 1-28 www.infoshop.org/pdfs/TadzioMueller.pdf [Accessed 2.12.11].
- Mulvey, G. (2010). When Policy Creates Politics: the Problematizing of Immigration and the Consequences for Refugee Integration in the UK. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23:4, 437-462.
- Mulvey, G. (2013). *In Search of Normality: Refugee Integration in Scotland*. Scottish Refugee Council.
- Musgrave, A. (2011). *Refugee Council Response to the Government Equalities Office consultation paper: Strengthening Women's Voices in Government*.
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/6364/Refugee_Council_response_-_Strengthening_Womens_Voices.pdf [Accessed 12/5/13].
- Naples, N. (1992). Activist mothering: Cross-generational continuity in the community work of women from low-income urban neighbourhoods. *Gender & Society* 6:3, 441-463.

- Navarro, A. (2006). *Refugee Integration and Cohesive Communities: Community Development in Practice*. London: Community Development Programme.
- Neelands, J. (2007). Taming the political; the struggle over recognition in the politics of applied theatre. *Research in Drama Education* 12:3, 305-317.
- Newman, S. (2001). *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*. Oxford: Lexington Books.
- Newman, J. (2006). Restating a politics of 'the public'. *Soundings* 32, 162–176.
- Newman, J. (2012). *Working the Spaces of Power*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Newman, J. (2012). Beyond the deliberative subject? Problems of theory, method and critique in the turn to emotion and affect. *Critical Policy Studies* 6:4, 465-479.
- Noffke, S. and Somekh, B. (2011). Action Research. In B. Somekh and C. Lewin (eds) *Theory and Methods in Social Research*. London: SAGE.
- Noffke, S. (1998). *What's a nice theory like yours doing in a practice like this? And other impertinent questions about practitioner research*. Keynote address presented at the 2nd International Practitioner Research Conference. Sydney, Australia.
- O'Connor, M., Denton, M., Hajdukowski-Ahmed, M., Zeytinoglu, I. U., and Williams, K. (1999). A theoretical framework for research on women's health promotion. In M. Denton, M. Hajdukowski-Ahmed, M. O'Connor and I. U. Zeytinoglu (eds) *Women's voices in health promotion*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 9-20.
- O'Neill, M. (2010). *Asylum, migration and community*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. In H. Roberts (ed) *Doing feminist research*. London: Routledge, 30-62.
- O'Neill, M. and Harindranath, R. (2006). Theorising narratives of exile and belonging: the importance of Biography and Ethno-mimesis in 'understanding' asylum'. *Qualitative Sociology Review* 11:1, 39-53.
- de Oteyza, C. (2007). *Participatory techniques in popular education*. Internal GAP Unit document.
- Pannett, L (2011). *Making a liveable life in Manchester: Doing justice to people seeking asylum*. Doctoral thesis, University of Manchester.
- Parker, I. (2013). Managing Neo-Liberalism and the Strong State in Higher Education: Psychology Today *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. www.tandfonline.com/loi/uqrp20 [Accessed 19.12.13].
- Parsons, R.J. (2001). Specific Practice Strategies for Empowerment-based Practice With Women: A Study of Two Groups. *Affilia* 16, 159-179.
- Pepper, R.E. (2010). *Community power: problems, possibilities and potentials, as perceived by stakeholders in Acton, West London*. Doctoral thesis, Goldsmiths.

Percy-Smith, B. and Burns, D. (2013). Exploring the role of children and young people as agents of change in sustainable community development. *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability* 18:3, 323-339.

Perkins, D.D. and Zimmerman, M.A. (1995). Empowerment Theory, Research and Application. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23: 5, 569-579.

Però, D. and Solomos, J. (2010). 'Introduction: migrant politics and mobilization:exclusion, engagements, incorporation'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33:1, 1-18.

Peterson, N.A. and Hughey, J. (2004). Social cohesion and intrapersonal empowerment: gender as moderator. *Health Educudaction Research* 19:5, 533-542.

Phillimore, J., Goodson, L., Hennessy, D. and Ergün, E. (2009). *Empowering Birmingham's migrant and refugee community organisations*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/2193-migrants-policy-engagement.pdf> [Accessed 4.4.13].

Phillips, A. (2006). *Beyond 'Feminism versus Multiculturalism': Revisiting the relationships between power, beliefs, identity and values*. Workshop report, London School of Economics Gender Institute.

Piacentini, T. (2012). *Moving beyond 'refugeeness': problematising the 'refugee community organisation'*. Birmingham: Third Sector Research Centre Working Paper 85.

Pitcher, B. (2007). *Multicultural Nationalism: New Labour and the Politics of Race and State*. Doctoral thesis, University of East London.

Prilleltensky, I. and Nelson, G. (2002). *Doing Psychology Critically: Making a Difference in Diverse Settings*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pupavac, V. (2008). Refugee Advocacy, Traumatic Representations and Political Disenchantment. *Government and Opposition* 43:2, 270-292.

Querton, C. (2012). *'I feel like as a woman I'm not welcome': A gender analysis of UK asylum law, policy and practice*. London: Asylum Aid

www.asylumaid.org.uk/data/files/ifeelasawoman_reportv2.pdf [Accessed 3.2.13].

RAA (2012). *Regional Asylum Activism Project Overview*. <http://www.lcvss.org.uk/res/media/docx/RegionalAsylumActivismProjectOverview.docx> [Accessed 1.2.13].

Rainbird, S. (2012). Asylum seeker 'vulnerability': the official explanation of service providers and the emotive responses of asylum seekers. *Community Development Journal* 47:3, 405-422.

Rainbird, S. (2007). *Movement and Stillness: Journeying through storying, asylum seekers in the UK* www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/cslplc/documents/RainbirdResatwork.pdf [Accessed 1.2.13].

- Rakes, H. (2013). Toward a Theoretico-practical Accountability to Difference and Relationality. *Disability Studies Quarterly* 33: 4 <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3873> [Accessed 19.12.13].
- Ray, K. (2003). Constituting 'Asian women: political representation, identity politics and local discourses of participation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26:5, 580-583.
- Ray, S. (2012). *Why UK asylum advocacy should take citizens' complaints seriously*. Working Paper Series, No. 844. Refugee Studies Centre: University of Oxford.
- Rea, N. (2010). *Alternatives to Detention for Asylum Seeking Families, Subject to Removal, briefing paper to members of the North West Consortium*. Manchester: Asylum, Refugee and Migration Services, MCC.
- Rees, S. and Pease, B. (2006). *Refugee Settlement, Safety and Wellbeing: Exploring Domestic and Family Violence in Refugee Communities*. Melbourne, Au: IWDVS.
- Refugee Action (2006). *Hear My Voice: Refugee Women's Involvement in Integration*. Conference Report. <http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/information/documents/HearMyVoiceconferencereport.pdf> [Accessed 3.5.13].
- Refugee Action (Manchester) <http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/manchester/projects.aspx> [Accessed 7.5.13].
- Reid, C. (2004). Advancing Women's Social Justice Agendas: A Feminist Action Research Framework. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 3:3, 1-15.
- Rice, C. (2009). Imagining the Other? Ethical Challenges of Researching and Writing Women's Embodied Lives. *Feminism & Psychology* 19:2, 245-266.
- Riger, S. (1993). What's wrong with empowerment? *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 21. 279-292.
- Robson, S. and Spence, J. (2011). The erosion of feminist self and identity in community development theory and practice. *Community Development Journal* 46:3, 288-301.
- Rooke, A. and Kendall, D. (2013). *London Bubble Theatre*. Taking Part? Research Cluster Report <http://www.takepartresearchcluster.org/publications/takepart-research-publications> [Accessed 4/1/14].
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge University Press.
- Russo, A. (1991). We Cannot Live Without Our Lives: White Women, Antiracism, and Feminism. In T.P Mohanty, A.Russo and L. Torres (eds) *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 297-313.
- Salverson, J. (1996). Performing Emergency: Witnessing, Popular Theatre, and the Lie of the Literal. *Theatre Topics* 6:2, 181-191.

- Salverson, J. (2001). Change on Whose Terms? Testimony and an Erotics of Injury. *Theater* 31:3, 119-125.
- Sarason, S.B. (1974). *The psychological sense of community: Prospects for a communitypsychology*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sardenberg, C.M.B. (2008). Liberal vs. Liberating Empowerment: A Latin American Feminist Perspective on Conceptualising Women's Empowerment. *IDS Bulletin* 39:6, 18-27.
- Sawicki, J. (1991). *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, power and the body (Thinking gender)*. London: Routledge.
- Schechner, R. (1988). *Performance Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Seu, B. (2008). 'Everybody is welcome, but..' Talking of emotions and with emotions about refugees; a psychosocial discursive analysis. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* 6, 71-88.
- Shaffer, P. (1998). Gender, Poverty and Deprivation: Evidence from the Republic of Guinea. *World Development* 26:12, 2119-2135.
- Sharma, U. and Berry, H. (2009). *Am I Safe Yet? Stories of women seeking asylum in Britain*. Manchester: Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Educational Trust.
- Shepler, S. (2005). The rites of the child: global discourses of youth and reintegrating child soldiers in Sierra Leone, *Journal of Human Rights* 4, 197–211.
- Silove, D., Steel, Z., Susljik, I., Frommer, N., Loneragan, C., Chey, T., Brooks, R., Touze, D., Ceollo, M., Smith, M., Harris, E. and. Bryant, R. (2007). The impact of the refugee decision on the trajectory of PTSD, anxiety, and depressive symptoms among asylum seekers: A longitudinal study. *American Journal of Disaster Medicine* 2, 321-329.
- Slater, J. (2012). Self-advocacy and socially just pedagogy. *Disability Studies Quarterly* 32: 1 <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3033/3061> [Accessed 11.11.13].
- Smart, C., Wade, A. and Neale, B.(1999). Objects of Concern? – Children and Divorce. *Child and Family Law Quarterly* 11:4, 365-376.
- Smart, K., Grimshaw, R., McDowell, C. and Crosland, B. (2005). *Reporting asylum: The UK Press and the Effectiveness of PCC Guidelines*. London: Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK (ICAR).
- Spivak, G. (2000). Translation as Culture. *Parallax* 6:1, 13-24.
- Spivak, G. C. (1990). The post-modern condition: The end of politics? In S. Harasym (ed) *The postcolonial critic: Interviews, strategies, dialogues*. New York: Routledge, 17-35.
- Squire, V. and Darling, J. (2013). The 'minor' politics of rightful presence: justice and relationality in City of Sanctuary. *International Political Sociology* 7:1, 59-74.

- Stacey, J. (1988). Can there be a feminist ethnography? *Women's Studies International Forum* 11:1, 21–27.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Standing, K. (1998). Writing the Voices of the Less Powerful: Research on Lone Mothers. In J. Ribbens and R. Edwards (eds) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: Public Knowledge and Private Lives*. London: Sage, 186-203.
- Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1993). *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology*. 2nd revised edn. London: Routledge.
- Stewart, E. (2005). Exploring the vulnerability of asylum seekers in the UK. *Population, Place and Space* 11, 499-512.
- Stromquist, N.P. (2004). Education as a means for empowering women. In J.L. Papart, S.M. Rai and K.A Staudt. *Rethinking Empowerment: Gender and Development in a Global/Local World*. London: Psychology Press.
- Sutherland, C. and Cheng, Y. (2009). Participatory-action research with (im)migrant women in two small Canadian cities: using photovoice in Kingston and Peterborough, Ontario. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* 7: 3, 290-307.
- Takhar, S. (2011). The construction of political agency: South Asian women and political activism. *Community Development Journal* 46:3, 341-350.
- Taylor, M. (1995). Community work and the state: the changing context of UK practice. In G. Craig and M. Mayo (eds) *Community Empowerment*. London: Zed Books, 99-112.
- Taylor, M. (2012). Talk at TSRC event: *Working with the Grassroots: Learning from Community Organisers, Community Development and Community Engagement*. Manchester, 28/6/12.
- Taylor, P. (2003). *Applied theatre: creating transformative encounters in the community*. London: Heinemann.
- Thompson, D. (2008). *Community Empowerment: Refugee Perspectives*. Federation of Community Development Learning.
<http://www.oneeastmidlands.org.uk/sites/default/files/library/community%2520empowerment%2520refugee%2520perspectives.pdf> [Accessed 12.4.13].
- Travis, A. (2013). *UK Border Agency to be abolished, Theresa May announces*. The Guardian 26/3/13. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/mar/26/uk-border-agency-broken-up> [Accessed 12.4.13].
- TSRC website. *About the TSRC*. www.tsrc.ac.uk/About/tabid/347/Default.aspx [Accessed 4 July 2010].
- Tyler, I. (2006). 'Welcome to Britain'. The cultural politics of asylum. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 9:2, 185-202.

