

**A Qualitative  
Exploration of the Social  
Construction of the  
Asylum-Seeker Category in  
UK Policy, Media discourse  
and Practitioner work**

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# Abstract

This research investigates the complex relationship between the official categorization of asylum and the social construction of the asylum-seeker in the UK. I assess the role of categories, the process by which they are constructed and the purpose which they serve. Adopting an eclectic theoretical framework which focused on; social construction, the relationship between categorization and power and liquid modernity, the thesis consists of a series of three studies which aim to advance the discursive research on 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees'.

The thesis addresses how the figure of the 'asylum-seeker' has become problematized. The three actors examined in the study play a combined role in the social construction of an asylum-seeker. Asylum policy, media reporting and practitioners collectively contribute to how asylum is defined and managed. The official categorization of asylum is consumed, produced and reproduced in society through a range of processes, all which shape and provide the changing meanings attached to the label 'asylum-seeker'. Furthermore, I explore the relationship between the categories 'asylum-seeker' and related categories such as 'refugee' and 'forced migrant'. Research has paid little attention to the connections and areas of intersectionality between these terms. This research addresses this gap in literature to provide new insights.

The study integrates multiple perspectives that are rarely examined together, through qualitative multi-method research. Study one is a documentary thematic analysis of asylum policy which demonstrates both normative and evolving social constructions of 'asylum-seekers', 'refugees' and 'migrants' in policy discourse. Study two examines the social construction of 'forced migrants' in news reporting, employing summative content analysis, supplemented with two journalist interviews. It demonstrates the significance of the conflation of different migrant categories in framing our understandings of forced migration. Study three presents the interview data conducted with twenty-one practitioners employing theoretical thematic analysis. The analysis draws attention to both official and unofficial representations of asylum-seekers. In addition, the study sheds light on the relationship between the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'.

This research adds to existing scholarship which maintains that a 'new asylum paradigm' is emerging, which has shifted the language of refugee protection. The thesis provides new empirical support to conceptualise the status of 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers' as fluid rather than fixed and highlights the grey area of labelling in the field.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

API	Asylum Policy Instruction
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BREXIT	British Exit to leave the European Union
BES	The British Election Study
CIGs	County Information and Guidance reports
COI	Country of Origin Information
COIS	Country of Origin Information Service reports
ECHR	European Convention of Human Rights
ECMS	Essex Continuous Monitoring Surveys
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
EURODAC	European Dactyloscopy
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
HM	Her Majesty's
IABS	Immigration and Asylum Biometric System
IGO	Intergovernmental organization International governmental organization
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OGNs	Operational Guidance Notes
PSG	Particular Social Group
UK	United Kingdom
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	The United States of America
UN	The United Nations
VPRS	Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme
VCRS	Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme
9/11	September 11 Attacks (2001)



# Key to transcription conventions used

All interviews were transcribed verbatim using the following conventions:

Where extracts from interviews are included, the format of these has been edited to make them easier for the reader to understand. All repetitions of words have been removed from the selected interview extracts in the thesis. Pauses that I deemed not to be significant are not included in these passages. Neither are the responses of the researcher where these serve to validate what the interviewee was saying; in this way the following types of responses have been edited from the transcript to thesis: (Mhmm), (Uh-uh), (Right), (Okay) etc. The conventions used are presented here to assist the reader in their interpretation:

(.) Pause in speech

(text) Non-verbal actions of interviewer and interviewee

... Speech trailing off

# Chapter One: Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I outline the context, aims and research questions of the thesis. I provide a short prologue to the key terms that will be discussed at length throughout the chapters and also draw attention to the official asylum process in the UK. This chapter positions the thesis within the global context of forced migration and refers to the contribution that this research seeks to make. Furthermore, the chapter ends with an overview of the thesis chapters that follow.

## Background

The migration of individuals across the globe has been a feature of world history and continues to be an aspect of contemporary life. However, whilst globalisation has enabled freer movement of capital and goods across borders, this is not the experience of many people who migrate from their home countries (from developing nations) into Europe. Stricter border controls both prevent and deter all forms of irregular migratory movement, including those individuals who are categorised as ‘refugees’ or ‘asylum-seekers’. Forced migration generates interest from policy-makers, practitioners, academics and media professionals. When I began this study in 2015, there were more refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced people seeking safety across the world than at any time since the Second World War (UNHCR, 2015a). Throughout the duration of the journey of the thesis, forced migration and asylum have dominated policy-making, politics and discourse. Forced migration has increased dramatically and the global community has struggled to respond to the mass movement of individuals seeking sanctuary. Today there are estimated to be 25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million asylum-seekers across the globe (UNHCR, 2018a). The current context suggests the need for further critical research on the topic of asylum.

Both asylum and forced migration are challenging subjects to study, as they are deeply political and polarized issues. The figure of the ‘asylum-seeker’ and ‘refugee’ present a number of challenges to the nation-state ideology (Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1992; Brubaker, 1996). Modern nation-states control the movement of non-citizens through border controls and regulations. However, border control becomes complicated in relation to asylum. Refugees are individuals who have been forced to flee their homes and cross the borders of their home countries to seek protection in another state. In order to claim asylum and qualify as a refugee, the ‘forced migrant’ must be outside of their country of origin and migrate.

Refugees challenge the nation-state status quo by crossing borders and calling for the universalization of rights. The response of many states to those fleeing persecution has been to enforce border controls, making it difficult for individuals to request the right to asylum as demonstrated by government responses to the humanitarian crisis of 2015.

In 2015, there were over one million arrivals into Europe by sea (UNHCR, 2015b). Individuals undertook life threatening journeys from countries including Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan to reach Europe. The manner in which the events of 2015 were categorised were significant as they provided the meanings attached to particular individuals on the move. The role of categorization is central to the thesis as bureaucratic categories have life changing consequences for individuals who are labelled as 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees'. The granting of asylum is not simply a human rights issue, as European governments also have security and economic considerations that lead to political decisions regarding which groups of individuals are accepted as refugees, in contrast to those which are denied entry. Throughout 2015, the majority of European countries responded to the humanitarian crisis of 2015 by enforcing barriers to prevent individuals entering their territories. Hungary built a fence along its border with Serbia, Spain (in Ceuta and Melilla) and Bulgaria (on the border with Turkey) also followed suit (Berry et al., 2015). In Britain, the then prime minister David Cameron's response was criticised as being inadequate (The Independent, 2016). The UK chose only to relocate 'forced migrants' from refugee camps near Syrian conflict zones, rather than accept refugee claims from those who had travelled into Europe. Britain also refused to participate in the European refugee scheme to redistribute asylum-seekers claiming refuge in southern European countries (The Independent, 2016). In contrast, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel waived the European Union's Dublin Regulation<sup>1</sup> by her public commitment to process all asylum-seekers who applied on German territory. The majority of European state responses focused on securing external borders and limiting the entry of those on the move.

In the perception of many politicians and the general public, seeking asylum has become a means of evading immigration control (Borjas and Crisp, 2005). Fundamentally, there is an underlying negative connotation towards asylum applicants in the UK (Sales, 2002; Borjas and Crisp, 2005; Sigona, 2014). This becomes very important today where immigration control has been an agenda of policy-making for the past two decades. Reducing net migration to the UK has been a central proposal in the Conservative manifesto since 2010 (The Migration Observatory, 2017). This continued in 2015, with David Cameron's pledge to reduce the annual net migration to below 100,000 (The Conservative Party, 2015). Theresa May (the current

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<sup>1</sup> The 1990 Dublin Convention ensured that asylum seekers filed their applications in the first safe country that they reached in Europe (i.e. signatory to the Convention).

Prime Minister) has continued to pursue this target and introduced a number of legislative changes to create a 'hostile environment' for illegal migrants since she became the Home Secretary in 2010.

The European referendum result on 23 June 2016 shocked academics, politicians and the remain voting section of the British public alike. The motivations of the individuals who voted for Britain to leave the European Union were incredibly complex. However, they were in part a response to the increased fears about immigration (Somerville, 2016; Goodwin, and Milazzo, 2017; Jones et al., 2017; Dennison, and Geddes, 2018; Outhwaite, 2018). The figure of the 'migrant' represented both an economic and security threat in political and policy discourse. In addition, the 'refugee' was also depicted as a threat in the campaigns. Nigel Farage famously campaigned that if British people voted to leave Europe, they would successfully keep refugees from entering the UK (Virdee and McGeever, 2017). The Brexit leave campaign centred on immigration and the need to take back control of 'our own borders' as immigration was presented as out of control (Vote Leave, 2016). These events provide the background to and importance of the research of the thesis.

The topic of asylum has dominated politics and policy-making for the past three decades in the UK; debates have centred on the abuse of the asylum system, the crisis of asylum and the ideology of the 'bogus' or 'illegal' asylum-seeker. Although scholars in the field of refugee and forced migration studies have produced a number of research outputs there remains much ambiguity involving the relationship between the official construction of the asylum-seeker category and the social construction of asylum-seekers. Once an individual applies for asylum they are automatically placed within the asylum determination process. In theory, the term 'asylum-seeker' has a very clear official and legal definition. However, this does not always translate into practice, as the category 'asylum-seeker' is shrouded in negativity today. How is the label 'asylum-seeker' understood officially? Has this evolved over the years? Existing studies are unable to shed any light on the matter. The thesis attempts to address these issues.

This research adopts a social constructionist stance. I do not claim that there is no sense of a 'real' issue in relation to asylum-seekers. There is no question that significant numbers of individuals have claimed asylum in the UK in recent years and governments are required to manage asylum-seekers through various policy responses. The thesis argues that the specific ways in which 'asylum-seekers' have been represented is neither inevitable nor simply a policy response to their existence. This research maintains that the construction of asylum as an immigration problem has been socially constructed, and the thesis explores how

the social construction of an asylum-seeker takes place. Official constructions of asylum are also socially constructed. A complex range of factors have combined to produce the present understandings of asylum. This process of construction is highly complex, has involved a range of competing actors and organisations and has occurred over a long period of time. It has seen asylum become an important and sensitive political issue, which has come to dominate immigration policy in the UK.