- Tyler, I. and Gill, R. (2013). Postcolonial Girl: Mediated Intimacy and Migrant Audibility. *Interventions International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 15:1, 78-94.
- Valentine G, McDonald I. (2004). *Understanding Prejudice: Attitudes Towards Minorities*. Stonewall: London.
- Vickers, T. (2010). *The Management of Oppression: Focussing on relationships between refugees and the British state in Newcastle upon Tyne*. Doctoral thesis, Durham University.
- Waddington, P. (1994). The values base of community work. In S. Jacobs and K. Popple (eds) *Community Work in the 1990s*. Nottingham: Spokesman.
- Wadsworth, Y. (1998). What is Participatory Action Research? *Action Research International, Paper 2*. <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/ari/p-ywadsworth98.html> [Accessed 13.4.13].
- Walter, N. (2010). *Speaking out for change*. The Guardian 26.11.10. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/nov/26/speaking-out-for-change-asylum-seeker?INTCMP=SRCH> [Accessed 13.4.12].
- WAST (2011). *WAST Demands to UKBA*. <http://www.wast.org.uk/wast-demands-to-ukba-booklet> [Accessed 6.1.12].
- Waterhouse, P and Scott, M. (2013). *Here We Stand: Inquiry into Local Activism and Dissent*. National Coalition of Independent Action.
- <http://www.independentaction.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Final-NCIA-final-with-contacts.pdf> [Accessed 12.4.13].
- Watts, J. (2013). *The MISSH Group case study*. Taking Part? Research Cluster Report. <http://www.takepartresearchcluster.org/publications/takepart-research-publications> [Accessed 4/1/14].
- White, C. and Bailey, C. (2004). Feminist Knowledge and Ethical Concerns : Towards a Geography of Situated Ethics. *Espace populations sociétés* [En ligne] <http://eps.revues.org/index568.html> [Accessed 15/5/2013].
- Williams, L. (2006). Social networks of refugees in the United Kingdom: tradition, tactics and new community spaces. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32:5, 865-879.
- Wilson, R. and Lewis, H. (2006). *A part of society Refugees and asylum seekers volunteering in the UK A report based on case studies of ten organisations*. Leeds: Tandem Communications and Research Ltd.
- Wood, J. T. (2009). Feminist Standpoint Theory. In S.W. Littlejohn and K.A. Foss (ed) *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory 1*. London: Sage, 397-398.
- Wray, S. (2004). What constitutes agency and empowerment for women in later life? *The Sociological Review* 52:1.
- Wren, K. (2007). Supporting asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow: the role of multi-agency networks. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20:3, 391-413.

Wroe, L. (2012). *A Study of Refugee Advocacy: Paradoxes of Helping in a Climate of Hostility*. Doctoral thesis, University of Manchester.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Intersectionality and Feminist Politics. *Journal of Women's Studies* 13:3, 193-209.

Yuval-Davis, N. and Kaptani, E. (2009). Performing Identities: Participatory Theatre Among Refugees. In M. Wetherell (ed) *Theorizing identities and social action*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Yuval-Davis, N.(2011). *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*. London: Sage.

Zavos, A. (2010). *The politics of gender and migration in an anti-racist group in Athens*. Doctoral thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Zetter, R. (2007). More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2: 2, 172-192.

Zetter, R. and Pearl, M. (2000). The minority within the minority: refugee community-based organisations in the UK and the impact of restrictionism on asylum seekers. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26:4: 675–697.

Zontini, E. (2010). Enabling and constraining aspects of social capital in migrant families: ethnicity, gender and generation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33:5, 816-831.

Appendix 1.

Table 2. Empowerment and disempowerment

	RESPECT/RACISM
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the support and trust of others • Feeling valued and respected. • To be recognised as equal human beings here in the UK: To get respect, not only papers and visas! • To be appreciated for what we do, however small
DIS-EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone telling you what you don't have, reminding you of negative or difficult aspects in your life e.g. work experience in the UK. It is demoralising. • People not being polite, not taking you on board or respecting you. "They don't want to listen to me". • Being treated as a 2nd-class citizen. • Situations when I am given a leadership role or too much responsibility but lack the preparation or training necessary to fulfil it. Expectations of my ability being too high and my limits are not respected. • Assumptions: judging your capabilities and making assumptions about people - "it puts me down". • Pretending racism does not exist, but attitudes might not always be on the surface, they can be hidden • Not feeling recognised/respected • Thought less capable due to your race • Racism • Rejection • Being criticised or discriminated against • Discrimination x3 • Neighbours – scared to report them • Humiliation, knowing you can do better • Lack of caring • Going to work and feeling that you don't belong, people don't talk to you, behave like you're not there • I don't feel equal, sometimes I talk and someone finishes my sentences and speaks for me, feel less capable even though you can be more so • My lecturer said "this work can't be yours because there aren't any mistakes in it and your first language isn't English", I feel there's discrimination going on • Racism, rejected for wearing a hijab (mentioned youths calling out names in the street) • Cultural differences: no contact with our neighbours, people are not as friendly. It's difficult because the community is not as strong (e.g. of E. Asia and the West being different). • People see you as 'different'. We are forced to fit in but nobody explains how. People do not get to know their neighbours here, they are not friendly and do not even say 'hello' at the bus stop. The effect of this is withdrawal into oneself, becoming unable to talk and forgetting how to interact, which leads to lack of confidence and lower self-worth. • Elinah gave direct examples of racism, when her certificate was rejected, others mentioned being called for a job interview, but rejected when the employer sees your face. Some had been told posts were over-subscribed, but then had seen the same jobs re-advertised. Women commented on the need for more UK work experience, but the difficulties of getting it. <p>Women felt they are always on the receiving end because they are ignorant of the system and lack UK experience</p>

	INFORMATION
DIS-EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information, not understanding how the law and system works here in Britain • Unsure where to get information • Lack of knowledge of what is expected of us. It is easy to make mistakes even if you have the best intentions. People tend to let you make those mistakes and are not willing to help. • Everything must go through the systems and the courts which consequently seems to breed low levels of trust in society. You can be accused if you're only trying to help, e.g. picking up another person's child if they fall – you could be prosecuted for touching them! • Access to Services: Examples of education, health care, banks, phone boxes – everything is alien and ignorance leads to <i>fear</i>, so we are discouraged from trying to access them. This creates social isolation
	CULTURAL CONTINUITY
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-determination, reminding ourselves who we are and where we come from • Communication and networks: Example given of BT free evening calls and community taking advantage of this to share knowledge and signpost amongst themselves, therefore retaining the community spirit true to Zimbabwe. • Identifying ourselves: Being able to retain a sense of who we are through our culture despite racism and difficulties, e.g. meeting with the community and sharing problems. • Access to familiar things • Diversity in the UK means we can easily find African foods and miss home less • To return home to Baghdad when peace comes, visit friends there • To be in Basra for the birth of my cousin this month
DISE-MPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being called by my first name! Elinah explained that in Zimbabwe this is offensive because people are referred to by their relation to each other, e.g. aunty, mother etc., or by formal title (Mrs, Miss etc) They have had to adapt to this cultural difference but it felt belittling at first.
	FAITH
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from my Church, my faith group • God / Faith / Religion x2 • Religious Faith: Christianity and God. Going to church. • Strong believers in religion, both in Christian God and Muslim faith. In Islam the belief that patience is necessary during hard times is helpful • Spiritual motivation • Religion
	SOCIAL RESOURCES
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming together with each other • Sharing experiences • Communication • Good friends • To meet and know sympathetic understanding people • Making lots of friends • Celebrations x2 • Helping others • Joining and belonging x4 • Support from women's groups • Belonging • Being with women who haven't been refugees or asylum seekers but still share my pain and are trying to help • Being within groups or people that understand • Belonging to a group where women share similar experiences and listen to me • Groups like these also help, we come together • The Red Cross (WISP) x2 • "Women's group is a strength" • Individuals and groups in the UK x5
DIS-EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation, no friends or family • Social isolation: When I didn't know anyone from my community and had nobody to communicate with. I didn't even know where my church was • New country - no friends

	LANGUAGE
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to speak my own language • Learning the language x2 • Learning English • Learn English / improve our English and then get a job and integrate • To speak good English
DIS-EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When people don't understand me. • The use of 'power language', e.g. "it is illegal in the UK". Formal jargon etc. is used to show who is in control, but makes things inaccessible • Limited English – can't share problems • Language barrier x2 • Have to go out with husband • Not understanding accent • Language – explaining, making appointments • Letters – language hard to understand • No English • Language, limited communication
	STRUCTURAL ISSUES
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting refugee status • Getting a positive response from the Home Office • I got my papers, felt like a different person and more accepted, full of relief • Knowing that I have human rights • To have status • Good and comfortable houses • To live in the UK • Bring family to the UK and see them. Live with them here. • To see Dahlia graduate (Yusra, her mother) • Move to another house • To go to college • To have a job • Finish English classes and go to university here
DIS-EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being denied the right to stay in the UK. You feel rejected, you do not belong and that you in a place where you are not wanted. It takes a long time to overcome that set-back and be strong again. You are denied everything, denied basic rights. • Problems with neighbours • Housing/living conditions • Not having a home • Lack of control over paying bills • Immigration status • I got a refusal from the Home Office, it's like your life belongs to someone else and you're not in control • The UK asylum system x2 • Lack of legal support • Lack of info – UK system • Education – lack of access • Section 4- having vouchers instead of money • Housing – moving on after one year is unsettling , poor condition of council housing • Access to services e.g. dentist • Foreign qualifications • No vote • Lack of experience • Lack of training • People needed references and not having them • Finding a job • Hard to get a job x 2 • Housing problems – 8 people in 2 bedrooms • Status of immigration • Not being allowed to work • We are denied the freedom of choice others can enjoy here, e.g. in the employment we

	<p>can take up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our qualifications are not recognised here, so many end up doing jobs which are 'below' them, e.g. care work, despite having held high positions previously. This knocks your self-confidence
	ATTITUDE
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perseverance, don't take no for an answer! "Quitters never win and winners never quit" • Belief in ourselves. • Positivity: belief that everything is possible despite our difficulties • Determination • Moving on • Persevering • Self-belief • Personality – asking for help • Happiness • I go to university, I'm proud of myself and feel like I can do anything and anything is possible, like with my reading being so good now, I've got faith in me, self-belief and a can-do attitude • Surviving the weather!! • Making ourselves appear brave and confident even when we don't feel that way inside (e.g. of a small animal who is scared and small but puffs out its chest in the face of danger). • Be determined, don't give up. • Having hope. • Create happiness within ourselves e.g. being positive, continue looking after ourselves by doing the things we like. • Be open to other people (so that they can help us). • The knowledge that we have already flown thousands of miles and survived harsh conditions and struggles gives strength to withstand racism, even though it's "like cancer which spreads", and even though it's demeaning to be an accountant now forced to work as a care worker • We dream all the world
DIS-EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems are too much • Worries • Remembering the past • Fear and uncertainty of future • Living in a foreign country • Fear of being sent back • We have suffered
	AGENCY
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement • Doing voluntary work. Meeting people, being allowed to be myself and gaining people's trust in that position. • Recognising your rights and standing up for them (example of being discriminated against and ignored by classmates on a university course, but defying this attitude and speaking with supervisors to make sure the situation was corrected). • Before Christmas I couldn't live with the situation anymore, with not knowing any of the people on my street. And I put cards in all my neighbours' letter boxes with my name, address and telephone number on it and I got four replies. So now I know some of my neighbours and we talk and say hello and some are my friends now. • For our children to progress academically and achieve economic and social wellbeing. • To get the necessary skills and resources to be our own masters. • To empower others and help ourselves and continue the journey • Training and volunteering • Through volunteering we meet a lot of helpful people and learn a lot. We learn good time management and share problems.
	FAMILY
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the support of friends and family • Motherhood • Determined to help children • Children x 4

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deciding to separate • Being with my family • Family • Family – children • To see our family • Family reunions
DIS-EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing my family, not having family support • Separation from family x3 • Being used to having a baby • Missing friends • Homesick • Miss home • Left daughter behind • When I remember friends and family • I had to leave my country and my son and had no choice about it • Husband away • Dealing with children • Problem husband
	POLITICAL AGENCY
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representing others and having a voice (e.g. being on a council, steering group, a campaign) • We want an end to racism and discrimination. • We would like to see a Zimbabwean in parliament or in the local council (Elinah was encouraging in this respect, already being on a steering group). • The capability to recognise our rights as humans
	OTHER
EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The peace in the UK • Benefits are a really good thing • The way people treat each other in the UK • Help provided by health authority • Health • Money
DIS-EMPOWERING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The weather! No sunshine. • I had to have the operation, didn't feel in control, there's nothing you can do about medical problems

Appendix 2.

People who seek asylum and their trajectories of involvement

Between 2004 and 2010, 43 per cent of the 3134 refugees allocated to Britain through the UN Gateway Protection Programme were settled in Greater Manchester (Conlock & King, 2012: 10), nearly half of them in Bolton where GAP Unit collaborated with Refugee Action and the British Red Cross during the first phase of Arise and Shine. Refugee Action is the voluntary agency charged with overseeing the integration of Gateway refugees, who are offered English language workshops and cultural training and given a Personal Integration Plan to help them access services.⁶³ Greater Manchester and Liverpool are also leading host regions for asylum seekers. Since the implementation of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, those arriving in the country and requesting asylum have been sent to one of a number of dispersal areas while they wait for their claim to be processed, and between 2004 and 2011 around 4,621 asylum seekers a year were directed to accommodation centres in Greater Manchester (the largest number to Manchester, the second largest to Salford) (Conlock & King, 2012: 5). The accommodation and dispersal process is overseen by NASS, which does not have an official remit to aid settlement and integration. Every European country manages the issue differently but the official position in the UK (as stated in the 2005 National Refugee Integration Strategy) is that “integration in its fullest sense can take place only when a person has been granted refugee status so that they can make plans, including those for employment” (Home Office, 2005: 14). Until then the system is geared more towards deterring people from wanting to settle in Britain at all. However, neither are those refugees who receive a positive determination (permission to stay) from the UK authorities offered the same level of support with integration as those on the Gateway programme. They are expected to find housing within 28 days and to join the labour force as quickly as possible. There is little targeted statutory help with any of this, which considering that many will have just been through an extensive period of enforced worklessness, unable to practice or update their skills, is a tall order, and least plausible for those who speak little English (making the restrictions on asylum seekers’ access to English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes another barrier to integration). Wren, having surveyed the research literature, concluded that “the way that asylum seekers are

⁶³ The Refugee Action team in Bolton, having seen how the Arise and Shine group sessions had helped create bonds between participants, invited GAP Unit to lead welcome session for women from the next two cohorts of Gateway arrivals, who they wanted to encourage to keep meeting regularly after the organisation was no longer involved. Tendayi and I led these sessions as volunteers under Carolina’s supervision, a good chance to experience facilitation of large groups using interpreters.

supported during the waiting period while their claims are being determined” is of “key importance for longer-term integration” and that “the length of time an asylum seeker waits for status, and is thus excluded from the set of rights enjoyed by other UK residents, can have very significant effects on longer-term integration prospects” (Wren, 2010: 410).