The evolving context of forced migration has provided the thesis with a particular relevance and timeliness. Whilst this research is a detailed study focused on the role of categorization in the construction of asylum-seeker identities, it is embedded in the wider context of global displacement discussed here.

## Aims of the Thesis

This focus of the thesis is on the topic of asylum, and the category 'asylum-seeker'. The goal of this research is to explore the social construction of asylum-seekers. I investigate the complex relationship between the official construction of asylum and the social construction of asylum seekers in the UK. The thesis assesses the role of categories, the process by which they are constructed and the purpose which they serve. I examine the multiple ways asylum-seekers are socially constructed, by exploring the connections between the category 'asylum-seeker' to other related categories including 'refugee', 'migrant' and 'forced migrant'.

The central research question is:

***What role does the official construction of asylum play in the social construction of asylum-seekers?***

The thesis examines the interplay between the construction of the official categorisation of an 'asylum-seeker' and the representation and implementation of an 'asylum-seeker' in society. How do the official categories and definitions of asylum impact the practice of seeking asylum? What are the connections between the label 'asylum-seeker' to other related categories such as 'refugee', 'forced migrant' and 'migrant'? How does this affect our understanding of the category 'asylum-seeker'? How is asylum-seeking perceived in the UK? These questions are at the heart of the thesis and will be explored throughout the various chapters. The Home Office, media and practitioners of asylum, are the three actors examined in this study to provide new insights. These actors are involved in the construction, labelling, observing, dissemination and

implementation of the category 'asylum-seeker'. In this research, the focus is not upon the asylum seeker, but rather upon those who are involved in the constructing, labelling and observing in the asylum system. In order to answer the primary research question, I will be responding to four sub-research questions examined across three studies.

*1.) How does official policy construct asylum-seekers and refugees?*

The focus of this study is on the 'asylum-seeker' category and its connection to the term 'refugee'. The first study explores the representations of both 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in policy documents. The goal of all asylum claimants is to receive refugee status. Therefore, it was important to explore the relationship between the labels 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' in policy discourse. Home Office asylum documents are central to this research as they provide the official framework of asylum in the UK. Importantly, the official construction of asylum is produced, circulated and employed by the actors under investigation in this study. The media disseminate the key messages from official policy in reporting on forced migration and practitioners implement official asylum policy in their daily roles.

*2.) How do the media construct forced migrants in news reporting?*

Study two centres on investigating the role of the media in shaping understandings of forced migration. I examine the social construction of asylum seekers in connection to the categories 'forced migrant' and 'refugee'. The media play a crucial role in disseminating the official categories and definitions of asylum. Importantly, the media also interpret the key messages provided by policy-makers to the public (Chomsky, 1994). The language employed around asylum and migration influences how the public perceive asylum-seekers. As mentioned earlier, I conducted this research during the period of the European humanitarian crisis of 2015. Therefore, it was important for this research to provide an analysis of British media categorisations of the crisis. The manner in which the events of 2015 were categorised were significant as they provided the meanings attached to particular individuals on the move. The interview respondents also referred to media reporting of the 'crisis' during the interviews.

*3.) How do practitioners construct asylum-seekers?*

*4.) How do practitioners differentiate between asylum-seekers and refugees?*

These two sub-research questions focus on exploring the role played by practitioners in the social construction of asylum in Study Three. Practitioners play an active role in the implementation and interpretation of official asylum and refugee policy. What is the relationship between the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'? How are these terms implemented in practice? How does this affect an asylum-seeker? These questions will be explored in this study to address the current gaps in literature (see Chapter Two). Studies on 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' have typically been conducted separately. However, there is a very close relationship between the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. Studies have either centred on the conceptual framing of 'refugee' (Zetter, 1988; Zetter, 1991; Marfleet, 2005; Zetter, 2007; Haddad, 2008; Goodman, Sirriyeh and McMahon, 2017), or 'asylum-seeker' (Lynn and Lea, 2003; Goodman and Speer, 2007; Darling, 2008; Squire, 2009), rather than examining these concepts together. There is a lack of research which has examined the connections and relationship between the labels 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. The thesis explores the social construction of the category 'asylum-seeker' by examining related terms employed to categorise individuals on the move including 'refugee', 'migrant' and 'forced migrant'. The thesis aims to advance the discursive research on 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees'.

Furthermore, this research intends to add to the debate on whether a 'new asylum paradigm' 'maybe emerging as an alternative to the post-war international refugee regime' (Squire, 2009, p.6). The discourse of asylum as a security issue after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 has shifted the language of refugee protection and also affected the social construction of asylum. The fear of the 'other' has been augmented due to the threat posed by global terrorism. Categories are central to the asylum discourse, more so now than ever. Whilst the exclusionary politics of asylum have been identified in studies (Kaye, 2008; Squire, 2009; Darling and Squire, 2012), across different disciplines this has not been linked to the social construction of asylum. With the thesis, I have attempted to fill the gap by providing a focused study of three actors that contribute in the social construction of the asylum-seeker in the UK.

I will now turn to a brief discussion of some of the main terms that will be referred to throughout the thesis.

## Key Terms

Categorization plays a central role in the thesis. This section provides the definitions for the main terms that are examined in this study. All of these categories will be discussed in

great detail throughout the remainder of the chapters. These definitions are a starting point for the general discussion.

### **Asylum-seeker**

The label 'asylum-seeker' is a legal categorization invented in the 1990s. In the UK, an asylum seeker refers to an individual who has asked the government for refugee status and is waiting to hear the outcome of their application. 'You must apply for asylum if you want to stay in the UK as a refugee. To be eligible you must have left your country and be unable to go back because you fear persecution' (Home Office, 2018a). In the UK, asylum claims are made to the Home Office. The Home Office is the ministerial department of government responsible for immigration, security, law and order headed by the Home Secretary. Seeking asylum is a process of requesting official recognition for the dangers that an individual has faced and will continue to face if they are returned to their country of birth. The term has a legal and official status.

### **Refugee**

In the UK, the term refugee is defined according to Article 1A (2) of the *1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol*. A refugee is a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country' (UNHCR, 1951, p.14). The United Nations High Commissioner oversees the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, to ensure the rights of refugees are protected. The legal definition of a refugee is a universally recognised condition, however the label continues to provoke debate amongst academics (Zetter, 1988; Zetter, 1991; Zetter, 2007; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014).

'Who a refugee is and how we define and understand forced migration are central questions to studies of displacement and the multidisciplinary field of refugee and forced migration studies. While research often begins with these questions, answers usually remain elusive' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014, p.1).

### **Official Categorization**

Official categorization in the thesis refers to the legal definitions and the statistical data produced by the UK Statistics Authority and executive office (the Office for National



Statistics), by central government departments and agencies on asylum. Categorizing processes contribute to the definition of group identities (Zetter, 1988; Zetter, 1991; Zetter, 2007) and also serve as instruments of the state system (Foucault, 1980; Rose, 1989; Hacking, 1990). Official Categorisation is applied as a conceptual framework in the research.

### **Forced Migrant/Migration**

Forced migration and forced migrant are concepts employed in the fields of refugee and forced migration studies to cover different types of displacement across international borders and within a country. Some researchers (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014) prefer to adopt forced migration as a lens to refer to both asylum-seekers and refugees to highlight the forced conditions that lead people to leave their country of origin. Forced migration can also be applied to describe individuals who have been displaced by environmental disasters, conflict and famine. Forced migration is not a legal concept and there is no universally accepted definition (UNHCR, 2016). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees avoids using the term 'forced migration' to refer to refugee movements and other forms of displacement as the UNHCR argue that this 'shifts attention away from the specific needs of refugees and from the legal obligations the international community has agreed upon to address them'(UNHCR, 2016)

In the thesis, I employ the term 'forced migrant' to refer to refugees and asylum-seekers where it is appropriate to not differentiate between these two statuses. This is mainly to distinguish forced migrants from other categories of migrants.

### **Migrant**

There are multiple definitions of a 'migrant' and there is no consensus on the issue. In the UK migrants can be classified by foreign birth, by foreign citizenship, or by their movement into a new country temporarily or to settle for the long-term (Anderson and Blinder, 2016).

The next section provides an overview of the official asylum process in the UK.

## Claiming Asylum in the UK

Asylum is an official and legal process in the UK described in detail on the Home Office website<sup>2</sup> (Home Office, 2018a). National law establishes the legislation and procedures for the asylum process in the UK. The UK's asylum policy is implemented through the Immigration Rules and supplemented by internal agency instructions and guidance administered by Home Office officials. Asylum is not an automatic right. The UK government department responsible for asylum and immigration is the Home Office. In 2008, the UK Border Agency (UKBA) was introduced as an executive agency of the Home Office. The work of the UKBA involves UK visas and the border related work of HM Revenue and Customs.

The Home Office guidelines on asylum state that an asylum-seeker should apply for asylum when they arrive in the UK, or as soon as they realise it would be dangerous for them to return to their country of origin (Home Office, 2018a). An asylum claim is either made at the point, or port of entry into the UK, or 'in-country', at the Home Office Asylum Screening Unit in Croydon. It is more likely for an application to be rejected if an asylum-seeker waits to apply for asylum (Home Office, 2018a). Once a person applies for asylum they have a meeting with an immigration officer referred to as the screening interview. During this interview the UK Border Agency records basic information about the applicant, and asks the claimant if they have applied for asylum in Europe before giving them a registration number. Applicants are photographed and fingerprinted. Following the screening interview there is an asylum interview with a case worker. During the asylum interview the applicant is questioned on their reasons for seeking asylum. The Home Office explain that during this interview applicants should:

'Give a full account of what happened to you and who you are afraid of, if you return to your country of origin. You should give as much detail as possible about all the reasons you left and why you are afraid to go back. Anything that is not mentioned during this interview but is disclosed later in the process may not be accepted by the Home Office as true' (UK Visas and Immigration, 2016, p.3).