During their first weeks and months, asylum seekers’ principle relationships are with the UKBA and NASS. If denied asylum, as the majority are, they start to encounter other organisations⁶⁴. Early on, when potentially most disorientated and in need of guidance, there are various support services they can access, from specialist medical charities such as Freedom from Torture and legal advice charities like the Law Centres, to small scale local support projects of different kinds. As Table 4, (p.92) demonstrates, significant numbers of formal and informal organisations, some of them initiated by refugees themselves, make up in different ways for the lack of statutory help towards settlement and integration. Fortunately, despite the national policy of discouraging asylum seeker integration, most do not distinguish between asylum seekers and refugees when it comes to this process (Navarro, 2006, vi).

As time passes, some individuals gradually extend their networks, seeking out free training courses, volunteering with refugee or non-refugee organisations, joining campaigns and forums. If made destitute, having exhausted their right to appeal⁶⁵ there is another tier of organisations which they can access; in the Greater Manchester area, for example, the British Red Cross, Boaz Trust and various non-denominational church-based projects try to provide food parcels or shelter, without public funding, to as many as they can. Three of the women in the Arise and Shine group were destitute but of these only Sofia was interviewed (and mentioned the Boaz Trust among the organisations she was involved with). In 2011, Boaz Trust estimated that there were over 2,000 destitute asylum seekers in Greater Manchester, roughly 100 accommodated in their properties, around 50 homeless and hundreds relying on friends, family or moving between acquaintances (Conlock & King, 2012: 24). As Maggie O’Neill summarises, “the reality is that networks of voluntary agencies, including faith groups, refugee organisations and micro-communities, are the safety net for those people living in destitution” (2010: 244).

⁶⁴ Provision varies cross the country but the North West region is taken to be fairly typical of the ten major dispersal areas.

⁶⁵ At the time of writing, access to free legal representation is diminishing rapidly due to national cuts to legal aid. As it is, solicitors will only assist a client if there is fresh evidence and what they judge to be a higher than 50:50 likelihood of success at appeal.

The 1999 Asylum Act was the UK's first attempt at national co-ordination of resettlement, which had previously been managed ad hoc in response to what were seen as individual, self-contained emergencies (Wren, 2007: 392). With successive waves of refugee arrivals, of European Jews from the 1890s to 1920s, through Chilean political exiles and Ugandan Asians in the 1970s to people fleeing the Balkan wars of the 1990s, there had been a "strong tendency to rely on the voluntary sector and self-help within the community" (2007: 392). However, despite NASS and the multi-agency networks set up by councils to provide some local co-ordination, this "strong tendency" was as strong as ever. The New Labour Government had "an explicit aim to expand the role of the voluntary sector and community groups in the provision of services in new dispersal areas" (Wren, 2007: 393), as a HO document from the time, outlining the strengths of the VCS, made clear:

- Volunteers – the voluntary sector's unique capacity to involve volunteers in their work has major benefits
- Additional resources – once voluntary sector agencies are involved in the support arrangements, they will start to raise funds to provide additional services
- Expertise – the expertise in meeting the support needs of asylum seekers is almost exclusively based in the voluntary sector
- Networking capacity – a great strength of the voluntary sector is their ability to draw in other organisations in the sector to provide additional resources or expertise
- Policy development – the voluntary sector has a good record of developing imaginative responses (Home Office, 1999).

The third sector was dynamic, flexible, well-positioned and ideologically suited to supporting the new arrivals. It was also the cheap option, not least because of the potential to "exploit the sense of responsibility felt by the voluntary sector and charities" (Wren, 2007: 393), and was part of the New Labour government's commitment to outsourcing public services. While reception activities were delegated to the third sector, other aspects of the system were taken on by private sector. These included NASS housing (G4S) and the courts translation service (Capita), where by keeping standards low reasonable profit margins were assured; and IRCs (Serco, Reliance, G4S) and eviction and deportation procedures (Capita), which most VCS organisations would not touch for ethical reasons (hence the vociferous targeting of Barnardos by campaigners for its involvement in child detention, and the criticism levelled at Refugee Action for running the Voluntary Returns programme on behalf of the Home Office). The main criticisms of the way dispersal was handled were that inadequate resources were made available and many unfunded groups found themselves at full stretch trying to cope with the situation; that refugee communities

were expected to absorb and care for fellow nationals without state assistance (in particular those whose claims were turned down); and that the lack of a unified infrastructure led to a strong ‘hit and miss’ element as to when and whether new arrivals found out about their welfare rights or received simple information about daily life in Britain, such as how to get from a to b, enrol children in school, or find organisations or same-country networks which could assist them. The fact that it depended not just on where people were housed in relation to established communities of migrants (and on the corresponding levels of provision), but on them knowing where to look, explains why provision of locally-relevant ‘welcome packs’ emerged repeatedly as a recommendation during the Arise and Shine process. Lydia, endured months of isolation before discovering WAST via the internet, whereas Rut was aware of the Red Cross when she arrived in the UK “and I just found them, I went to office and I found them”.⁶⁶ While social care, health, education and other public sector departments do play a role in aspects of settlement, Navarro’s research found little work with asylum seekers and refugees going on in statutory organisations, and saw the tendency to signpost people to the specialist third sector services as resulting partly from a “perceived lack of experience and expertise by generic workers” (2006: vi), which sounds like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Workers at Rainbow Haven (p.261) and Revive told me that they still regularly need to spend time trying to “make social services honour their duty of care – if there are mental health needs or a child is involved automatically it is their responsibility, but they’ll often try to pass the client to us. Sometimes we phone up the solicitor in advance of them refusing to do a Community Care Assessment, because from experience we can predict what’s about to happen” (Phone conversation, 16/2/13).

Thus, in 2000, the VCS in the North West found itself responsible for the reception and signposting of thousands of asylum seekers who began arriving in the region, with established organisations like Refugee Action taking the larger public contracts but other organisations becoming involved too as the level of need became clear. When Wren wrote that “the long-term engagement of the voluntary sector and the churches with issues related to poverty and deprivation” had “prepared the ground for a rapid and humane response to the arrival of several thousand asylum seekers within a relatively short space of time” (2007: 409), she had Glasgow in mind, but could have been referring to Greater

⁶⁶ A Red Cross worker told me that in 2001 the organisation had decided to operate an orientation service, linking newly arrived refugees with volunteers trained up to look after them in their first months. However, they rapidly found themselves taking on case work because the office, with its internationally recognised symbol on the door, was visible from the main Immigration Reporting Centre in Salford and asylum seekers began arriving daily, needing assistance.

Manchester. Third sector social workers, advice workers, legal aid lawyers and volunteers (many of them Christians, left-wing activists or both), along with refugee communities themselves, have provided the backbone of support since dispersal began. The termination of welfare payments marks the end of the state's responsibility towards a 'failed' asylum seeker, so destitution services were always the preserve of charity. As destitution policies started to bite it was homeless shelters and faith organisations, later joined by the Red Cross, which began dealing with the humanitarian fallout, and a January 2013 meeting I attended of local third sector refugee support organisations - called to discuss avoiding competition and duplication in an era of diminishing funding - revealed that this remains the situation across Greater Manchester.

As already highlighted, different groups become relevant at different stages of the immigration process. The distinction between 'settlement' and 'integration' is blurry, but it is clear that it is through participation in different organisations that integration, in the sense of developing bonds with others and getting an insight into how things work and having the opportunity to ask, is accomplished. Four types of collective support to refugees and asylum seekers can be discerned among the examples my participants gave, and there follows a typology, although in practice there is a lot of overlap between the categories:

1. Support-orientated RSIs – offering advice and assistance of various kinds
2. Refugee Community Organisations
3. Refugee and Migrant Forums
4. Other solidarity, advocacy and campaigning groups

Support-orientated RSIs

The third sector organisations which provide support services to asylum seekers and refugees range from tiny volunteer-led initiatives to big national charities which also get involved in policy work, lobbying and research. Refugee Action is among the latter; it was the main charity charged with asylum reception services and is HO funded in this capacity. However, aside from its One Stop Shop for advice and signposting, local branches run their own short and medium term programmes, such as the three year Well-being Project which aimed to "empower[s] asylum seekers and refugees through arts and sports-based activities" (Refugee Action website). This was greatly appreciated by attenders such as Sofia, who took part in cycling and swimming "to keep my mind focussed and to stay

healthy” (Sofia, interview), and the other members of the group who spoke highly of the programme, strongly echoing Gilroy’s findings in her own asylum seeker interviewees that:

acquisition of new skills and the discovery of new physical potential in their bodies such as feeling stronger, having more energy, were foregrounded by the women as being important to them. This led them to feeling more positive about themselves and their potential (Gilroy, 1996: 27)

A number of the Refugee Specific Initiatives (RSIs) which run regular drop-in sessions partner with other funded projects to provide health and well-being activities, counselling or training. An example is Rainbow Haven, a drop-in project in East Manchester and Salford, where Oxfam UKPP is setting up an accredited training course in outside catering, where GAP Unit has just finished a ten week refugee women's employment course and Musicians Without Borders recently led singing and filmmaking workshops. Mental health care has also been a focus for Rainbow Haven, which recently piloted an NHS Primary Care mental well-being clinic with Refugee Action, illustrating the collaboration within and between sectors which does occur. One of the Rainbow Haven worker’s explained:

People weren’t accessing mental health services because of taboos and because not knowing where to go, plus by coming to Rainbow Haven they can get a hot meal, attend an English class and see a practitioner all on one bus ticket they have borrowed from someone. It softens the anxiety of accessing mental health treatment (Phone conversation, 16/2/13).⁶⁷

The nature of RSI work is constantly changing in line with policy developments. For example, until 2010, Rainbow Haven saw virtually no refugees, but since the UKBA Legacy Process (see footnote 41) refugees have been a major client group. Tony Openshaw of Asylum Support Housing Advice (ASHA), which works with a team of volunteers (many of them subject to immigration controls themselves), to help people apply for support under Section 4⁶⁸, told me that 550 of his clients got status in 2010, compared to 160 the year before. It has been widely documented that organisations once focussed on integration projects became swamped by the needs of asylum seekers rather than

⁶⁷ The Black Health Agency’s (BHA) Routes Project also provides support and advice for newly arrived families, and its project Sahara is focussed on the health and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers, particularly linking them to mental health related services.

⁶⁸ ‘Section 4 support’ is made available to those whose claims for asylum are deemed to have failed but who can show that for one of a number of eligible reasons they should not, in the short term, be returned to their country.

recognized refugees, but a different dynamic is now emerging, as captured here by MacKenzie et al, who looked in depth at provision in a small (anonymised) northern town:

It was notable over the two periods of research that drop-in centres initially aimed at asylum-seekers, and crucially assumed to be so by migrant workers at the earlier stage of research, had become increasingly utilised by a broader range of people regardless of formal migration status...recipients of both positive and negative decisions continued to use drop-in centres such as ARC; facilities ostensibly supplied for asylum-seekers and funded on that basis... the role of drop-in centres was vital for facilitating access to other social and material support needed by members of all new-arrival communities, such as registering with a doctor, help with access to schools for their children and improving English language skills (2012: 638-639).

Rainbow Haven, too, has found itself catering increasingly for Eastern European labour migrants from across Greater Manchester since the onset of the recession. There is increasing demand on the services of all the surviving RSIs for help, support, advice and signposting, not because more and more people are arriving but because more and more of the services they have previously relied on are disappearing. In Manchester, the Law Centres which traditionally offered a holistic service to their legal clients, helping with different aspects of their settlement, can no longer offer this. The Immigration Advisory Service closed itself down. The CAB has a reduced service and MCC-run Manchester Advice has closed completely.

Navarro's report mentions the importance of "safe spaces for people to meet, in environments and locations where they will be welcomed and not feel threatened" (2006:13). The Red Cross WISP projects in Manchester and Bolton (and elsewhere) provide such a therapeutic space, a caring, structured environment in which women can take part in activities, receive information and learn or practice basic English. Rut attended the weekly sessions for three years and I noticed a calendar on her wall showing the group involved in craft activities in different city locations. She said:

I like everything about that group, because it was helping me by meeting people, to see all around Manchester, to know the place. Most of the place in Manchester we went and we visit (Rut, interview).