The Home Office aims to make a decision on an application within six months. The process can take a lot longer if:

- 'your supporting documents need to be verified

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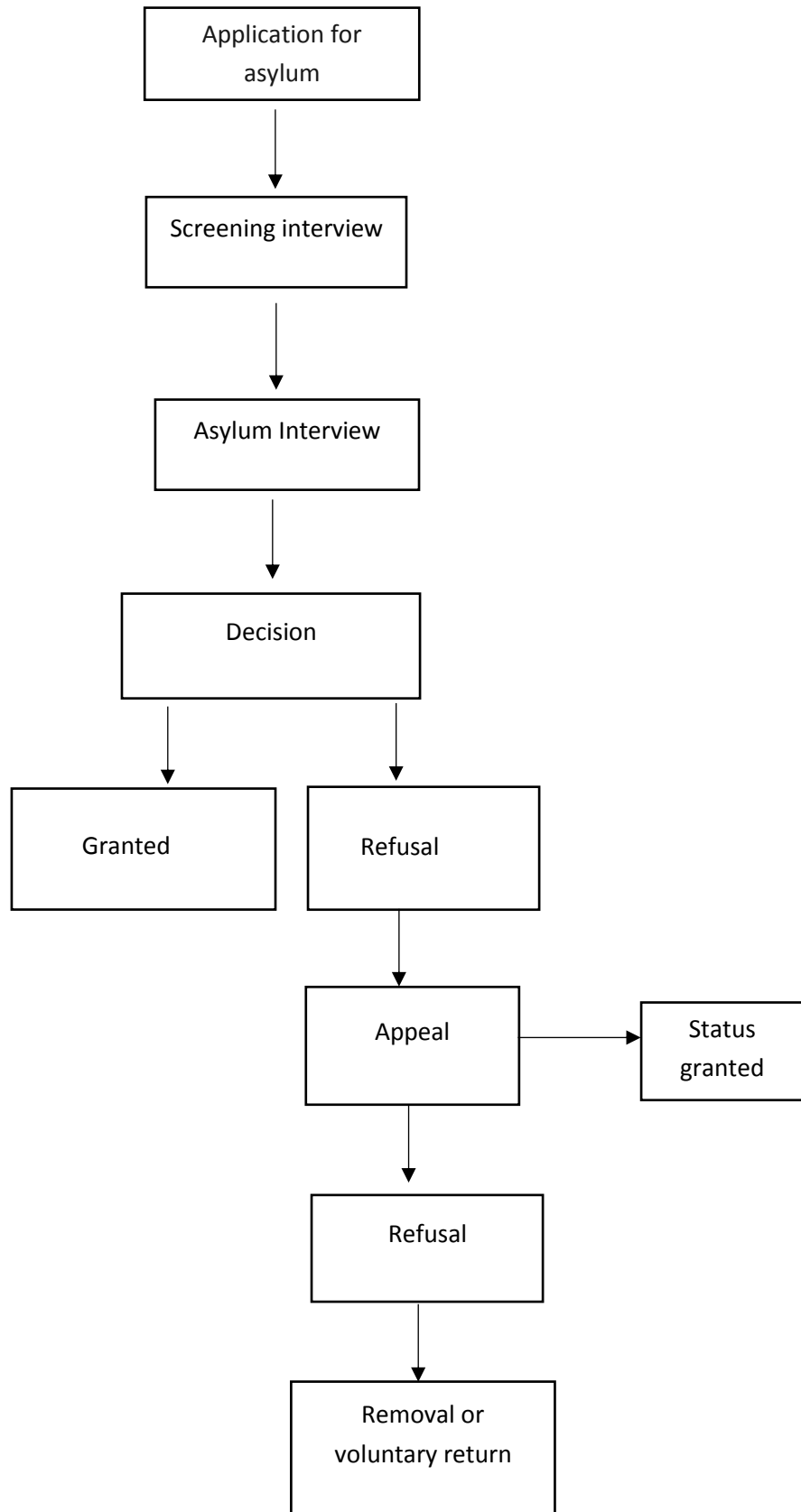
<sup>2</sup> For more details see, <https://www.gov.uk/claim-asylum>

- you need to attend more interviews
- your personal circumstances need to be checked, for example because you have a criminal conviction or you're currently being prosecuted' (Home Office, 2018a).

There are four possible results of an initial decision see Figure 1. Firstly, the applicant is considered to have met the criteria for refugee status as outlined in the 1951 Convention and is granted five years limited leave to remain. The second outcome is where the individual does not meet the requirements for refugee status but is granted Humanitarian Protection usually for five years limited leave. The third result is being granted permission to stay for other reasons that do not fit the legal definitions of humanitarian protection or refugee status. The final outcome is that that the applicant is refused. For those applicants whose asylum claim is unsuccessful the first time, they have the possibility of appealing the decision and they will be permitted to wait in the UK whilst their appeal is pending (Home Office, 2018a)

**FIGURE 1.** DIAGRAM OF ASYLUM PROCESS

(Home Office, 2015, p.38)



## Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. This section provides a general overview of its structure and contents.

Chapter One provides the introduction to the thesis. It presents the research questions, aims and context for the overall thesis with a prologue to the terms that will be reviewed in detail throughout the chapters.

The first two chapters are designed to contextualise this research and provide an account of the literature that has shaped my approach. Chapter Two situates the thesis within the wider fields of research on refugee, forced migration and asylum studies. The chapter is divided into themes which are interconnected providing the context, significance and theoretical perspectives for the thesis. I begin, by examining research on the relationship between the 'refugee' the nation-state and its relationship to the 'asylum-seeker'. I discuss how frameworks of citizenship define 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers'. I review the significance of the policy of 'managed migration' in relation to forced migrants. Furthermore, I discuss how the topic of asylum has been presented as a problem in policy-making and discuss the significance of labelling. The final part of this chapter examines studies conducted on the social construction of the 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' category. Chapter Two contributes to an understanding of the conceptual, social and legal complexities involved in the construction of an 'asylum-seeker' and highlights the gaps in literature which the thesis seeks to address.

Chapter Three defines the conceptual toolkit developed around three areas; social construction, the relationship between categorization and power, and liquid modernity, which underpin the analytical framework adopted to understand and explore the empirical findings in the latter chapters. This chapter focuses on the complex relationship between official categorization and identities.

The rationale behind adopting a social constructivist epistemological framework is discussed in Chapter Four. I also outline in detail the qualitative multi-method approach employed to collect and analyse the data across the three studies. The chapter ends with a reflection on ethics and positionality.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven present the empirical findings of the three studies. Chapter Five is the first study, of the thesis, which explores the social construction of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in policy discourse. Official policy documents are at the heart of this research as they provide the overarching official framework of asylum. Chapter Five serves as an official

reference point for future chapters and provides the background in which practitioners of asylum have been operating.

Chapter Six is the second study which critically reviews media representations of 'forced migrants' in news reporting. Chapter six is divided into two parts, the first half presents the analysis of the media monitoring, which provides the context of forced migration reporting for the research at the time of the interviews. The second section of the chapter shares the insights of two journalists who report on asylum and refugee issues.

Chapter Seven is the third study, focused on practitioner understandings of asylum. Part One of Chapter Seven explores how the official categories and definitions of asylum were understood and employed by the participants. Part Two of Chapter Seven centres on the relationship and implementation of the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' in practitioner work.

Chapter Eight summarises the key findings from the three studies. I highlight the theoretical implications of the research, practical applications, limitations of the thesis, directions for future research and the contribution that the thesis makes to the field.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by providing some critical reflections of the journey and research process of this study.

The next chapter reviews the manner in which the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' have been conceptualised in the fields of refugee, forced migration, asylum studies and related empirical studies. I identify the main themes and gaps within existing literature which the thesis attempts to address.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review, Key Themes in the Conceptualisation of the 'asylum-seeker' category

## Introduction

The previous introductory chapter contextualised this research and positioned the thesis within the wider global context of forced migration.

This chapter provides the framing for the discussion in the thesis, and situates the study within the fields of research on refugee and forced migration studies. The focus of the thesis is on the 'asylum-seeker' category and its relationship to related terms including 'refugee'. The review focuses on how the term 'asylum-seeker' has been conceptualised in the field and empirical studies. I highlight the close connection between the labels 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. In addition, I review the main topics examined by scholars across disciplines, which are significant to the asylum discourse. The topic of forced migration is in a constant state of flux, generating interest from academics, practitioners, policy-makers and the media. Asylum and forced migration continue to feature heavily in recent political events (discussed in Chapter One), and remain a topic of interest for academics. I propose that the current context points to the need for further critical research on such politicised and polarised issues.

There has been extensive research conducted in the fields of forced migration and refugee studies across the humanities, social and political science subjects. However, surprisingly, it is only in the last thirty years that the field has 'grown from being a concern of a relatively small number of scholars and policy researchers to a global field' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014, p.3). The 1980s witnessed refugee issues becoming a global concern as a result of refugee situations arising across the globe. This also increased the numbers of asylum-seekers in Europe and North America (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014). The nation states had no mechanism to deal with the refugee phenomenon and continue to struggle with the rising numbers of forced migrants claiming asylum today.

Anthropology has played a central role in developing the modern inter-disciplinarian nature of forced migration studies (Chatty, 2014). Geographers have also contributed to the field (Black and Robinson, 1993; Darling, 2008; Collyer, 2014; Amin, 2015). Information on identifying who refugees are depends on methods of counting and systems of categorization

and the politics and practices of that information (Crisp, 1999). Research across refugee studies has resulted in a growing body of research exploring the origin of refugee flows; emergency assistance programs for refugees, transnational networks to assist refugees and policy responses of particular states to refugee movements (Harrell-Bond, 1986; Zetter, 1999; Bakewell, 2008; Betts, Loescher and Milner, 2008; Betts, 2011a; Betts, 2011b; Betts, 2014; Chatty, 2014; Gibney, 2014; Goodwin-Gill, 2014). Interestingly, whilst research within the field has focused on defining refugees and forced migration. There is no agreed consensus on where the boundaries of refugee and forced migration should be drawn (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014; Gibney, 2014; Goodwin-Gill, 2014).