Amanda Jones-Said, the then Red Cross worker who started its first women's group in 2003, said her idea had been to offer taster sessions of therapeutic activities such as massage, and she had invested in a big bag of jewellery making equipment, "but it wasn't

about making jewellery but to encourage problem sharing, or for us to pick up on problems.” She added that “the women really liked the multicultural nature of it - it was very mixed, with women from Kurdistan to Colombia”⁶⁹. Fiona’s group RMU in Preston is another example of a service-orientated organisation. She felt she had “really benefited” from the professional counselling she was able to access there; it had helped her cope with problems that had been threatening to overwhelm her, including the on-going uncertainty of her legal case, the absence of her daughter, having no money and the demands of a baby and a husband suffering from mental illness. She was grateful for the birth partner RMU had provided and highlighted the organisation’s core offerings of support and assistance, mainly from the manager, Louise:

Wherever we want to go, which numbers we need to call, which support we need, she knows already, because she's born here, and we are new to the system and sometimes we are new even in Preston.

The point about support-orientated initiatives is that they are often essential in the lives of asylum seekers, whether they provide food, ESOL, advice, well-being services, legal help, training, or just social contact. Some RSIs are starting to offer opportunities for mutual collaborative working and collective action, a point which was covered in Chapter 5.

RCOs

Refugee community organisations⁷⁰ are “little different from other immigrant group organisations” (Zetter & Pearl, 2000: 682) in the way they promote the preservation of cultural identity, meet material needs, create a collective voice and act as a bridge to other services. Lynette Kelly distinguishes between formal (constituted) and informal RCOs and identifies their four main functions as overcoming isolation, providing material assistance, defending the interests of the community and promoting community culture (2003: 41). Cambridge & Williams (2004:106) draw attention to the way that diasporic networks “frequently stretch across the UK, countries of resettlement and countries of exile” and can be “very powerful forms of advocacy for refugees as they are trustworthy, comprehensible and culturally appropriate”, but RCOs are not always formed around a single nationality or ethnicity group (or what Kelly refers to as a “contingent community” (2003: 41)). WAST

⁶⁹ The WISP staff who witnessed the Arise and Shine interventions with the Manchester and Bolton groups said they would have incorporated some of the group work ideas if both had not left their posts soon afterwards. One of these women later became a GAP Unit associate, and because word of the sessions reached the national team, GAP Unit has been receiving an annual invitation to run a day workshop with a Red Cross women’s group in London.

⁷⁰ Also sometimes referred to as ‘refugee associations’ or ‘refugee-based organisations’

for example, is an RCO with an international membership - a community of women from asylum seeking backgrounds. ZIWO, in contrast, is a small, unfunded diaspora group whose members include migrants who have not come through the asylum route. Its main function is as a social space for supporting and maintaining cultural heritage. These are the only two RCOs listed in [Table 4.](#), because between them they account for most of the women who had chosen to be part of an RCO. People tend to affiliate to just one RCO while they may frequent multiple RSIs over time because, in Fiona's words: "we need a certain service as your situation changes... you have to move on to another kind of group which provides what is in your situation" (Fiona, interview).

Informal asylum seeker-led RCOs⁷¹ proliferated in dispersal areas after 2000. They joined older RCOs set up by communities with a longer history of settlement (Zetter, 2007: 187). Zetter also notes that the effect of the influx of new asylum seekers and refugees after 2000 was that many of the established, bigger RCOs had to deflect their activities towards "essentially defensive tasks of advocacy, protecting basic rights of asylum seekers – challenging both forced repatriation and local hostility – and filling the increasingly large void left by the withdrawal of state support in the last decade" (2007: 187). This was corroborated by a 2008 overview of RCOs in Yorkshire and Humber which saw that provision of services and activities for refugees was largely on hold due to the more urgent problems of asylum seekers and 'failed' asylum seekers (Choksi et al, 2008: 4).

The 2012 evaluation report of Basis, a five year Big Lottery-funded multi-agency project which gave tailored support to RCOs in several regions, mentions that, nationally, "it is clear that RCOs are at least for the moment reducing in numbers" (2012: 10). Arise and Shine member Elinah, who was recently made redundant from Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN), confirmed that recent cuts are weakening local RCOs, making them less able to offer services to members and, in particular, to cover their travel expenses to meetings. Those RCOs which "served essentially internal, often narrowly defined needs and were self sufficient and self organised" were surviving best, according to the Basis report (Harris et al, 2012: 13).

The organisations/projects listed in [Table 4.](#) are split evenly between women-only and mixed groups, which suggests a strong inclination towards women-only activities but without exclusivity. What newcomers look to find or create in terms of social and other

⁷¹ The word 'refugee' in 'refugee community organisation' is used loosely.

collectives is inevitably influenced to an extent by their gender. In the refugee sector there are evidently more single sex services directed at women, and more self-help initiatives established by women for other women, just as there is a defined women's but not a men's voluntary and community sector more generally. However, many of the ostensibly mixed RCOs are male-led and have a largely, sometimes exclusively, male membership. Griffiths et al (2005: 20) highlight women's underrepresentation in RCOs, and Chung (2005: 915) has noted a conspicuous absence of women in the power structures of traditional immigrant organisations (contributing to the creation of women-only provision rather than resulting from it). It is instructive that the only RCOs my participants mentioned were women-only (ZIWO and WAST). However, several were active in consultative forums and networks alongside men.

Although a slightly different category, both Lydia and her husband were involved in the South Cameroon National Council (SCNC), so political groups in exile need a mention. It may be true, as Jones-Correa contends, that a much higher proportion of men participate in politically active organisations which direct their attention to the country of origin, while women are more often involved in organisations aiming at the receiving society and concerned with finding practical solutions for everyday problems (1998: 334). However, Lydia was not the only woman involved in Arise and Shine who had been and remained active in a political party in exile, and at least two were granted Leave to Remain partly on the basis of being able to prove continued involvement in outlawed parties while in the UK.

Refugee forums and networks

Amas and Price (2008:19), examining the level of involvement of refugees in local area decision making structures, noted that "Where RCO participation existed it was through a local refugee co-ordinating body such as a 'refugee forum'". Navarro also stated that "In order to maximise the impact of refugee community organisations and link them into existing community infrastructure, the creation of forums or a framework for dialogue can provide a focus for and co-ordination of activity between public and community and voluntary sector agencies" (2006: 15). The Basis Project evaluation mentioned above, while finding that RCOs were in decline, noted that:

refugee self organisation and initiative is not. Refugee activists are all still taking forward ideas and trying to support needs in their communities which cuts in service

budgets (for advice services, legal services, support and integration services) only render more acute (2012: 10).

This reflects the situation in Manchester, where refugees and asylum seekers have been increasingly visible in campaigning and representing their interests in different forums. It is interesting that the evaluation report says of Manchester and Liverpool that:

Both major cities situate work with refugees within a long and sometimes difficult struggle with issues of race and migration, and the region has produced some inspiring leaders ready to challenge the national trends and speak out in favour of migrants, migration and refugees. Possibly as a result of this, community development in the area has also been quite advanced (2012: 14).

That “community development in the area has been quite advanced” is clearly a relative and subjective statement, yet a glance at local history (pp.118-124) suggests that it captures the reality and that the three factors highlighted have indeed been pivotal: the active promotion of CD frameworks within the refugee sector; the galvanising role of particular charismatic (or just persistent) individuals; and the link between asylum-related provision/activism and a local history of anti-racist and other oppositional political organising.

Solidarity groups

This category includes groups, typically headed by non-migrants, who take a political rather than a merely a humanitarian approach to solidarity, although they may well support migrants groups in multiple ways. In 2010, when a meeting was called to try to co-ordinate communication and mobilise activists rapidly in response to immediate threats from UKBA (for example to stand with families who have been told they are about to be detained), groups represented included No One is Illegal, (NOII), WAST, No Borders, Permanent Revolution, RAPAR (which originally stood for Refugee and Asylum Participatory Action Research), United Against Fascism, MCDAS, LISG, Unite the union, solicitors and lawyers from legal aid chambers, Safety for Sisters (which lobbies for women with no recourse to public funds to be able to access refuges and otherwise able to leave violent partners), staff of at least one of the Law Centres (which at the time existed in Rochdale, Oldham, Bury and South Manchester) and Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU). These are examples of the more overtly political groups involved in standing up for the rights of refugees in the city. Strongly left wing or anarchist ideology and/or non-conformist Christianity would tend to characterise their active memberships, with the presence of WAST members illustrating its category-spanning nature and the fact

that refugees and asylum seekers themselves can assume an ally/solidarity role with others once they have sufficient levels of experience and connectedness.

The three solidarity organisations referenced by my participants were the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC), MCDAS and RAPAR. RAPAR began as a participatory research project based at Salford University, but political and personnel problems led to a split and an independent existence predominantly focussed on empowering and galvanising support for individual asylum seekers' and their anti-deportation campaigns. NCADC was formed in 1995 to build the capacity of asylum seekers and activists to defend those facing threats of detention and removal. Tony Openshaw of ASHA, at one time one of its four national workers; was also among the founders of MCDAS in 2000. The primary aim of this group was to expose myths and defend asylum seekers' rights; members attended national demonstrations, organised public meetings against, for example, destitution policies and family detention, and lobbied for the right to work. Recognizing the need for social space, and seeing it as the way to encourage asylum seekers to get active politically in their own cause, MCDAS began monthly Saturday Solidarity Socials at the Friends Meeting House⁷². Being on a Saturday meant whole families could attend, and for eight years, supplemented by occasional day trips, the socials were a place to meet allies who could provide advice and information and link people into various campaigns or help them fight their own. Funding⁷³ initially came from a number of trade unions as well as churches, local grant making trusts and 'benefit dos'. However, by 2009, many other socials and drop-ins had grown up across Greater Manchester, and a lot of the initial attenders had thankfully been granted refugee status. MCDAS volunteers no longer had time and energy for raising increasingly scarce funds, so called it a day, but most (probably all) members continued to be active in defence of asylum seekers and refugees.

Although this was not discussed during the interviews, I was aware that several members of the Arise and Shine group had received legal advice through one of the Law Centres, which have played a pivotal role in defending migrants' rights locally and nationally. The first in the region (now SMLC) opened in 1976. The Law Centres came about as an expression of radical dissent from the politics of the welfare state, which it was felt was

⁷² The Quaker Meeting House is a popular venue for refugee events and meetings in Manchester, including Arise and Shine meetings and gatherings.

⁷³ Most of the funding went on bus fares for those attending the socials or the various trips to places of interest (with free entry) and the surrounding countryside.

premised on a lack of equal access of all before the law. They were staffed by idealists who operated with a collective pay structure and sought to be active in their local communities. According to Marjorie Mayo:

Law Centres were established with staff with strong commitments to the values inherent in providing equal access to the law, regardless of the ability to pay and/or of other social advantages and disadvantages, together with commitments to working with disadvantaged communities to promote social justice agendas more widely. In addition, the early Law Centres were typically committed to collective and collaborative ways of working, with strong community involvement, developing preventative work as well as working with individuals holistically (2012: 18).

They were, especially in the early days, “closely linked, in many cases, to local community organisations and social movements” (Mayo, 2012: 32). The Law Centres’ philosophy and internationalist outlook conflicted with the racism of immigration controls, and staff regularly defended people who found themselves on the wrong side of the UK’s (constantly tightening) immigration law. In 1987, Law Centre staff successfully lobbied local councils for a grant to set up a dedicated Immigration Aid Unit, which survives. Anti-deportation campaigning in Manchester has been intimately tied up with NCADC, SMLC, GMIAU, RAPAR, No Borders, WAST and the unions, as discussed above.

Bringing the sector together

RAA is a three year project funded by the Network for Social Change (NSC), a group of progressive philanthropists. The job it has set itself is to “enhance grass roots and national campaigns and build a movement for positive change to the asylum system” (RAA, 2012), producing a “loud, co-ordinated voice” (RAA, 2012) to try to shift the “weight of public consensus making anti-immigration views highly and automatically appealing” (Glennie, 2011). Co-ordinators in the three regions with the highest numbers of asylum seekers outside of London, the West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humber and the North West, are working with existing groups to “strengthen and inform existing work, inspire new support and involve those with personal experience of seeking asylum” (RAA, 2012). The targets are both policy change and public awareness-raising. As one of her many tasks, the Manchester-based worker is supporting UfC, a Greater Manchester coalition for influencing decision-makers on the destitution issue in particular. UfC was launched by the Revive Action Group at a conference on destitution they organised in partnership with the SRF (with the collaboration of Salford University) in 2011. Since then it has made submissions to the European Court for Human Rights and the National Poverty Commission, and recently hosted Shadow Equalities Minister Kate Green to table

questions raised during their Poverty Commission research. The initial vision had been for UfC to be a diverse campaigning forum bringing together asylum seekers and professionals to share knowledge across the sector. However, the attendance of the larger organisations dwindled after a few months, leaving a core of mainly Revive Action Group members. In the view of one participant, the fact that Refugee Action set up a policy-orientated lobbying group shortly after UFC got started had diverted energy into what was probably perceived as the more high-powered forum. However, the two have distinct and different remits (although she remained concerned, echoing the Arise and Shine women's view (p.108) that asylum seekers always seem to be at a distance from where the important negotiations are occurring) and she conceded that things had turned out quite positively in some ways. The Action Group members felt more comfortable to practice chairing and facilitating and other roles in the smaller, more intimate meeting, while the fortuitous arrival of RAA meant they felt 'in the loop' and on a more equal footing with established campaigners, especially having the RAA worker – the regional communication hub personified – working directly with them. Her presence had also freed up the Revive workers who had been struggling to manage UfC on top of their existing workloads – again reinforcing the message that external resources are often vital to advocacy activities. During the conversation at the start of this chapter about who represents asylum seekers, some of the Arise and Shine women expressed disappointment that the first regional RAA meeting had had the usual format: White British people standing at the front directing proceedings and doing most of the talking, along with one or two refugee professionals. However, they believed that the workers seemed genuinely committed to best practice, and were likely to be open to constructive feedback for future meetings.