This chapter is separated into themes which are interrelated and provide the context, significance and theoretical perspectives for the thesis. This review contributes to an understanding of the conceptual, social and legal complexities involved in the construction of an 'asylum-seeker'. I start by examining scholarship on the relationship between the refugee and the nation-state, including the challenges this presents to both the nation-state ideology the refugee and its relationship to the 'asylum-seeker'. I then, consider the manner in which citizenship operates to define both 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers'. I discuss how the policy of 'managed migration' has significantly altered not only how the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' are understood but also are treated in policy. Prior to the adoption of the 'managed migration' paradigm the 'asylum-migration' nexus was the accepted framework for conceptualising 'migrants' and 'refugees' and this will be examined to highlight the complexities involved for actors in the asylum discourse.

Furthermore, I explore some recent developments in relation to how the routine framing of asylum has been constructed as a 'problem' and also discuss the significance of labelling to the thesis. In addition, I review the work of scholars who have conducted research on the social construction of the 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' category. This chapter identifies some of the gaps in current literature that require further study, which the thesis attempts to address. Let us start by examining the tensions created by the nation-state ideology and the refugee.

## **Sovereignty, the Refugee and the Asylum-seeker**

Modern nation-states control the movement of non-citizens and protect national borders by regulating their populations. However, this becomes problematic in the area of



asylum. Refugees are individuals who have been forced to flee their homes and must cross the borders of their home countries to seek protection in a host state. To claim asylum, and qualify as a refugee, a 'forced migrant' must be outside of their country of origin. The central ideological and legal principle of a refugee crossing a border challenges the sovereignty of the nation-state. Since the nineteenth century, the leading model of global political organization has been the nation-state (Anderson, 1983; Keely, 1996; Hobsbawm, 1992). The characteristics that define a nation and nation-state are disputed (Smith, 1986; Hobsbawm, 1992; Gould and Colley, 2006). However, the modern nation-state is defined as both an analytical and normative ideal (Brubaker, 2010). Theoretically, the understanding of the modern nation-state itself is problematic in how different polities treat outsiders. The nation is, following Benedict Anderson, the imagined community of individuals who share a common sense of identity, who place loyalty to each other above their loyalty to strangers (Anderson, 1983). Today, refugees are created through and incomprehensible without the interaction of migrants and borders (Haddad, 2008; Hansen, 2014). Emma Haddad's examination of the conceptualisation of a refugee as a product of the global state system has been highly influential in the field. Her central principle is that refugees are an inevitable, if unanticipated part of the international state system and the refugee will remain as long as states are constructed and separated by political borders (Haddad, 2008).

Many would agree with Haddad's conclusions, however her analysis would have benefitted further by treating the conceptual construction of concepts such as asylum with the same complexity and detail she provides to the term 'refugee'. What is the relationship between the concepts 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker'? Do these categories transcend the law? These questions highlight a gap in current literature which requires further study. No discussion centred on 'refugees' is complete without examining its evolving relationship with asylum. The terms 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' are intertwined and have an intimate relationship with state sovereignty. Article 1 of the 1967 UN Declaration on Territorial asylum states that 'asylum granted by a state, in the exercise of its sovereignty, to persons entitled to invoke Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights shall be respected by all other states' (quoted in, Goodwin-Gill, 2014, p.46). On the one hand, the figure of the refugee presents a direct challenge to the nation state ideology, by forcing international actors to prioritise human rights, over and above the interests of a system of sovereign states (Skran, 1988). Yet, simultaneously the act of claiming asylum reifies state sovereignty by the same refugee. The granting of asylum by a state is not only the implementation of the Refugee Convention but is also a mechanism whereby state sovereignty is both legitimised and exercised. The figure of the refugee has a dynamic and complex relationship to sovereignty

and there is a need to investigate this dimension by also examining the category 'asylum-seeker'. Scholars in the field have either focused on the term 'asylum-seeker' (Lynn and Lea, 2003; Goodman and Speer, 2007; Darling, 2008; Squire, 2009), or 'refugee' (Zetter, 1988; Zetter, 1991; Marfleet, 2005; Zetter, 2007; Haddad, 2008; Goodman, Sirriyeh and McMahon, 2017), rather than examining these categories together. However, these terms are interconnected and need to be explored together to provide a critical approach.

Forced migration raises numerous ethical dilemmas, as a 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' are not merely descriptive terms, but also evaluative categories which involve moral judgements about the legitimacy of the movement of individuals on the move. The international community, as a result of the Refugee Convention, has accepted that some forced migrants have a special right, or entitlement to cross borders in search of international protection and asylum. However, each nation-state decides which individuals are permitted to claim asylum. Political theorists who have focused on asylum have tended to question whether immigration controls of states are morally justifiable. Liberals including Joseph Carens (1992) are committed to liberal principles of equality and freedom and demand that states allow the free movement of individuals between them. Such thinkers see no need to define a refugee, as the world would have open borders (Gibney, 2014). In such a utopia all individuals, regardless of their status, would be free to migrate anywhere they wanted. Michael Dummett (2001) goes as far as to argue that 'the idea that national frontiers should everywhere be open should become more than a remote aspiration: it should become a principle recognised by all as the norm' (Dummett, 2001, pp.72–3). However, others argue that immigration controls are necessary (Hansen, 2014), and states have an obligation to offer asylum to those people who are forced to move (Dummett, 2001; Gibney, 2004), or the right to govern who is admitted and excluded (Walzer, 1983; Miller, 2008).

The international border created by nation-states plays a central role in defining forced migrants. The issue of whether or not a 'forced migrant' remains on the territory of their state of citizenship is determinant of the rights they can legitimately claim from the state and their access to international protection. The fundamental spatial categories of the nation-state are questioned by critical geographic research. Geographers claim that international borders are not fixed, given or natural ontological categories (Collyer, 2014). John Agnew (1994) holds the view that the nation state should be viewed as an evolving collection of institutions. This approach is central to geographical research on forced migration. It is not only geographers who criticise the conventional use of the 'nation-state'. From the 1990s onwards, there has been a shift towards adopting a transnational lens within academia. Transnationalism refers to various kinds of global or cross-border connections in relation to

one's identity (Vertovec, 2001). For many scholars (Appadurai, 1990; Robinson, 1998; Glick Schiller, 2012), the given assumption that the nation-state functions as a container of social, economic and political sovereignty is challenged by international flows and cross-border networks represented by migrants and forced migrant communities. A large number of people live in social worlds that are located in multiple spaces across nation-states which are not territorially restricted. 'The lives of increasing numbers of individuals can no longer be understood by looking at what goes on within national boundaries' (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004, p.1003). Recent movements such as 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007), are demanding different ways of conceptualising the world and its populations. It will now be useful to look at the role of globalisation in relation to the nation state and its boundaries.

For Stephen Castles (2003), the sociology of forced migration changed in the era of globalisation. 'Globalization combined with the awareness of increased and increasingly rapid movement of people, money, goods and images fracture structures and have forced a realization that borders are fluid' (Lewis, 2007, p.38). The term 'globalization' has been utilised by academics, policy makers and media outputs since the 1990s to describe the changing events of the world. It must be noted that globalisation is a contested term (Zimmermann, 2013). The framework which appears to be the least problematic is to conceptualise 'globalization' as the process of increasing interconnectedness between societies such that events in one part of the world move and may have effects on peoples and societies in other parts of the world (Baylis et al., 2001). The key characteristic of globalization is the growth of cross-border flows and their organization by means of multi-modal transnational networks (Castells, 1996). Flows and networks can refer to economic factors such as trade and investment. However, such flows can also be linked to the movement of people. At its extreme, some globalization theorists saw an all-pervading force that would destroy regional cultures and language and create global homogeneity (Massey, 1994; Ong, 1999). This directly threatens the modern nation-state ideology. Globalization as a system also looks at selective inclusion and exclusion of specific areas and groups which maintains in equality (Castells, 1996). These processes play a conflict and lead to forced migration (Castles, 2003).

Globalisation has been identified as one key factor which raised international migration to unprecedented levels (Castles and Davidson, 2000). 'In 1993 after the Cold War the global refugee population was estimated at 18.2 million. The UK had over 97,900 asylum seekers in 2000' (Castles, 2003, p.14-15). The process of globalization also demonstrates the changing political meanings attached to the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker'. Periods of uncontrolled migration resulted in the need for states to differentiate 'economic migrants' from 'forced migrants'. This distinction provides the basis for those 'strangers' or 'foreigners'

who are allowed access and entry to a state, in contrast to those who are denied entry. The creation of national boundaries thus necessitates both processes of inclusion and exclusion and leads to an ideology which defines and embraces those who belong and rejects those who do not. Territorialization is central to discourses of nationalism where biological or kinship metaphors are adopted to demonstrate the rootedness of nations to specific lands (Chatty, 2014). For Anderson (1983), a nation is a socially constructed community, imagined by people who perceive themselves as part of that group, 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them' (Anderson, 1983, 6).

'Urbanization and industrialisation, resting as they do on massive and multifarious movements, migration and transfer of people, undermine the basic nationalist assumption of a territory inhabited essentially by an ethnically, culturally and linguistically homogenous population' (Hobsbawm, 1992, p.157).

The ideology of the nation-state is based on the fit between geographical territory and the nation. Every state differentiates their own citizens from 'non-citizens' (foreigners). The stranger or foreigner is constructed as an 'outsider' and is of critical significance for the power it possesses to define who belongs (Amin, 2012). The internal 'other' has to be transformed into a national before they can become a citizen. Citizenship implies both inclusion and exclusion (Castles, 2003). 'Foreignness' operates as a framework for democratic theory and citizenship (Sassen, 1999; Honig, 2001).

Malkki (1992), Appadurai (1995), Gupta and Ferguson (1992) argue that places are socially, politically and historically constructed. They prefer to remove 'identity' from territorialized, nation-bounded concepts of place and space. Anthropology and Geography have been the disciplines which have been at the forefront in advocating for transnational approaches in the field of migration studies. Transnationalism is a new analytical framework within forced migration (Van Hear, 2014). Proponents of transnationalist approaches warn us of the dangers of methodological nationalism. Methodological nationalism is an orientation that approaches the study of social processes and historical processes as if they are contained within the border of individual nation-states (Glick Schiller, 2012). Essentially, nation-states are conflated with societies (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2008). Researchers who view the nation-state as a single homogenous entity fail to acknowledge the internal regional and cultural differences within each nation-state (Glick Schiller, 2012).