Although not part of the refugee sector as such, faith groups are often among the most important resources sustaining refugees and asylum seekers. Many asylum seekers also undertake voluntary work beyond the sector, so these additional elements merit a short mention.

Faith groups

Religious faith is a primary aspect of many refugee and asylum seeker women's identities and a primary source of resilience. All ten of the women were active in faith groups; two were practising Muslims and the others regular churchgoers who, in most cases and to varying extents, derived a sense of belonging from their church community. In Lydia's play (see Chapter 5.), when the central character Aminata is asked which support group she

attends, she answers “I don’t have a support group, I only have my church”, reflecting the fact that, for a practicing Christian asylum seeker, having a church is a first priority and a minimum need. In the scene at the detention centre women are seen praying out loud to Jesus and Allah, and the original last line of the play is: “Some of us still have a mountain to climb, but we have each other, hope and God”, indicating that basic sustenance is provided by faith in God’s blessing and protection.

The women attended different kinds of churches, not necessarily the denominations (Methodist, Catholic, Protestant and others) with which they were previously aligned. A born-again Christian in Zimbabwe, Sofia had also sought out evangelical churches with charismatic African pastors in the UK, wanting that joyful, noisy, exuberant style of worship. However, Lydia had joined an Anglican church, and when I asked whether she enjoyed the singing (as Sofia did) she smiled and said it was “very English”, meaning inhibited and barely audible. However she and her husband had remained with this church in Rochdale despite various moves to different towns. She had been a Catholic in Cameroon, but found the Church of England service very similar. Lydia and Bernard were the only Africans in the mostly elderly, white, working class congregation, and there were always at least one or two parishioners present at their tribunal hearings, quietly and discretely showing their support:

I think I’m the first asylum seeker they ever, they ever met. And even I’m a member of the church council, so they treat me like part of them, so that, that act of acceptance, knowing that ‘Oh, I’m really accepted, they like me’, it makes me feel at home... Even when I went to detention, I came out, I was living in Chorlton, I couldn’t go right to Rochdale for my church, they send me to Liverpool and so on - I was like missing, like missing home, I’m missing Rochdale, I’m missing my church. So when finally they move me from Liverpool to Bury, I had time once only when I went to church, I felt like I’ve come back home. You see. So when I entered the church, everybody was like a ghost have come, so, it was like I’m back home again. So I still go there. So those are the things that keep me strong, and they keep on checking with me if I’m ok, what is happening with your case now, any news? So those things they keep you strong and hopeful (Lydia, interview).

Maria had experience of the Pentecostal Nigerian churches, which are often American influenced with a theological stress on Christianity as a means to prosperity and success. However, she did not feel drawn to that style of worship and preferred the Church of England (CoE) parish she had discovered when living in Ashton. She continued to worship there despite having been re-housed in East Manchester, again showing the importance of

continuity which is so often shattered by the way UKBA moves people about from one borough to another. Asked what helps her keep strong, she replied:

I've got the church because- when Jack [her son] had his broken leg I called the Reverend: 'Pray for us! Jack is-' The next minute the wife is there, I've got a friend with lunch coming, and all the support of the people around me. I believe these people are my family (Maria, interview).

Rut's primary community was centred around an Ethiopian church in Birmingham where she had lived before being relocated to Manchester, and as soon as she received Leave to Remain (that is, after successfully fighting Birmingham City Council's refusal to house her) she moved back there because:

In Birmingham we have a community, like Ethiopian community, we have. We have church, not like Manchester; maybe they are a bit stronger than in Manchester, the Ethiopian people.

As Gall, Charbonneau and Clarke et al comment, a "relationship with God can fulfil various functions, including the provision of comfort, social support and a sense of belonging, the encouragement of inner strength and acceptance, empowerment, and control, the relief of emotional distress and specific fear... and the creation of meaning" (2005:95). Despite the importance of the social community and sense of belonging gained through shared worship, more than one of the women I interviewed made clear that their personal relationship with God was the most important aspect of all this. Tendayi's comment, for example, that:

Having a faith has helped me quite a lot. And not only having a faith, like 'I used to go to church on Sunday', no. Personal faith. Because, there are some people who used to go to church on Sunday, now they don't want even to see the door of the church! (laughs) So it was my own personal faith, and the values my er my parents instilled in me, and the values I've also embraced as an adult. And my aspirations, which kept me, er, going (Tendayi, interview).

That the relationship with God, rather than strict adherence to formal doctrine, was often the central aspect of their faith, is perhaps illustrated by the women's willingness to try out different church denominations (Fiona, too, had been introduced to an evangelical church in Preston, and decided she liked it). It is also suggested by an undogmatic openness I detected in some individuals' relationship with religion. For example, during a conversation with Lydia about the (destructive) legacy of colonialism in Cameroon, I

asked what she thought about the fact that it was European missionaries who brought Christianity to the country. She is a person who refers frequently to scripture and is never without her pocket Bible, yet her answer was that people would have just continued with the religions of their ancestors, which had been equally rich and sacred. She also mentioned how surprised she and her husband had been to see a woman vicar when they first attended church in Rochdale, but had thought it made complete sense and found it very positive.

On several occasions Carolina asked one of the group to lead us in prayer, usually to as a way of closing a session. A number of the women (perhaps all, but this wasn't tested), were able and willing to do this eloquently and without prior notice. They would recite appropriate passages from the Bible or Qur'an or weave their own affirmations and blessings to reflect the mood and content of the session. One was Susan, a very pious and spiritual person. At one of the later meetings, everyone was asked to note down two reasons why they had come along that day, and one of hers was "To show the depth of my appreciation to God. He alone can do things beyond our reasons". As we went round the circle she again invoked the Heavenly Father and her desire to thank him for all his help and for having returned Sofia safely to the group from detention.

Secular discourse often emphasises tension between religious traditions and between religion and secularism. My experience with asylum seekers and refugees is of people mixing freely with members of different religious traditions, in a spirit of respect for and interest in others' cultures and practices, and in appreciation of the many continuities and commonalities between them. Tendayi, a Methodist, for example told me it was an "advantage" that:

Especially with women from the Asian background, we share similar cultures. Yes, it is very similar. So. Although the Asians they are very- may be very strict, but we are a bit liberal, in some cases! (Tendayi, interview).

Sharing a religious framework of any kind can provide a shared repertoire and style of relating, and I saw this working within the Arise and Shine meetings. Britain's dominant secularism is one more cultural difference to which people from very religious societies need to adjust, so the bonds between new migrants can be strengthened by shared religiosity, as well as faith communities providing one of the contexts in which intimate relationships with British people develop more quickly and easily.

Volunteering

Most of the non-refugee organisations in Table 4. were mentioned by Maria, who had been in the UK for several years and was not an asylum seeker originally – she had been working for the NHS in London when her visa expired and was caught by immigration. She was moved to Liverpool where, not being allowed to work and having a baby son, she took part in many community activities (some of which she initiated herself), and volunteered with different organisations in order to feel integrated. Sofia (an asylum seeker at the time of writing) also consistently volunteered “outside of asylum seekers”, again as a strategy of integration and to keep herself busy. Fiona had embarked on some training in mental health care while still an asylum seeker and had taken a placement at MIND, the mental health charity, as part of this. Tendayi (an experienced teacher) had tried to get some work experience in a primary school, but was rudely turned away:

I wanted to do voluntary teaching, then I was bombarded with all these questions, ‘Do you know the National Curriculum? Do you know whatnot?’, and I was just standing there foolishly blank (laughs). I just said ‘I don’t know’ (Tendayi, interview).

According to Tim Cowen, the director of a project aimed at involving refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers with the CAB (branches of which both Maria and Sofia volunteered with at one time):

The two main challenges have been childcare provision and issues around immigration policy and destitution. Many women lack support networks for childcare. This is not just with refugees and asylum seekers, but it may be more difficult if you don’t have any family here (Wilson & Lewis, 2006: 38).

Indeed, Maria did the volunteering she loved with Refugee Action “Until they couldn’t afford childcare” and her CAB placement came to an end for the very reason Cohen describes:

When I went to CAB and volunteered, they wanted me as advisor. So, but that same month they cut off the childcare aspect of it. And my son wasn't going to school. And as much as I loved to be an advisor with CAB and do the thing, I couldn't continue because of childcare. So it’s still the same impediment... Most of the time there’s no funding for childcare (Maria, interview).

Table 8., extracted from a 2006 report by Ruth Wilson and Hannah Lewis which looked at volunteering by asylum seekers and refugees, lists childcare among the detracting factors, and the rest of the table is interesting in terms of the discussion about motivations which

follows. Wilson and Lewis write that “some refugees and people seeking asylum find their way into ‘mainstream’ volunteering almost by accident”, but Maria and Sofia are characteristic of those “at the other end of the spectrum...who are deliberately seeking out volunteering experiences where they know they are unlikely to meet other people from their community” (2006: 30). In Maria and Sofia’s case they were seeking this *in addition* to their many volunteering activities with fellow refugees and asylum seekers, but the rest of Wilson and Lewis’s account describes them both with notable accuracy:

These people often have a long-term goal they are working towards, usually related to establishing a career in this country. They may have a strong wish to be of service to the host society. They may want to counteract the tabloid image of refugees and asylum seekers as scroungers. They are aware of the benefits that come from volunteering outside the refugee sector: having to speak in English, meeting local people, learning about work and life in the UK, gaining references and guidance. They may use the term ‘integration’ and be seeking to integrate. They may encourage others to do the same: the presence of one enthusiastic volunteer can, in a welcoming environment, lead to other refugees and asylum seekers joining in. To achieve their goals, several of the people we interviewed were volunteering in more than one place. A few had moved from one volunteering agency to another, to build up a particular track record, to continue to develop, or as they search for the right experience... For some, their first volunteering experience had been in a refugee organisation they knew and understood, and this led on to volunteering in other sectors. Most of the people we interviewed had at least some ‘pioneer’ qualities (2006: 30).

Table 8. Reasons commonly given by refugees/asylum seekers for volunteering outside the refugee sector (Wilson & Lewis, 2006: 26)

Why volunteer?	What puts people off?
Work/study reasons To get experience that will help get a job To practice/develop skills To improve language/communication skills To get experience that will help get into college To get references Personal To be busy, interested To meet new people To be with friends Altruistic To help host community To show asylum seekers are not scroungers Sense of religious duty To help the environment To share knowledge Because come from culture of communal activity Integration To mix with British people To learn about British society Legal Because not allowed to work	Reasons commonly given by refugees and people seeking asylum: Emotional/attitudinal reasons Low confidence Anxieties around immigration status Thinking your English isn’t good enough Depression Previous negative experience of volunteering Lack of knowledge Not knowing you can volunteer Not knowing what’s on offer, how to get it Not understanding what volunteering is Fear that benefits will be affected Not seeing previous experience as ‘volunteering’ Practical Living in a hostel Destitution Lack of childcare Distance from home Amount of paperwork Expenses not paid promptly

Appendix 3.

More about WAST

WAST has exclusive access to a big basement office where weekly activities include creative writing classes, the WAST Nightingales choir, legal advice sessions, anti-deportation campaign planning and, most importantly, the Friday drop-in, attended by

“WAST is a self-led, self-help gender specific group which was developed by women asylum seekers, getting together to support ourselves through the dehumanising, disempowering and frightening process that is Britain’s immigration system” (WAST leaflet)

up to 60 women and small children. According to Wroe, the way WAST frames itself works against the identification of refugees as needy, helpless and dependent, towards being capable and politically involved. It challenges negative images of asylum seekers:

with a narrative of community, education and capability. The meanings associated with ‘asylum-seekers’ are re-worked; women asylum seekers are those who face specific problems but who have the skills and resources (both personal and social) to collaborate, form friendships, promote a positive image of themselves and fight for their rights, *despite* the hostile light in which the media places them (Wroe, 2012:127).

Asked if she felt a particular attachment to any of the organisations she was active in, Sofia said that “WAST is the unique one amongst all the others” because:

it is not that there is a certain group of British people, and then asylum seekers volunteer. No, we are ten asylum seekers, five of the Management got their status, and five of us still fight to get our status. So, that is why I say this is a really caring group, because we went through so a lot of things, and experiences, and then we come together and we share it in WAST (Sofia, interview).

Lydia and Sofia stressed the importance of meeting people going through the same situation, and forming friendships:

Before I went to WAST, I realise I was really depressed, I was down. But since it’s an organisation that is an organisation of women, who are all the same like me, going through the same experience, so I, so they help to support one another. Not financially or anything, just giving their own experiences. So it makes you feel no, you are not the only person in that situation (Lydia, interview).

When they come to WAST, then they see a lot of women, even maybe worse than them. Then they feel this is where I belong, because... they meet friends there and they meet their country's people and that is so important. The Home Office want us to integrate, so that is how we integrate. Which although it is not much with British people, because you are an asylum seeker they don’t understand you (Sofia, interview).