However, the essentialist view of the nation-state focused on territories informs the perspectives of the individuals on the move labelled as 'asylum-seekers', and 'refugees'.

'The twentieth century became the century of refugees, not because it was extraordinary in forcing people to flee, but because of the division of the globe into nation-states in which states were assigned the role of protectors of rights, but also that of exclusive protectors of their own citizens'(Adelman and Suhrke, 1999, p.90).

The topic of forced migration is always discussed with reference to the nation-state. In order to study asylum we have to interrogate the state, its foundation and internal mechanisms (Sayad, 2010). We can look to the nation-state as more than just a static, fixed entity but as a changing collection of entities which are historically constructed. Engaging with the 'nation-state' is crucial to this study, it is clear to any scholar in the field that 'refugees' are created legally and politically through the crossing of borders and there is no denying the importance of the 'nation-state' in relation to each claim for asylum. This requires further investigation in the context of the present day. How do the official categories and definitions of asylum impact the practice of seeking asylum? How is asylum-seeking perceived to be done in everyday discourse? These questions will be explored in the thesis.

## Asylum, Refugees and Citizenship

Historically, refugees have been at the heart of policy and debate around citizenship in the UK (Koffman, 2005; ICAR, 2010). Fundamentally, all states differentiate their own citizens from individuals who are non-citizens. There are multiple meanings of citizenship and the conceptual framing of citizenship continues to be debated (Tonkiss and Bloom, 2015; Shachar et al., 2017). Academics have criticised Marshallian ideas of unitary citizenship which are centred on the state (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2008; Isin and Turner 2007; Turner 2001). Citizenship has been described as 'internally inclusive' and 'externally exclusive' (Brubaker, 1992, p.21). For the purposes of our discussion, it is helpful to recognise citizenship as a practice (Tonkiss and Bloom, 2015) and a status (Isin, 2008). An individual can only be fully a citizen when resident in the state of one's citizenship (Hansen, 2014). This becomes important when examining the manner in which citizenship operates to both differentiate and also define refugees and asylum-seekers. Following, on from the earlier discussion of the role of the nation-state in creating both 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers'. Citizenship, ultimately defines the rights and entitlements of individuals within a nation-state. Different rights are afforded to different statuses in the UK. Categories are employed to distinguish different members of a political community. Once again, it becomes important to examine the

categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' jointly, to fully understand why debates around 'citizenship' are central to understanding how refugees and asylum-seekers are differentiated and treated.

Citizens are individuals who enjoy civil, social, economic and political rights granted by the nation-state (Hansen, 2009). In contrast, refugees, by definition, no longer enjoy the citizenship rights of their former country of citizenship (Costello, 2017). The relationship between citizenship and refugees continues to be debated in the field (Price, 2009; Owen, 2013). Although, the international refugee regime attempts to tackle the civil, social and economic rights of refugees, it does not directly address their political rights (Owen, 2019). The 1951 Refugee Convention, recognises that refugees become politically stateless upon fleeing their state of nationality. 'Article 34, calls on states to facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees (and stateless persons) to the fullest possible extent' (quoted in, Price, 2009, p.349). However, it does not require refugees to be granted political standing. Citizens enjoy a range of social privileges which refugees do not. Citizens are able to exercise autonomy and independence and go about the daily lives as they choose fit. However, States are unable to return refugees to countries where they face a 'well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion' (UNHCR, 1951). The principle of *non-refoulement* is imposed by the 1951 UN Convention relating to the status of refugees and the Convention's 1967 Protocol. However, refugees, continue to be differentiated from citizens as they are, 'unable to commit to building a new life because they may be returned to the old, unable to commit to the old life because they may never be able to take it up once more' (Owen, 2013, p. 334). Whilst, refugee status ensures protection rights which are similar to citizenship rights, asylum-seekers are differentiated and treated very differently to citizens.

Differential access to the labour market is a method by which states are able to maintain distinctions between British citizens who belong and non-citizens who are excluded (Mayblin, 2016) from citizenship rights. The right to enter the labour market is a privilege which is restricted for citizens and selected migrants. 'On a sliding scale of privilege some migrants are able to obtain visas to work in the UK relatively easily, while for others (notably asylum seekers and irregular migrants) working is prohibited' (Mayblin, 2016, p.192). Home Office policy denies asylum-seekers the right to employment whilst they are waiting for a decision on their application. 'Access to employment illustrates a stratified system of inclusion and exclusion' (Morris, 2002, p. 411). Successive British governments have claimed that exclusion from the labour market deters potential asylum-seekers from entering the UK. Until 2002, asylum-seekers were permitted to apply for the right to work if they had been living in

the UK and awaiting a decision on their claim for six months or more. In 2005, the British government allowed asylum-seekers to apply for the right to work only 12 months following their first application for asylum, and only under the condition that the delay had not been their fault. From 2010, if asylum-seekers were permitted to work, they were restricted to jobs on a government's shortage occupations list. Mayblin (2016) argues that this list is incredibly selective, that it in effect prevents the majority of asylum-seekers from entering the labour market.

Britain's welfare state including the benefits of social citizenship are privileges reserved for national citizens (Sales, 2002). Typically, welfare provisions have been tied to citizenship status. Britain's welfare state has long been regarded as a pull factor for asylum-seekers (Wolton, 2006). Newly arrived asylum-seekers heavily depend on the welfare state. By linking asylum-seeking with welfare support has resulted in the view that asylum-seekers are an unfair economic burden on the state (Sales, 2002). Within, the context of debates centred on 'deserving' citizens and 'undeserving' welfare recipients, asylum-seekers have been grouped together as 'undeserving' (Sales, 2002). Evidently, discourses surrounding the rights and entitlements of citizens has affected both 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees'. For Squire (2009), asylum began to play a central role in defining citizenship in Britain during the 1990's. The spontaneous arrival of asylum-seekers challenged the territorial governance of the state. It was these norms which the renewed emphasis on citizenship attempted to reinforce. Debates centred on asylum have played a role in redefining citizenship in the UK (Wolton, 2006; Morris, 2009).

Welfare provision has shifted to the centre of current debates around asylum. For Wolton (2006) increased powers of detention of asylum-seekers, including welfare restrictions suggested that a section of the Britain's elites moved away from the notion of citizenship as embodying rights and freedoms. The UK implemented a complex system of immigration statuses with particular entitlements and exclusions. The increasing differentiation of migrant categories (skilled and unskilled), family, asylum-seekers and refugees has resulted in a hierarchy of civic stratification with, on entry, each category being afforded different protection rights by the state (Koffman 2002; Morris 2002). Debates focused on British values and identity define the rights of citizens who belong and also those individuals who can become citizens (Morrice, 2016).

Evidently there is a tension between the rights of citizens and the rights of asylum-seekers (Gibney, 2004). The rights of refugees are protected to some extent by the principle of *non-refoulement* enshrined in the Refugee Convention. However, the majority of refugees

start their journey off as asylum-seekers. Scholars have neglected to examine the relationship between the categories asylum-seeker and refugee within debates centred on citizenship rights. The state ultimately privilege citizens over non-citizens in terms of rights, protections and welfare. However different privileges and rights are afforded to different statuses. Countries which are signatories to the Convention have accepted that some forced migrants have a special right to international protection and asylum. What role does this play in both the official and social construction of asylum? This will be examined in the thesis. Fundamentally, citizenship is a privilege not a right and one of the main policy implications of this affects both 'refugee' and 'asylum-seekers'.

## Managed Migration

New research has established that there has been a dramatic shift in the politics of mobility which can be referred to as the 'migration management' paradigm (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010; Squire, 2011; Scheel and Squire, 2014; Scheel and Ratfisch, 2014). This is important to this research as migration policies have an impact on asylum-seekers. Previous research in the field has missed the connection to the broader migration regime which the asylum determination and administration process is a part of.

The regulation of immigration is a recent phenomenon originating in the late nineteenth century (Castles and Davidson, 2000). Originally, managed migration policies were employed as an argument for the expansion of labour migration (Spencer, 2003; Kofman, 2005). 'International Migration Management' has now become a familiar phrase for policy-makers and IGO's<sup>3</sup> to describe a number of initiatives aimed at renewing the policies concerning the cross-border movements of individuals including 'asylum-seekers'. The organisations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), explained in 2006 that both refugee protection and migration management were both separate and also inter-related activities (UNHCR, 2006). The term has been employed by individuals both within and outside of governments (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010). The British government's White Paper on immigration titled '*Secure Borders, Safe Haven*' (published in 2002 by the then Labour government) adopted the term.

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<sup>3</sup> IGO refers to an intergovernmental organization or international governmental organization



‘Managing’ migration means having an orderly, organised, and enforceable system of entry. It also means managing post-entry integration and inclusion in the economy and society, helping migrants to find their feet, and enabling members of the existing population to welcome them into their communities (Home Office, 2002, p.22).

For Geiger and Pécoud (2010) ‘migration management’ refers to three distinctive trends. Firstly it is used by actors to conceptualise and justify increasing interventions in the migration field. Secondly, it refers to a range of practices that are part of migration policies and performed by the institutions that promote the notion, for example counter trafficking. Thirdly, it is a set of discourses and new narratives regarding what migration is and how it should be addressed. This points to how ‘power is everywhere diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge & regimes of truth’, (Foucault, 1991, p.1). ‘Migration management’ was first discussed in 1993 by Bimal Ghosh who planned to cover all types of human mobility including refugee flows (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010). The notion of ‘managed migration’ is problematic as it implies that migration can be controlled.

‘Migratory movements involving refugees and asylum seekers are inherently chaotic and unpredictable, involving individuals and groups of people with strong fears, emotions and aspirations. While the notion of ‘migration management’ has a reassuringly technocratic ring to it, we can be sure that the reality will prove to be considerably more complex, controversial and costly than this concept implies’ (Crisp, 2003a, p.14).

The ‘migration management’ framework adopted by the international community was an attempt to transform migration into a more orderly, predictable and essentially manageable process. However, the practice of ‘migration management’ produces many challenges. The discourse of ‘managed migration’ constructs the problem of ‘migration’ in the first place. Policies centred on ‘migration management’ shape the construction of reality, as they create the very perception of the ‘problems’ of migration to be addressed by governments (Betts, 2011a). Frontex<sup>4</sup> is an agent of European border management. Nevertheless, Frontex does not simply control the borders of the European Union. This agency shapes a new representation of what the border is and how it should be governed (Kasperek, 2010). It has also been highlighted by scholars that ‘migration management’ schemes utilise humanitarian arguments to justify their activities (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010; Zolberg and

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<sup>4</sup> The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG), also known as *Frontex* (from French: *Frontières extérieures* for "external borders")

Benda, 2011). Measures to prevent unauthorized migration, or to prevent refugees' claims to asylum are presented as 'necessary' to fight human smuggling and trafficking (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010). As a result, this new paradigm has involved the differentiation of migrants into additional 'desirable' and 'undesirable' categories, beyond the 'deserving refugees' and 'undeserving asylum-seekers' (Sales, 2002). This is something which requires further examination in relation to the asylum discourse which this research proposes to examine. The policy and practice of migration management has shifted the significance of refugee protection as the key framework of migration regulation during the Cold War (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010; Scheel and Squire. 2014).

For Roger Zetter (2015), the mass migration of individuals in 2015 into Europe, and the events that followed, highlighted the tensions that characterise policy and practice within the field. Policy approaches centre on determining the status of individuals on the move. Fundamentally, policy-makers always ask whether or not the individuals are refugees or not. However, the motivators of displacement are diverse and incredibly complex. Many refugees migrate from their home countries because of ethnic, religious and political persecution, however many individuals will be on the move as a consequence of a combination of factors including conflict, poor governance, poverty and environmental change. The causes of forced migration are varied and more complex than a single cause-effect relationship with one factor. Current policy is 'ill-equipped to meet complex multifaceted needs'(Zetter, 2015, p.2). The 'Managed migration' framework would be easier to accept if it was possible to maintain and separate the categories of 'migrant' and 'refugee' (Haddad, 2008). Many migrants and asylum-seekers have multiple reasons for mobility and it is impossible to completely separate economic and human rights motivations. The 'asylum-migration nexus' framework rested on this proposition, therefore it will be helpful to examine this paradigm and discuss why this was abandoned.

## Asylum-Migration Nexus

The 'asylum-migration nexus' (Crisp, 2008) paradigm was the dominant trend in literature. It referred to migratory movements undertaken for the purpose of, or with the consequence of seeking asylum in another state (Castles and Loughna, 2005). It had practical uses as it was centred on the recognition that it was often difficult to determine at the time of movement whether an 'asylum-seeker' was actually a 'refugee' based on the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention. Many asylum-seekers will be permitted to stay in a country based on humanitarian, or other grounds even if they are denied refugee status (Helton, 2002;

Hansen, 2014). The term 'asylum-migration' was coined in the context for the need to differentiate between 'genuine' and 'bogus' asylum-seekers. After the 1973 oil crisis Western European countries stopped labour recruitment and redefined themselves as 'zero-immigration countries'. For many individuals, applying for asylum became the only legal route to entering and settling in industrialised countries (Castles and Loughna, 2005).

However, from 2008 onwards the UNHCR reassessed its perspective on the 'migration-asylum nexus' and also distanced itself from the term (Crisp, 2008). The agency continued to recognise the significance of mixed migration, but felt that in many ways the discourse associated with the 'migration-asylum nexus' could potentially compromise the UNHCR's core function of refugee protection (Van Hear, 2011). As a substitute, the UNHCR preferred to speak of 'refugee protection and durable solutions in the context of international migration' (Crisp, 2008, p.3). The primary reason for this change was that not surprisingly, the 'asylum-migration nexus' framework became too closely associated with the agenda of the migrant-receiving countries of the 'global north' including the concerns with irregular migration, control of borders and unfounded asylum claims. Such an agenda evidently conflicted with the UNHCR's core mandate of protecting those individuals who are forced to flee (Van Hear, 2011). I would like to propose in this study that this is continuing today with the 'managed migration paradigm'.

In the current age of migration the binary distinctions between 'forced' or 'voluntary' migration and 'legal or 'illegal' migration have become more and more blurred. The motivations and modalities of migrations are much more diverse than in the past (King, 2010). The 'managed migration' approach would only function in a world where migrant groups can be differentiated and easily identified to ensure the protection of those individuals who will become refugees once claiming asylum. Similarly to the 'asylum-migration' nexus which served an initial policy function and then was disregarded, the 'managed migration' paradigm serves to promote the view that nation states can exercise their sovereignty by 'managing', if not 'controlling' migration. Practices of control are embedded in border security, not just in a practical sense but also inform what controlling borders does and what it means (Bigo, 1998; Bigo, 2014).

'Contemporary politics of control is constituted through various modes of power. Sovereign, pastoral, disciplinary and bio political powers come together in the contemporary context as part of the struggle to master movement' (Squire, 2011, p.30).

Research within refugee and forced migration studies firstly contradicts the notion that migration can be managed (Crisp, 2003a), and numerous studies conclude that it is near enough impossible to separate categories of 'migrant' from 'refugees' (Crisp, 2003b; Haddad, 2008; King, 2010; Scheel and Squire, 2014). Consequently, I propose that the 'managed migration' framework needs to be critically assessed. Its practical function for policy makers is evident. However, its implementation is challenging in relation to asylum. The multiplicity and variety of the types of migration and movement observable today (Sassen, 1999; King, 2010), not only blur the binary divisions between 'forced/voluntary' migration but also distort the distinctions between all migratory movements. Policy-makers misunderstand migration as either caused by poverty or persecution. This challenges the principle of 'managed migration' and requires further study in relation to asylum. Established forms of international migration have been historically significant in shaping our thinking about how migration is conceptualised and theorised. However, such perspectives need to be interrogated further before being accepted as normative truths.

Although 'managed migration' is the accepted framework in policy circles, it provokes much debate in refugee and forced migration studies and causes some to argue for the need for more interdisciplinary work in the field (Marfleet, 2005; King, 2010). Academics in the field have tended to focus on the subject from very traditional disciplinary perspectives. There is a need for new programmes and research outputs that cut across humanities and social and political sciences fields to become more multi-disciplinary (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014). Researchers need to reflect critically about the boundaries of disciplines and the field of refugee and forced migration studies. Whose agendas are being implicated in the categorization process? It is also important to explore how 'forced migrants' might undermine the categories that policy-makers impose upon them. Previous research on asylum-seekers has missed the connection to the broader migration regime of which the administration of asylum is a part of. The implementation of the 'managed migration' framework affects asylum-seekers as it prevents them from accessing protection as there are no legal routes for them to claim sanctuary. The thesis is multi-disciplinary in its approach and attempts to explore the relationship between the official construction of asylum and the social construction of asylum. Such a study provides significant insights into how asylum seeking is carried out and how it is perceived to be done in the current climate where asylum is presented as a 'problem'.

## The Problematisation of Asylum

Since the start of the twenty-first century, all western states have executed a range of restrictive measures and policies to deter asylum-seekers from entering their territories (Zetter and Pearl, 1999; Gibney, 2004; Zetter, 2007; Darling, 2008; Brekke and Thorbjørnsrud, 2018) to address the 'problem of asylum'. Such practices have included 'external measures such as visa regimes, carrier sanctions to internal measures like detention, dispersal regimes and restrictions on access to welfare and housing' (Gibney, 2004, p.2). In the perception of many politicians and the general public, seeking asylum has become a means of evading legitimate immigration controls (Borjas and Crisp, 2005). Matthew Gibney argues that the response of western states to refugees and asylum-seekers can be characterised as a kind of 'organised hypocrisy' (Gibney, 2004, p.229). Although states publicly advocate for the importance attached to the principle of asylum, they nonetheless implement policies that prevent as many asylum-seekers as possible from arriving on their territory where they could claim its protection. Dummett claims that a device employed by the UK is to;

'repeat incessantly that most of the asylum-seekers are mere 'economic migrants'. The phrase has a benefit of blurring the distinction between refugees and immigrants: it also serves to convey that the motives of those claiming asylum are more trivial and unworthy' (Dummett, 2001, p.44).

The routine framing of asylum as a 'problem' leads to the creation of asylum as simply a political discourse which needs to be correctly managed, and takes away from the legal and ethical framework of humanitarian rights that the term 'refugee' automatically causes us to identify with. Heaven Crawley maintains that asylum policy making should be based on evidence, not assumption. For Crawley the majority of asylum policies in the UK are driven by fundamental misperceptions about the extent to which asylum seekers actively 'choose' to come to the UK (Crawley, 2010). The 'problem of asylum' cannot be removed from the wider government agenda of the problem of 'swarms of people coming across the Mediterranean', 'marauding migrants' and 'this tidal wave of migrants' (Shariatmadari, 2015), wanting to enter the UK. This is linked to public anxiety about the numbers of 'bogus asylum-seekers' (Anderson, 2017a). More studies need to connect the construction of the 'problem of asylum' within the wider framing of migration. The need for more research on asylum has become more significant in the present day. Migration featured heavily in the Brexit referendum campaigns and the Brexit result was in part a response to increased fears concerning

immigration (Somerville, 2016; Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017; Jones et al., 2017; Dennison and Geddes, 2018; Outhwaite, 2018). Theresa May, (current Prime Minister) has continued to pledge since 2010 ‘to bring net migration down to sustainable levels. We believe that is the tens of thousands’ (Asthana, 2017). The central argument for the Leave Europe campaign was the need to retake control of the borders. This was echoed in Theresa May’s 2017 election campaign, ‘when we leave the European Union we will have the opportunity to make sure we have control of our borders- leaving the EU means we won’t have free movement as it has been in the past’ (Asthana, 2017).