It had been asylum seeker Farhat Khan's principle motivation for starting WAST in the first place:

I became aware that I felt safer and more comfortable in the company of other asylum seeking women. I did not have to explain my hopes and my fears to them... We belonged to different countries, but what had brought us together was that we were women asylum seekers who had come to the UK to seek international protection and we had been treated unfairly by the British justice system (Sharma & Berry, 2009: 5).

The number of refugees on the Management Group has been steadily increasing; half had 'status' at the time of my interviews and now almost all are refugees, but they remain focussed on fighting for the rights of those in the asylum system. WAST fosters opportunities for individual women to find support, take on tasks at their own pace and gradually increase their confidence, surrounded role models. As Rainbird notes, "receiving information that had been 'tried and tested' by another asylum seeker was of immense value" (212: 419). It was Sofia, clued up on asylum law after training courses attended on behalf of WAST, who was able to inform Fiona that relevant legislation had been amended and that she should re-submit her asylum application, which she did with success. There are asylum seekers at WAST who are trained to advise and help women with their paperwork post-asylum. As well as fostering social relationships within the group, WAST acts as a bridge into wider society, mediated by allies and supporters.

The link with solidarity activism

Farhat Khan, who had arrived in the UK with her children in 2002, launched a campaign with the help of the new worker at NCADC, Emma Ginn. Farhat, a British Council employee in Pakistan, worked at the Cheetham Hill Advice Centre until the 2004 Asylum Act removed her right to do so. It was fellow advice and VAW workers, trade unionists and veterans of the women's movement who joined her campaign team and later assisted her in setting up WAST. I was in Manchester's Basement social centre during what I now realise was their inaugural meeting; I remember seeing Emma and seven or eight other women at a table, deep in conversation. Most of these women had campaigns supported by NCDAC, and the recently founded No Borders' group, which also met at the Basement, was a source of experienced campaigners. The Basement had been the initiative of a loose network of people involved with anti-capitalist, anarchist, environmentalist, feminist, queer, animal rights and other activisms. Their radical art collectives, dadaesque protests, temporary squat cafes and other goings on were twenty-first century reinventions of some of the countercultural formations of the 1970s which (I realised after speaking to some of

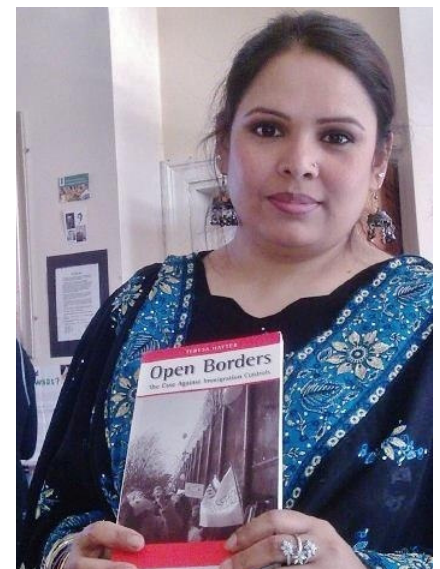
them) people who had been active in an earlier wave of deportation campaigning in Manchester had been part of. One of the Basement's founders has written:

I think had a huge effect on the levels of activism happening in Manchester. For example the Manchester No Borders group and related migrant and refugee groups and organisations benefited hugely from the social centre, and it was interesting to see how important having a space was to this type of campaigning. From somewhere to have campaign meetings, to make banners, have English lessons or simply a space where refugees could come for tea and free internet without being moved on (Bullen, 2008).

The close interactions between migrants and socialists, anarchists, queers and radical feminists does not necessarily mean that they come to share one another's political views but no doubt creates some interesting ideological hybridities. Gwyneth Lonergan, an activist whose PhD looks at the political resistance of migrant women's groups in Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds (WAST included) mentioned that as someone who grew up (in Canada) with a close knowledge of North American Black feminist organising, it had come as a surprise to realise that these groups did not have any kind of radical or feminist agenda (Gwyneth, phone conversation, 4/4/13). Nevertheless, when WAST women were invited to speak at the UK Feminista conference in 2011, they headed over to Occupy at St Paul's and received strong support from the assembly for their intervention. They felt at ease among the familiar crowd of assorted dissenters, given their main allies back in Manchester.



WAST member at the St Pauls' Occupy site in 2011



WAST member posing with Theresa Hayter's polemic book subtitled 'The case against immigration controls' (WAST Facebook site)

Appendix 4.

More on anti-deportation campaigning and resistance

Like other No Borders activist involved with anti-deportation campaigns in the 2000s, I noted the irony of arguing against immigration controls on one hand and for their just application on the other. I was unaware that “past campaigners... seeing immigration and asylum controls alike as racist” (Cohen, 2003: 214) had attacked immigration the controls per se and had not distinguished between asylum seekers and other migrants. Until the mid-nineties, the right to stay had been framed more often than not in political rather than humanitarian terms, often pointing up not just the racism but the gender violence of the law. I discovered that at least thirty-six such campaigns were won in Greater Manchester between 1978 and 1987 and that a number of familiar characters in my neighbourhood, including the owner of the Caribbean takeaway and his twin sons, are familiar characters because of the successful campaigns they fought in the 1980s. “Perhaps the most significant feature”, according to immigration barrister Steve Cohen, “was the manner in which campaigns were collectivised around particular issues – bringing together in resistance people in the same situation” (2003: 218). Cohen, the late founder of the No One Is Illegal network (as well as SMLC and GMIAU), saw these community-based immigration campaigns as reflecting “growing political strength of the black community” (2003: 230) and representing “flying pickets against immigration control” (2003: 228). The campaign of Nasir Begum, a Pakistani national who was refused settlement after leaving the abusive husband she had come to England to marry, “established”, in Cohen’s view, “many of the practices to be followed by future campaigns” (2003: 215), including gathering support from disparate organisations such as trade unions, black groups, the Asian Youth Movement and women’s groups, and the fact that it was “her campaign and not a campaign for her” (2003: 216). The only campaign I had heard of (not just because I live two minutes from the Church of Ascension where he sought sanctuary in 1989) was the two-year mobilisation by and for Viraj Mendis, a Sri Lankan communist who had overstayed his student visa.

Save Viraj Mendis, as Tony Openshaw from ASHA⁷⁴ recounted, brought people together from different campaigns and social movements, leading to a sometimes fraught and sometimes constructive negotiation of varying ideological and sectarian positions. Tony

⁷⁴ ASHA is based in a health centre almost opposite the Church of the Ascension

was involved in ‘gay liberation’, campaigning against Clause 4 and Section 28, and remembers a profusion of banners proclaiming this or that group’s support for Viraj Mendis on the weekly marches from the Town Hall to the church in Hulme. One aspect of the uneasy alliance was between the church and the revolutionary communists (including Steve Cohen) at the heart of Mendis’ campaign. However, Christianity has a long history civil disobedience and challenging the state, both through individual radical clergy within the established Church (typically based in socially and economically marginal communities such as Hulme) and its many separate nonconformist traditions. It is no coincidence that the other well-known British sanctuary case, that of the Ogunwobi family who took refuge in a Baptist church from 1994 to 1997, took place in Hackney (where Sunday Ogunwobi was later a Labour councillor and pastor). Like Hulme, Hackney had a tradition of both secular radicalism and religious nonconformism:

Walter Schwartz in his 1989 book *New Dissenters* sought to discern a moral alliance against Thatcherism among nonconformist Christians, the Anglican Christian socialist tradition and all those of the Left who were morally opposed to the consequences of monetarist economics. Certainly Thatcherism did dismay many Christians and create a desire for resistance to what was perceived as a selfish and materialist society. This was particularly evident in inner London where the consequences of monetarism could be most clearly seen and there was already a political bias to the Left...In Hackney this was most evident around the issues of immigration and refugees where there was widespread opposition to what was seen as a racist immigration policy (Ashdown, 2002: 17).

The Viraj Mendis campaign ended when immigration officers broke into the church by night, seized Mendis and bundled him out of the country. The fact that Viraj Mendis always argued in terms of a right to free movement across borders and not on the grounds of a threat to his safety, may well have contributed to the state’s harsh response. Acquaintances have spoken of a profound demoralisation among some supporters after this defeat, but for Openshaw it was just the start of a lifelong commitment to defending migrants. With a multi-ethnic affinity group including Law Centre staff, he campaigned alongside many more local people who had fallen foul of immigration control. He joined GMIAU as administrator before moving to the George House Trust, where he founded a support group which became what is now Gay In the UK, a national organisation. As already mentioned he was a founder of MCDAS and the first Manchester-based worker with NCADC, set up in 1995 with lottery money raised by - no surprise - Hackney Law Centre.

Asylum advocacy, as I have explained, “conforms to the violent paradox of sovereignty, where exclusion is permitted in order to better care for those ‘inside’” (Judge, 2010:34). Judge asks “Is the ‘national order of things’ (Malkki 1995) just a pragmatic inevitability that advocacy must conform to?” (2010: 31) On one level the answer is yes (especially when it comes to defending individual asylum seekers), but there are good reasons for trying whenever possible to open out to other spatial scales and to disrupt popular imaginaries when we know them to be based on fundamental inequality. According to Naomi Millner, “emergent critiques of humanitarianism are displacing calls for hospitality to refugee victims with a demand for solidarity across borders... solidaristic habits of action yield a more lively politics than the tropes of compassionate hospitality associated with humanitarianism” (2011: 321). As mentioned on p.151, in Western countries of destination, movements of undocumented migrants are increasingly engaged in disrupting established notions of citizenship, staging what Alison Jeffers (after Butler) calls ‘wishful performatives’ in their demands for recognition on terms other than those defined by any particular state. Jeffers is sceptical that the ‘politics of the spectacle’ is able to advance entitlements, arguing that “the lack of any real political power on the part of refugee activists means that their reiterations will probably not be effective on real terms. Individual refugees are no less likely to be deported, and campaigners are equally unlikely to see a policy of open immigration across international borders” (2011: 95). However, in some case migrants have successfully secured new rights through these actions, and the ‘staging of the impossible’ is perhaps even more important on a symbolic level. This echoes the discussion of Levinasian ethics (p.150), and connects to Millner’s work on the No Borders movement.

Radical migration politics

The premise of the No Borders philosophy is that freedom to travel and settle should be open to all, regardless of social or geopolitical location. This demand for free movement is linked explicitly to a demand for the dissolution of nation states (for being too large a unit of organisation for democracy to function, and for being foundational to the capitalist order). But No Borders activists do not naïvely lobby their respective governments for the immediate and unilateral abandonment of immigration controls. They create propaganda and engage in solidaristic practices with migrants which seek, as Millner puts it, “to expose the ‘miscounts’ which allow the discriminatory functions of border controls to pass unnoticed” (2011:327). Millner, herself a volunteer at a support centre for asylum seekers, uses the work of philosopher Jean Rancière to theorise her experience ‘in the field’ with

the No Borders movement, though which she succeeds in articulating what is for many an experiential, even mysterious, form of politics. Unlike most mobilisations in support of refugees and asylum seekers, No Borders does not draw on the giver/receiver dynamics of humanitarianism and compassionate hospitality; instead it attempts to foster cross-border solidarity and a “democratic politics of disagreement”, scope for which, according to Rancière, has been “calamitously eroded as a result of the great emphasis laid on contemporary policy-making as a means to achieve eventual equality” (Millner, 2012:3).

In the analysis of radical philosophers like Badiou, Žižek and Rancière, the global acceptance of capitalism and the liberal state as the organisational basis of society⁷⁵ as being inextricably linked has reduced politics to social administration and replaced political values with moral ones (Hooker 2011). For Rancière, in this ‘post-political’ age, politics ‘proper’ now only occurs in the rare moments of ‘dissensus’ when “a collective subject asserts itself as a part to be taken account of, in contradiction to a social order in which it is allotted no place” (Millner 2012:3). Such a moment (as when a ‘failed’ asylum seeker insists on her entitlement to the same NHS maternity care as any other woman) involves a break with the institutional logics through which the organisation of social life has been consensualised, affirming instead “fundamental equality between ‘anyone anywhere’ – not as something which a state owes its citizens” (2012:3). Millner explains that holding oneself receptive to these breaks in dominant forms of belonging allows one to comprehend that “what *feels* to be a natural response (for example, a sense of antipathy toward economic migrants) is not the only possible one” (2012:13). The “embodied sense experience” of this realisation can then “become a resource for ethical responses which multiply their own basis, rather than reproducing transcendent orders and boundaries of political belonging” (2012:15). Millner describes No Borders activism as “an ethic of ethical disturbance, which allots political listening a new priority over political speech” (Millner 2011:327), destabilises the boundaries between insider and outsider and attempts to facilitate “the conditions under which a political message can be heard” (Millner 2012:189).