Scholars (Virdee and McGeever, 2017; Burrell et al., 2019) have maintained that the Brexit Leave campaign was intimately tied to concepts of race and racism. No one expected that the Brexit result would have ended in the decision that Britain would leave Europe. ‘A tide of reactionary populism is sweeping across the European mainland which demands nothing less than a restoration of a mythical golden age of sovereign nation states defined by cultural and racial homogeneity’ (Virdee and McGeever, 2017, p.2). Central to the Brexit Leave Campaign were concerns around immigration (Dennison and Geddes, 2018). Scholars have suggested that leave voters tended to be more socially conservative and anti-immigration than the remain voters (Kunovich, 2004; Hobolt, 2016). In the Leave Campaigns the ‘migrant’ was constructed as both an economic and security threat. Furthermore, the ‘refugee’ was also depicted as a threat in the campaigns. Nigel Farage famously campaigned that if British people voted to leave Europe, they would successfully keep refugees from entering the UK (Virdee and McGeever, 2017). The rise of populism and the timing of heightened awareness of the movement of individuals into Europe during the humanitarian crisis of 2015, intersected with the lead up to the Brexit vote (Burrell et al., 2019).

Habermas (2016) has explained that in discussions of Brexit, those ‘internal others’ against whom the nation has often defined itself, including most notably, racialized minorities and migrants are carefully omitted. The language of the nation is employed to invoke ‘a hidden racial narrative’ (Barker, 1981; Verkuyten, 2001). For researchers of race and migration Brexit marked a significant point in the UK’s identity and practice as a multicultural country (Burrell et al., 2019). Although, Brexit has highlighted the importance of race and migration issues in the UK, it does not present a uniquely anti-migration sentiment. As many scholars (Spencer, 1996; Spencer, 2006; Garner, 2007) have demonstrated, UK migration policy was racialized long before the implementation of the ‘hostile environment’ (Immigration Act 2014) targeting illegal migrants (Wallace, 2017).

The topic of asylum is highly racialized (Schuster, 2003a; Schuster and Solomos, 2004; Garner, 2013; Hirsch, 2017), and gendered (Indra, 1987; Greatbatch, 1989; Crawley, 2001; Pittaway and Bartolomei, 2001; Staeheli et al., 2004; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014). Although refugee studies and ethnic and racial studies are separate disciplines, in contemporary political debates most notably through Brexit, it has been highlighted that these topics can also intersect (Jones et al., 2017; Burrell et al., 2019). Bridget Anderson (2017b) argues that the nation-state itself is in crisis, as the contemporary obsession with migration, reducing numbers and right wing populism has to be seen within a broader political context. The nation-state framework is proving to be unstable. Borders have fallen, shifted, and proved vulnerable while global capital, finance and new technology are proving highly resistant to state regulation (Wendy, 2012). All of these issues are interconnected and have to be examined together to shed light on the complex shaping of 'the problem of asylum' as a security issue.

## The Securitisation of Asylum

Migration and asylum have increasingly been converted into 'a law-and-order question and have become securitised' (Trauner, 2016, p.313). Squire (2009) argues that migration as a security threat became the dominant narrative after September the 11<sup>th</sup> in 2001 and the July London bombings in 2005. There was a direct linkage of asylum seeking and terrorism (Hammerstad, 2000; Hammerstad, 2014; Hammerstad, 2016). However, the security dimensions of forced migration can be traced to the early 1990s. The collapse of the former Soviet Union led to fears in Western Europe of mass migration from the East. In the post-Cold War era refugees and asylum-seekers were proposed as potential threats to security (Hammerstad, 2014). 'The term 'security' came to be employed in a variety of political and economic contexts' (Collinson, 1999, p.303). The end of the Cold War and the changes that resulted as a consequence triggered new mass population movements across the globe. 'International migration came to be identified in Europe as a threat to 'our' jobs, housing, borders and also to issues of security and collective identities and cultural homogeneity' (Faist, 2004, p.3).

The framing of asylum as a security issue after September the 11<sup>th</sup> was made further explicit. Huysmans and Buonfino (2008) have described a politics of 'unease' in Europe, where migrants and asylum seekers were previously not directly or individually described as threats and enemies, soon after were grouped together with other threats such as international crime, including people smuggling and trafficking (Huysmans, 2006). Additionally, a direct connection was made between lax immigration control and international terrorism. Governments worldwide announced major immigration reforms and the tightening of border controls under the banner of 'homeland security' (Hammerstad, 2014). Whilst most of the 9/11 terrorists had arrived in the US on six month tourist visas, and none as asylum seekers, asylum procedures were highlighted as open to abuse by terrorist networks. As a direct consequence there was a rise in the use of the exclusion clauses of the Refugee Convention post 9/11 (Blake, 2003). The fear of the 'other' was augmented due to the threat posed by terrorism. The explicit discourse of international migration and human and state security became referred to as the 'migration-security nexus' (Koff, 2014). Security is socially and politically constructed through the 'struggles for political decisions and justification of practices of surveillance, control and punishment as well as practices of protection, reassurance, worrying and surveillance' (Bigo, 2008, p.123).

Following the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks and the 2016 Cologne attacks there was a further heightened attention to security in Europe (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2015). Liz Fekete has demonstrated that since 2007 'European centre right parties have adopted a more openly Eurosceptic and xenophobic approach' (Fekete, 2016, 4). On the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2017, President Donald Trump signed an executive order halting all refugee admissions and temporarily banning individuals from seven Muslim majority countries. Although this order was overturned by the American courts, this signalled the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment. Such events demonstrate why the current context is significant, as labels and self-identities shift through time in response to external and internal factors. Since the end of the Cold War there has been a widening of the security agenda and a threatening discourse to describe migrants. Such dehumanisation is commonplace in the construction of enemy images and makes it easier to detain, deport and ignore migrants and 'asylum-seekers'. Today the refugee is criminalised and securitised through the act of attempting to seek asylum (Hammerstad, 2014).

In contrast, Randall Hansen (2014) questions contemporary literature which suggests that asylum policy is under the remit of military, security and policing policy which have both criminalised and militarised asylum and undocumented migration. Hansen argues that governments have no interest in criminalising asylum-seekers.



‘States have been compelled to shift the border outwards because the traditional mechanism of border control has been undermined by the regular operation of the asylum system. States cannot simply line the physical border with guards who deny entry to undesirable migrants, because migrants acquire rights as soon as they reach the shores of a signatory state’ (Hansen, 2014, p.259).

Hansen contends that within Europe, ‘less than 50 per cent of asylum-seekers receive either refugee or non-Convention refugee status’(Hansen, 2014, p.260), following the processing of their asylum applications. Governments have been forced to implement restrictive policies towards asylum seekers to reduce costly asylum processes. For Hansen it is the press that transform asylum into a political matter.

‘In the United Kingdom, efforts to reduce asylum applications through externalizing the border occurred after a) a great upsurge in asylum seekers and (b) the politicization of asylum by extra-governmental actors. In the UK, the latter was provoked by the tabloid press’ (Hansen, 2014, p.261).

Hansen’s work on how the issue of asylum has become politicised requires further examination. On the one hand, he demonstrates the complex dynamics and actors that are at play when an issue is politicised and asks us to be critical of normative views that treat the state as the sole actor responsible in transforming asylum into a political issue. Yet he also ends up falling into the trap of being uncritical of the state in its role. There have been very few recent studies which have examined how the problem of asylum has become such a topical and contested issue. Hansen raises some useful points of consideration which are often neglected by scholars, including the high costs involved in asylum applications, deportation of failed asylum-seekers and the obligations of states to every ‘refugee’. However, it is difficult to accept Hansen’s central argument, as he is uncritical of the role of the state itself in the politicisation of asylum. Gareth Mulvey (2010) has suggested that asylum policy politicises the issue in the first place. The UK government is constantly negotiating the balance between publicly appearing to show compassion and offering protection to those assessed to be ‘genuine refugees’ and the ‘hard line’ stance towards those who abuse the system. What is the role of the UK government in the politicisation of asylum? Is Hansen correct in his analysis or is the issue more complex? These questions will be examined in the thesis through an interrogation of the evolution of the label ‘asylum-seeker’.

## The Power of Labelling in Asylum Debates

Roger Zetter was the first to claim that the category 'refugee' was one of the most powerful labels in the field of forced migration (Zetter, 1991). In his editorial introduction to the first issue of the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Zetter argued that labels played an important role in research, policy and practices related to refugees (Zetter, 1988).

'The concept of labelling provides a powerful tool to explore the political in the seemingly apolitical arena of bureaucratic practices. The concept reveals how bureaucratic labels both reproduce themselves in the prevailing political discourse and popular vocabulary, and are instrumental in further politicizing the label' (Zetter, 2007, p.184).

Zetter's work has provided the inspiration for the thesis, as his research has highlighted the complex relationship between labelling and policy. Both labelling and policy play a central role in forming bureaucratic identities through which the political system categorises the other (Zetter, 1991; Zetter, 2007; Sigona, 2009). This becomes a key issue for consideration when examining the category 'asylum-seeker'. Zetter's (1988, 1991) work on bureaucratic labelling has been highly influential in the development of Refugee Studies as a subject area in both theory and practice. Nevertheless, in the current context, it is not possible to understand the conceptual framing of the term 'refugee' without examining the category 'asylum-seeker'. Asylum policy in the UK is the implementation of the Refugee Convention. The thesis addresses this gap in literature by examining the relationship between the conceptual framing of the terms asylum-seeker and refugee. Policy categorisation of the 'asylum-seeker' category is one of the processes in the creation of bureaucratic labels. Zetter's seminal work has demonstrated that the production of labels entails 'stereotyping which involves disaggregation, standardization and the formulation of clear cut categories' (Zetter, 1991, p. 44). As part of the process of bureaucratic labelling, the formal policy category of 'asylum' is established. In this case, the category follows the policy concern and is then followed by the application of that category as a label.

The labels 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' are underpinned by normative legal frameworks. However, according to Bhupinder Chimni (2009), the legal definition of a 'refugee' has always been designed to serve state policy and academia has failed to address this issue. There are a lack of studies which have examined this paradox by exploring how the terms 'refugee' and

'asylum-seeker' have evolved and been socially constructed. It would be helpful to explore how the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' are recognized in everyday contexts rather than simply on paper as administrative categories. To fully appreciate the changing meanings attached to the term 'asylum-seeker' it is necessary to examine related categories such as 'refugee', which the thesis intends to do. There are a lack of studies which have addressed this in the field.