At a No Borders camp on the Bulgarian/Turkish/Greek border in 2011, activists visited local villages and towns to talk about the implications of the Bulgaria accession to the EU in terms of creating a new opening in the Schengen area for would-be migrants from outside Europe. The frontier was being increasingly militarised and the area subject to

⁷⁵ creating the ‘pull factors’ of global migration

heavy state propaganda about the need for vigilance and help with intelligence on illegal entrants. No Borders films were screened and there were exhibitions and facilitated discussions in different villages. The fact that almost every family had a member who was or had been working illegally in Europe, was used as a way of opening sympathies to outsiders in the demonisation of whom they were being enlisted. A press release to a regional paper set out the main aims of the camp and its political objectives, but the camp's Media Group were against using the term No Borders or mentioning a vision of a world beyond states, arguing that these would be unheard of ideas and potentially undermine the credibility of the message. However, a group of us argued that the fact that the concept might be new to people made it even more important to include, given that the role of politics 'proper', "is to in some way transform prevailing forms of perception, and in doing so to create a breach or space for something or someone else to be seen, heard, felt or in some way to be perceived otherwise" (Tyler & Gill, 2013: 12). Unless an idea is first named, it has no chance of a political life. It is also the case that post-nationalist visions are not as rare as we might assume from their almost total absence from mainstream discourse. The Manchester No Borders Group organised a May Day festival in my neighbourhood during the 2010 election campaign, inviting local bands to play. The Jamaican musicians who came over needed no explanations of the 'No Borders, No Nations' banner they were playing under; their vision of one humanity and free movement - forged through racism, Rastafarianism and transnational identities - predated the No Borders movement by several decades. More recently I tuned into the local community radio station Peace FM and heard one of the presenters, chatting about the need to teach children to be "good citizens", quickly correct himself because the word 'citizen', he said, suggests you belong to the state, when you are just a person in the world. He and his co-presenter then discussed whether 'civilian' was a better alternative, but rejected that as well for its associations with the civilising mission of empire. To give a final example, during the research process I attended a Question Time-style event on asylum in Leeds (chaired by BBC presenter Jenni Murray), where the panel was asked if they supported the idea of open borders. An academic thought it unhelpful and utopian, and a representative of the 'Still Human, Still Here' campaign said "If you knew how hard it was to get tiny concessions out of Government regarding the current system, you would know how irrelevant it is to talk about 'no borders'". But architect Irena Bauman's reply was "Of course. In 20 years time, we will be even more mixed up, with climate change accelerating population movement. We can't stop it, we have to adapt and welcome it". The fourth panel member, a young woman representing her Eritrean community, in a poetic way also

supported the idea of free movement for all. The question was then put to the audience of 70 or more, and the great majority - academics, activists and refugees - put up their hands. The first two panelists looked uncomfortable and excluded as a thrilling positivity suddenly enveloped the hall – what Millner (who was there, in fact) would have described as an embodied sense experience; the coalescence of collective energies around future-oriented desire. Articulating progressive, even utopian ideas, can surely only help bring them closer. At the least it will help prompt awareness of the inevitability of long term population change, which for some may require a process of mourning certain ideas of nation and identity which must pass.

Isolated, fleeting moments, for some, cultivate a habit of openness which might start to affect our political views. Millner provides a theoretical explanation for why articulations and acts which break within the existing order are worthwhile engaging in. She draws attention to what Arendt (1951) calls the ‘rise of the social’: the erosion of traditional forms of authority (of the oppressive state and the church) and their replacement with ‘biopolitical’ forms of knowledge production, and technocratic modalities of governing. Populations are controlled on the basis of categories assigned through bureaucratic processes, rather than, as in the past, by sovereign jurisdiction. The institutional practices for managing others’ mobility are legitimised by social unease about ‘foreigners’, but this administrative power can only function if the logic on which it is based is tacitly accepted (Millner 2012:36). Challenging normative ideas about difference at the level of the social; opening systems of classification and forms of belonging to question and change on the basis of the equality of all forms of intelligence, expands the arena of democratic politics (2012: 47). Developing our sensibilities through interaction, empathy, embodied experience and by trying to actively embrace post-national ways of thinking, creates fertile ground from which political claims can be made, or on which they can be heard. The kind of ‘political listening’ Millner identifies as part of the No Borders ethos is recalls the listening advocated by Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of Freedom*:

Listening is an activity that obviously goes beyond mere hearing. To listen, in the context of our discussion here, is a permanent attitude on the part of the subject who is listening, of being open to the word of the other, to the gesture of the other, to the differences of the other (1998:107).

Becoming accustomed to post-national thinking made me more sensitised to advocacy which unnecessarily reinforces the national frame. For Refugee Week in 2011, members of Salford Forum and a local disability focus group jointly created a short film called

‘Celebrating Diversity’, in which individuals from both groups talked to camera about the way their perceptions of British / disabled / asylum seeking people had altered as they spent time together and came to understand more about one another’s lives. The video, which was streamed on BBC Manchester, had a warm message about how lives can be enriched by working and sharing together across difference. However, just before the final credits, some text appeared and lingered on a black screen:

“According to estimates by the United Nations, the UK only hosts 3% of the
global refugee population”

“The number of people seeking asylum allocated to Salford is less than
0.5% of the population”

Myth-busting facts are regularly disseminated as part of pro-asylum advocacy, and Arise and Shine was no exception. But here, as I watched, I felt this reversal into defensive mode destroy the mood of the video. The viewer was being stereotyped as needing reassurance that people like those they had just met in the film were, fortunately, still few and far between. This was in contrast with the next frame, which read:

“Only 5% of people with disabilities are wheelchair users”

“1 in 5 people in the UK have a disability”.

In other words, there are many more of *these* people about than you may have thought – so look out for them and have a care. Despite the drive to be recognised as deserving of humanitarian protection, or as desirable, talented would-be citizens, if asylum seekers, refugees and their allies in their advocacy resist orientation to ‘hostility discourses’ and instead try to keep space open for dialogue which transcends naturalised values based on nationalism and capitalism, visions of a better possible world are nourished. This is not an easy proposition. When at the destitution conference organised by the Revive Action Group and the Salford Forum an audience member said there was an urgent need to quantify the economic contribution made by asylum seekers’ volunteering, Arise and Shine members and Community Researchers trained by GAP Unit expressed enthusiasm for taking this on. I would have been unhappy to associate GAP Unit with a project, however well-meaning, that tried to justify international protection in cost-benefit terms, and would have wanted to debate this with the group. Meanwhile there are inspirational activists who are keeping these visions alive, such as those of Movement for Justice (MfJ) which has been, among other things, supporting direct action and insubordination by women at Yarls

Wood IRC. Formed by US youth and now with a growing base in the UK, MfJ's Pledge (covering several pages) begins:

I PLEDGE to build a new Britain... Some come to our nation to improve the lives of their families. Others to escape from tyranny and political, religious or ethnic persecution... What distinguishes the people who are immigrating to Britain from so many born here, is not their different languages or customs, but rather their deep appreciation and commitment to preserve the democratic freedoms and rights that are now under attack in this country. The core values the vast majority of British citizens believe in and want their society to provide – good jobs for everyone able to work, world class health care for all, decent housing, free education from nurseries through the university, a good quality of life for those who cannot work, and other basic human needs – are no different from the values of those who come to Britain for political asylum or a better life.

It goes on to set out an internationalist vision:

Winning freedom and justice for all in Britain is not possible so long as hundreds of millions of other people throughout the world live in desperate poverty, battle small and large man-made disasters on a continuous and regular basis, and are forced to accept the dictates of wealthier foreign powers. To win, our movement must be an international movement of the oppressed... We can, if we act, create a new society in which the needs of humanity come before the enrichment of a few and for the first time in human history, human beings can finally think, love and socialise as equals while protecting and realising the great potential of both human beings and all that inhabit this earth (www.movementforjustice.org/2011/12/pledge-for-young-leaders-of-the-civil-rights-immigrant-rights-movement).

Appendix 5.

Arise and Shine recommendations and feedback

Problems and solutions – from Arise & Shine Gathering 1. workshops (25/4/09)

Issues & barriers - general

- Income too low to buy good food etc
- Humiliation, knowing you can do better
- Lack of training
- Foreign qualifications
- No vote
- Lack of caring
- Lack of experience
- HO letters – language hard to understand
- Finding a job
- Neighbours – scared to report them
- Access to services e.g. dentist
- Language, limited communication
- Lack of information
- Not understanding the system works here
- Racism, rejected for wearing a hijab or for the colour of our skins, being called out names in the street ... being treated unfairly
- Isolation, no friends or family
- Cultural differences: no contact with our neighbours, people are not as friendly. It's difficult because the community is not as strong
- Not being allowed to work
- Waiting for a decision, fear of deportation
- Access to services: everything is alien and ignorance leads to *fear*, so we are discouraged from trying to access them

Information/support we need - general

- To be allowed to vote
- Access to training/degree course
- End discrimination
- Create work
- Legal status
- Flexible childcare
- legal advice / support
- Information about basic things such as health services
- Information about our rights
- Knowledge about existing support organisations / networks in our areas
- English classes
- Emotional support
- Women's groups to share and work together
- Help with children issues

Recommendations: for local & national government, agencies, policy makers, service providers etc

- Faster decision making on asylum cases
- Provide info on how to access services, culture upon arrival
- Cash not vouchers, or more flexibility
- Free bus passes
- Easier, accessible communication – speak to people not machines
- Free phone numbers for services

- Appropriate and safe housing
- Don't tax too much so we have money to set up our own businesses
- Training e.g. in how to make a lot from nothing
- Could the Government write in Arabic?
- Want relatives to be able to come on travel visas direct from Iraq
- Change the HO fast track system – it's too slow
- Need housing – to live independently
- Do forms in own language
- Housing – moving on after one year is unsettling , poor condition of council housing
- Workers are dishonest – need honest workers who don't dupe or lie to people with limited English
- Need independent observers at asylum interview
- No court proceeding without legal representatives
- Interpretation
- Support for legal aid
- Education
- Information
- Mentoring and support schemes for new arrivals
- Treat people as individuals not numbers! We are people with rights and feelings.
- Encourage community cohesion – try to understand the experience of refugees and asylum seekers through interaction and open dialogue. Break the barriers.
- Broaden opportunities to study and work
- Recognise qualifications and certificates from abroad
- Recognise and value our skills
- Stop racism

Recommendations: for women's groups & supporting organisations

- Support women's groups
- Encourage one another
- More networking
- Meet as a bigger group – all countries
- Swap vouchers for money amongst ourselves
- Support each others' campaigns
- Raise awareness
- Speak to other people (not just asylum seekers)
- Voluntary work
- Integrating into the community
- Provide interpretation for others
- Volunteering and networking to exchange skills and knowledge
- Identify and meet those who are newly arrived
- Produce leaflet with basic info on how to access services, e.g. how to register with a GP, how to navigate buses etc.
- Share information about rights in relation to services
- Join a campaign for equality and use our voices against racism. Petitions empower us.
- Raise awareness of our language and cultures using library events
- Networking activities
- Understand the asylum process better
- Work with media to promote a more positive image of migrants

Feedback from the performances of *How I Became an Asylum Seeker*

Manchester 24/3/09

Audience feedback about the play (from papers on seats)

- Thank you for sharing your stories. Your play was so moving and has challenged me. You are all an inspiration and I will never forget what I have seen today.
- It was brilliant. You are all so brave! What WAST does is fantastic. This play really makes you understand how unfair and inhumane the asylum seeker system is and how courageous asylum seekers are who have to go through it. Keep performing this play and raising awareness! ...also you are all amazing actors!
- A wonderful play. I think the women should make a record! their voices were beautiful. A very moving experience. Thank you!
- Very powerful messages. Wonderful singing. Very moving. really liked the last song – humanity and a message of hope that together change is possible.
- It was very interesting. Good for awareness. Keep it up. You are great!
- It is so wonderful to hear from Women Asylum Seekers. You are the mothers of nations. Let's Britain know that.
- When women get together we are very powerful, please continue to inform people of the struggles we are and have gone through. You are brave to do what you are doing to move forward
- Please add in your play that sometimes we have to wait in the rain and snow outside the Dallas Court
- Are actors available to perform in other areas. eg Chester?
- Fantastic performance. Well done! Thanks!
- What a truly wonderful play. A powerful, moving story of your life. Thank you for all your hard work. You were all so wonderful.
- Very thought provoking.
- A very powerful and moving presentation of asylum seekers and the reasons for the need for asylum. Please try and take the play to as many places as possible. Specially Croydon.
- Thank you so much for inviting me to come to this amazing play. The performers from WAST were fantastic. I think doing a play is a wonderful way to get the voices of asylum seekers heard. Keep it up and THANK YOU!
- Very well organised and publicised. Beautiful singing, a great performance. Thanks!
- Enjoyed the play very much. It is very hard to get up in front of people and you are very brave. I wish you all luck in your futures. Thank you.
- Very powerful. Excellent. Thank you
- A wonderful piece of work. I work with young people, this should be made available to youth clubs and schools so young people can have a much more better awareness. Thanks
- Very interesting, informative play. Thank you
- It was very good for raising awareness of the problems facing the women. Keep up the good work.
- Inspiring production
- Moving and inspiring Thanks

- It was fantastic. I wish them all luck. they really have talent. I cried and laughed. thanks
- The play was excellent! Well done! I would like to keep in touch, please.
- Incredible! Very moving and inspiring
- Well done! Hope the play does the trick!
- Very emotive and powerful message
- The play was extremely moving. You are all amazing strong women.
- I really enjoyed the performance. I thought the song was very powerfull!! Great to see the women working for themselves. inspirational! Good networking opportunity
- Very powerful, emotional and definitive eye opener. I am so glad I came! Well done
- Very powerful drama piece. Much more advanced skills in acting of women from previous years. Excellent. Very engaging and informative. Please send me any contacts of young refugee and asylum groups in Manchester.
- More government abuse of asylum seekers should be exposed eg hiv positive, no money and on vouchers – 8 years no work
- Very well done. A very moving portrayal of women's stories. For me you HUMANISED the noun "asylum seeker". Thank you
- Thank you for this exceptionally strong and moving experience! Keep up!
- Powerful play that should be seen by many people. Thank you for putting this on, telling your stories and trying to change preconceived ideas.
- Very powerful message. Well done. Keep up hard work.
- It was moving and real and emotive – keep it this way. Don't give up – show it as many people as possible – schools, uni's, MP's, etc! Good luck
- Great. really enjoyed it! Made me want to cry but not sure why
- I feel the message was definitely sent. Very good production, it was nice to see women from different cultures, within asylum seekers, getting together and working together as one. I really enjoyed. I would be happy to attend further play. Well done to these women and the best for their future.
- Fantastic, very moving. I think people often ask how did you get here? – the actual physical journey as if that was the main issue!
- Very good! Would like to know more about regimes in these countries
- I liked that you included stereotypes and things people say e.g. 'Sri Lanka is a beautiful country' I think that more examples could be used as to how service providers could say simple things that could offend Asylum Seekers
- Superb!
- Thank you, very moving. Made me realise how little I know about the process once people arrive here.
- Very well presented. Raised profile of asylum seekers the difficult experiences were highlighted . Well done!! Keep the good work up
- So moving... Thanks
- Great. Very moving
- Well done. Please keep me informed when possible
- Very strong and moving message

- Thanks for sharing your stories and opening our eyes. We need to change. Thanks for helping us. Brave women!

One word reactions to the play (verbal)

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Emotional | • Challenging | • Powerful had individual stories |
| • Humbling | • Moving | • Excellent |
| • Made me cry | • Very good | • Real |
| • Excellent | • Eye opening | • Shocking |
| • Disturbing | • Informative | • Sad |
| • Visual eye opening | • Courageous | • Inspiring |
| • Touching | • Love | • Mind blowing |
| • Heart retching | • Insightful | • Emotive its me |
| • Enlightening | • Inspirational | • Distressing |
| • Good powerful impact | • Helped me as an asylum seeker | • Informative inspiring |
| • Moving thought provoking | • Excellent | • Evocative |
| • Honest | • Educational | |

Group brainstorm (2 groups amalgamated)

What needs to be done?

Improve bad housing
 Raising awareness of the shortcomings of the Asylum System
 Racism hate crime – reduction
 Improve flow of information
 Improve access to work/ education
 Dispelling myths
 Change the length of time before asylum is granted
 Improve housing provision in UK
 Increase nursery places, college places
 Allow asylum seekers to work
 Improve quality of staff of UKBA and Serco
 Have a more positive image of Asylum Seekers
 Improve education of general public

 More creative and reaching out to more people, taking it to the public (schools)
 Challenge misconceptions
 Ability to correctly assess a child's age
 Respecting & understanding different cultures/backgrounds e.g date of birth/family names
 Give the right to work
 Free English classes
 Mass media 9(positive reporting)
 Professional feedback

 Equality to services- education health

What can I/we do?

Join up working –multi agency
 Networking sign posting

 3rd party reporting A6 Corridor
 Information on different languages
 Raise awareness of Right to Interpreters
 Buddy/ Mentoring
 Lobby /Campaign

 Talk to local MP
 Write to Alan Johnson (Home Secretary)
 Become an MP
 Improve information about local services for Asylum Seekers
 Raise awareness e.g inviting WAST to our areas
 Use NCADC and other agencies helping in deportation cases
 Informing hospital staff

 Welcoming take time
 Protect children if age in doubt
 Educate the local community/professionals

 Treat people with respect
 Signposting if the organisation can't help
 Challenge discrimination
 Review policies to go in line with new legislation or services
 Education on History of British Rule in

housing social care etc Information about legal representation	Africa & Asia etc Make people aware of the myths and facts
Influence Policy change Governments need to speak to governments at high level Media and their influence Understanding British Rule- History Funding for childcare Local support group	Give more voice to Asylum Seekers More community involvement Lobby government Challenge journalists Signposting – change in legislation Need more training around issues that affect asylum seekers, both for Y.P. and staff
Awareness	Individuals can feed back to other staff members
Greater awareness by the general public. This can be done via journalism, documentaries	Raise awareness within my own organization and challenge prejudice or ignoring the problem
Laws and policies to be changed around waiting for decisions to be made. Asylum seekers are left in limbo More rights to work and education	Check policies for reference to asylum seekers or refugees Build on and promote good examples of references Lobbying our MPs
Change voucher system and reporting system, transport, institutions Improve awareness of asylum seekers' special needs as a valid and accepted group in the community Need to awareness raising amongst 'support organizations' (police, housing, planning etc) to prevent institutional prejudice and inconsiderate or abusive behaviour Allowing people to work	Do more listening Engage local communities and allow them access to social care planning and processes
Improving housing conditions	Challenge the perception of the media and general public Replace vouchers with money so people can choose what to buy, and from where
Look at revising standards for housing people	Balance benefits given to British citizens with those for asylum seekers

Awareness raised (buzzing in 3s – post-its)

- *Dallas Court Scene* revealed inhumanity of the system, treating people as criminals when they have not committed a crime
- Despair associated with reporting
- Short notice re deportation
- Did not realise it could take 9 years for application to be processed and appeals exhausted
- The length of time to be given asylum
- Detention – items (key, phones)
- Indignity in personal searches
- How is the decision made as who is deported and who isn't?
- Lack of duty of care re pregnant women

- Highly qualified living worse in this country
- No stability
- Unaccompanied young people asylum seekers – left alone, homeless, no support – therefore set up to fail once they get 18 years
- Destitution
- Isolation
- Not knowing the British system, lack of information, language difficulties
- They don't have a voice
- Inability to find paid work – de-skilled
- Struggle, stress, lack of information
- Family /children prospects
- Inability to work
- The loneliness and isolation of refugee / asylum seekers
- Inflexibility of voucher system – Can vouchers be exchange for ESOL classes?
- Vouchers- inflexibility, complicated, can't exchange it, have to use it all at once
- Female solidarity
- Reality of true stories
- The play has educated me about what could have happened to cause someone to come to the UK to seek asylum
- How is the decision made as to who is deported and who isn't?
- Should be more information / poems / stories about 'how I became an asylum seeker' ... in supermarkets, train stations, doctor's awaiting rooms for example
- Understanding that Asylum Seekers don't just look for benefits etc – they want to work and study to contribute to society
- Now ask questions with more sensitivity, e.g. questions about family could be distressing.
- First hand information from the people affected directly, not from reading the newspapers
- Empathy
- More of an understanding of what they have been through
- Perception of underclass treatment by system
- The perception of the HO – the failings of the system, inhumane way of treating people
- Frustration with the law and the process
- Re-iterated the opinions and thoughts of the women in Yarl's Wood
- Realising the need of asylum seekers to work, and how much they can contribute
- The need to 'never forget'
- The importance of listening/understanding and work to make a change
- We often think situations in the country people are leaving are bad. But people face far more trying situations in the country where they are seeking asylum
- I am already aware of the issues but the human connection was important
- Opened up more interest
- I saw beautiful women. I am thinking about drama as a method of communication. It reflects and speaks about women asylum seekers
- More need to tell people's story
- Knowing that there is support for asylum seekers and an understanding of Home Office procedures
- Network support available to women seeking asylum
- Confirmation that there is a lot of need and also a growing amount of awareness and support which may need networking

Feedback from the day (post-its)

- I think that the play and the follow up workshop have been an amazing achievement and clearly have inspired everyone to challenge misconceptions (in my case, continue to) I will do my best to promote the further showing of the play and its powerful moving messages.
- This has been such an inspiring day. Thank you for having the courage to share your stories. This has made a real impact on me and I will tell everyone I know about what I have learnt today.
- An educational and informative day. Keep up the good work.
- Very informative, thought provoking and moving. Thank you for sharing your stories
- An educational day for establishing networks and information. Enjoyed the whole production – powerful play, though provoking discussions
- Please keep up educating others
- Helped raise awareness throughout organisations
- Brilliant – please take it into the community
- Thank you
- Very informative day that should be seen/experienced by as many people as possible
- Thank you for making me aware of what is happening to human beings all around the world
- Eye opening, informative, powerful, inspiring
- An excellent emotive method of informing – could be used in so many settings
- Fabulous, courageous, selfless, humanising
- The event was very informative and inspiring, the workshop was well organised and thought provoking.
- WAST play was very powerful and thought provoking. Arise and Shine information pack will be very useful for future development and improve my knowledge of services and protocols
- Great play. keep it up and come to Birmingham
- Thanks for the opportunity to hear your stories and talk to you. Play and workshop have had an impact on me – will pass the word
- Powerful play, good facilitation of workshops. Fantastic to hear asylum seekers speaking and representing themselves and facilitating this dialogue
- Fantastic- I would love it if WAST can work with us in future to train volunteers we work with
- Wonderful play. Was not surprised at the issues the group dramatised. I do wonder how young people were affected. Excellent. Should be shown in schools and youth clubs
- I agree this should be shown in schools to prevent discrimination passing from generation to generation
- Very useful day for awareness raising of the issue and the special needs of this group of people
- Well done everyone for giving and sharing so much. More power to your elbows!

Liverpool 30/3/09

Audience feedback about the play (from papers on seats)

- It was really good but very emotional, excellent production
- A very powerful play in its simplicity, that it is performed by WAST women and that it is their stories – Thank you to all the women involved
- Very emotional and powerful. thank you for sharing your experiences. It really opened my eyes
- Powerful stuff!
- Have you been into schools? This would be good to raise awareness and breakdown barriers early
- Very powerful and it touched many people's emotions. Thank you. Spread the word and keep up the fabulous work
- I personally think it was great play, very emotional with a strong real background. Thank you again for putting this idea through. I hope other people who are not in our situation as asylum seekers will understand we are human like them too and that we once had a great life before all this. Thank you, great work. keep it up
- A very emotional and enlightening performance. Could be made even more real by including film footages. The public/community awareness about asylum seekers is scant . Public perception does not match the reality. Very well done, please continue in your efforts to get your message across.
- It was very emotional, great play
- How powerful and moving! Keep sharing strength – with love
- True education and awareness raised in me – I hope you all get what you deserve as human beings
- Very powerful, moving, informative ... keep it up
- Very moving. Let's hope for a better future for all who seek peace and harmony in their lives
- Very good play. Learnt a lot. Need to project the voices a bit more
- It was a very good show, well performed. You could also add in the play when Home Office come in the early mornings
- I really loved the use of music and song. I found a little confusing the scenes with the queues and the officers – I think for people watching the play who don't know anything about the asylum process it wasn't clear enough what was happening in those scenes. I really love the end scene – about are affirming that 'we are human beings', etc Amazing play. So powerful. Than you so much
- Very powerful. Thank you!
- Thanks for a very powerful and moving play – really good for raising awareness
- The play was very moving. I think it would be good to hear some of the stories in writing. Also it would be good to understand if improvements have been made and how, and what the women believe would help – workshops after the play, more information
- A stunning, powerful and moving performance. The quality of the writing is breathtaking. Please return and perform this in Liverpool again!

One word reactions to the play (verbal)

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| • Truthful | • Real | • Amazing |
| • Educational | • Eye-opening | • Painful |
| • Emotional | • We're not empty | • Heartbreaking |
| • Meaningful | • Powerful | • Disturbing |
| • Poignant | • Strength | |

Awareness raised (buzzing in 3s – post-its)

- Shocked by the situations presented in the play
- It brought home and crystallised the reality of the situation of ordinary people
- Better understanding of the fact that we can all become asylum seekers one day
- Not here by choice! What's been left behind is far more, especially children, and what they endure here is awful.
- Shame, disbelief
- How brave asylum seekers are! Being able to contain themselves.
- Have become aware of many more organisations supporting asylum seekers/refugees than previously.
- Support and friendship costs nothing!
- Better understanding of barriers faced by women seeking asylum, and why they left their own countries.
- Idea of staying strong and never giving up
- Carry on with the struggle
- Desperation
- Shame, disbelief
- How dehumanising people's experiences are

What needs to be done

Awareness raising with general public

Work with policy makers – policies need changing, people should be allowed to work

Better information at airports

Overhaul of the whole system long term

Change in the voucher system

Criteria for asylum?

Raise awareness generally – situations, barriers etc

Changes in the reporting system needed

People should be allowed to work

Recognise international qualifications

Speed up the process

Re-educate the general public

Put pressure on media and politicians

Raise awareness through schools

What can I / we do

Talk to people more about the issues facing asylum seekers

Offer friendship links to organisations

Group / business initiatives – offer placements?

Raise awareness, lobby politicians, tell the truth!

Find out the truth and dispel the propaganda about asylum seeking

See what we can do to help

Tell others

Assist with events – organising

Support campaigns, petitions

Lobby parliament

Bring the play back to Liverpool – to the mainstream

Within our own community as individuals

Video/DVD of the play

Feedback from the day (post-its)

- Found the day powerful, enlightening, humbling.
- Totally enlightening
- Very emotional - learned a lot about circumstances of asylum and what women endure here – shocking! So glad I came – thank you, and keep up the good work.
- Informative and interesting event!
- Very powerful and eye-opening, both play and workshop. Thank you.
- Very educational and great.

- Emotional drama.
- Inspiring
- Amazing – thank you
- Very powerful and informative day – please keep putting on events like this – raising awareness etc. Thank you.
- I am filled with admiration for the people who have the courage to come to a different country and survive. Thank you all.
- I have found today very emotional, moving, educational and I feel quite motivated to raise awareness by discussing what I have seen – at work and at home.

Profound in the optimism that shines through desperation.