Categorisation in forced migration defines the lived condition of those individuals on the move. Labelling is therefore employed as a mechanism to impose boundaries and also utilised to define categories. I would like to propose in the thesis that the label 'asylum-seeker' has become even more powerful than the term 'refugee' today. Labelling theory as an approach in the social sciences emerged during the 1960's (Becker, 1963). Studies centred on the power of labelling have a long tradition in the social sciences. Typically, research has either adopted a survey methodology focusing on particular categories in questionnaires or studies have focused on the role of labelling in stigmatizing certain groups of individuals (Moncrieffe and Eyben, 2013). A number of studies have revealed the increasingly negative public attitudes towards asylum-seekers (Fassmann et al., 2009). In 2011, the British Red Cross commissioned an independent poll and concluded that 72% of its respondents stated that newspaper reporting about asylum seekers and refugees was negative (The Guardian, 2012). The poll also highlighted the widespread confusion between the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. The juxtaposition of the 'true asylum seeker' pitted against the 'false' or 'bogus asylum seeker' does more than simply reflect a social reality today. Such forms of categorisation also play a huge role in the construction of that reality. The use of such categories adds to the widespread confusion between asylum and immigration. In 2015, the Migration Observatory (Oxford University), conducted a study examining public opinion on immigration in Britain amongst a sample interview of 1,002 individuals. Their findings compared public perceptions of migration against the evidence of migration data. Individuals were asked a series of questions, including, why do immigrants come to Britain? 62% selected asylum and 29% picked to study. The figures from the Home Office highlighted that the vast majority of individuals who came to the UK were to study and only 5% actually came as result of claiming asylum (Blinder and Richards, 2018)

The British Election Study (BES) started asking the public about immigration in 1964 (Blinder and Richards, 2018). A recent report released by the Migration Observatory concluded that British views were not favourable towards immigration and a substantial majority would like immigration to be reduced (Blinder and Richards, 2018). The Migration Observatory relies

on data from the British Social Attitudes Survey, British Election Studies, The European Social Survey, and the International Social Survey Programme. The report indicated that public attitudes towards immigration had shifted slightly as they had softened in recent years (Blinder and Richards, 2018). However, a report released by You Gov<sup>5</sup> (Wells, 2018) highlighted that overall public opinion towards immigration remains negative as 63% of people believe that immigration into Britain in the last ten years has been too high. The report concluded that although hostility towards immigration has softened since 2016, the changes are comparatively small. Opposition to the arrival of immigrants in the UK is nothing new. Enoch Powell's '*Rivers of Blood*' speech delivered in 1968, centred on national sovereignty and a determination to keep immigrants out of the UK. Powell's anti-immigrant rhetoric continues to influence mainstream debates about nationhood and migration (Tomlinson, 2018).

The majority of research on the perceptions of the British public towards immigration has been carried out quantitatively through questionnaires (Hathaway, 2007; The Migration Observatory, 2011; Rienzo and Vargas-Silva, 2016; Blinder and Richards, 2018). All of these findings have been significant and concluded that there can be a mismatch between views of immigrants in public perceptions and official asylum data. There is considerable conflation of the categories; 'refugee', 'asylum seeker' and 'migrant' in the public imagination and in press coverage (Aspinall and Watters, 2010). There are a lack of studies which have explored how the conflation of different categories impacts the social construction of the category asylum-seeker. This research intends to address this gap in literature.

Ronald Kaye (1998; 2001), carried out one of the first media analyses of the UK media's reporting of asylum. His work concluded that British national newspapers employed the terms 'bogus', 'economic' and 'phoney' in reporting on 'asylum-seekers', 'refugees' and 'migrants' between 1990 and 1996. Media coverage of 'forced migrants' continues to be a concern within academia. The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration concluded 'the policy and public mood towards migration is often more negative than it was ten years ago, much of this stemming from inconsistent media coverage' (quoted in Wright, 2014, p.463). The language employed around asylum and migration influences how the public perceive migrants and refugees. The collective representations of these groups by politicians and the media are shaping the asylum discourse. 'The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general public' (Chomsky, 1994, p.1).

The media interest on the topic of asylum is evident in the high numbers of articles printed each month, with the majority of the British newspapers associating asylum-seekers

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<sup>5</sup> Global public opinion and data company

with social unrest (Khan, 2013; Parker, 2015; Allen, 2016). Mollard (2001), has demonstrated how such a panic has been constructed through the repetition of a series of myths focused on both asylum seekers and asylum issues, centred around four topics; the scale of the asylum problem, questions of eligibility, the cost of supporting asylum seekers and the 'social cost' of asylum seekers. Mollard's review suggested that press coverage is characterised by negative imagery and hostility directed towards asylum seekers and refugees. Various studies (Kaye, 1998; Lynn and Lea, 2003; Kaur, 2007; Khan, 2013; Wright, 2014; Kosho, 2016; Goodman, Sirriyeh and McMahon, 2017) have demonstrated that media reporting on forced migration has been both negative and subject to changing political agendas influencing the perceptions of public opinion. Although media constructions of 'asylum-seekers' have been the focus of a number of studies. Little attention has been paid to the representation of 'forced migrants' more generally which also impact the social construction of the 'asylum-seeker' category.

## Social Construction, categorization and the Asylum-Seeker

Previous studies which have adopted a social constructivist stance to categorization affecting asylum-claimants (Lynn and Lea, 2003; Lacroix, 2004; Goodman and Spear, 2007) have employed discursive social psychology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) as a methodology for understanding the ways in which asylum-seekers are socially constructed. This particular type of discourse analysis has been utilised to investigate the ways in which society talks and writes about asylum-seekers. The manner in which individuals on the move are labelled and categorised affects how their issues are framed and simultaneously handled. Discursive research conducted on asylum-seekers (Lynn and Lea, 2003; Lacroix, 2004; Goodman and Spear, 2007) has demonstrated that public attitudes to those seeking asylum have varied over the years.

Lynn and Lea's, (2003) study analysed letters from members of the public centred on the topic of asylum to understand how asylum-seekers were discussed in the UK.

'What is the writing and talk of 'ordinary', 'everyday' people relating to 'asylum-seekers' being used to do?' (Lynn and Lea, 2003, p. 430)

This important piece of research concluded that within public discourse, asylum seekers were typically portrayed as 'bogus' and motivated as seeking asylum for economic reasons, in contrast to fleeing persecution. The focus of public attention was centred on the (il) legitimacy of asylum-seekers' claims and ultimately questioned whether they deserved sympathy and

support. The argument which followed is that asylum-seekers were simply economic migrants posing as refugees. Fundamentally, asylum-seekers were constructed in a negative manner in public discourse. Lynn and Lea's research highlighted the social construction of asylum-seekers at the discursive and narrative level. Public discourse around asylum-seekers affected their reception and treatment as harsh measures towards asylum-seekers were justified. Furthermore, Lynn and Lea suggested that it was important to 'examine and re-examine the way in which asylum-seekers or refugees are socially constructed' (Lynn and Lea, 2003, p.448). During different time periods there are different constructions.

Furthermore, Goodman and Speer (2007), conducted discursive research on asylum-seekers in the UK, by analysing texts including political speeches, newspaper articles and TV debates, focusing on the categories that were applied in relation to asylum-seekers. Similar to Lynn and Lea (2003), Goodman and Speer (2007) emphasised how categories were employed in discourse played a role in shaping public opinion on the topic of asylum in the public sphere. Their study concluded that categories including 'refugee', 'migrant' and 'economic migrant' were all conflated and confused in asylum debates, with negative consequences for those seeking asylum. This once again highlights the significance of categorisation to forced migrant identities.

'By categorizing asylum seekers in terms of those who are genuinely fleeing persecution and those who are economic migrants, the public sphere debate becomes one about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of asylum seekers' claims. A system of classification based around legitimacy has the effect of constructing all asylum seekers as immigration 'cheats' and as untrustworthy and dishonest people whom we are right to treat with doubt and contempt' (Goodman and Speer, 2007, p.179).

The binaries employed to represent 'asylum-seekers' centre on the legitimacy of individuals on the move. Categorization therefore, justifies suspicion and the implementation of harsher policies towards asylum-seekers as the focus becomes to determine the legality of asylum claims, rather than exploring ways of assisting asylum-seekers. Goodman and Speer (2007) also proposed that the government deliberately reclassified 'asylum seekers' as 'economic migrants' because of political pressures. Furthermore, Goodman and Speer maintained that 'the construction of asylum seekers is always fundamentally a political action' (Goodman and Speer, 2007, p.179). Categorisation in forced migration has serious life or death consequences for those individuals on the move and is inherently tied to power. Policy labels and categorizations demonstrate power relations (Zetter, 2007; Bakewell, 2008; Polzer, 2008). Recently it has been highlighted that the 'the use of labelling is not occurring in the interest of

the asylum seeker, but as a means for politicians and government to control, regulate and monitor asylum flows, successfully marginalising those who are seeking to claim asylum in Britain' (McFadyen, 2014, p.33).

Although, some research has been carried out on the social construction of asylum at the discursive and narrative level in the UK (Lynn and Lea, 2003; Goodman and Spear, 2007), the topic of asylum is still understudied. In the Canadian context, Lacroix (2004) carried out qualitative interviews with male African asylum seekers to investigate the relationship between the asylum determination process and identity. Her research demonstrated that refugee identity was formed when individuals first decided to leave their home country. The participants shared their experiences of seeking asylum as a stage in the life cycle, as feeling like they were being reborn, having to learn how to live again being completely removed from their previous life. Lacroix concluded that both immigration and refugee policy played a key role in defining refugee claimants in Canada and producing the main discourse of 'refugeeness'. Lacroix's (2004) study was limited to the social construction of refugees' subjectivity across work, family and state in Canada. She also neglected to include the ways in which asylum-seekers may have attempted to challenge or negotiate the identities that are placed upon them.

All of the studies conducted on the social construction of asylum-seekers have concluded that the manner in which we talk about 'asylum-seekers' and the way we behave towards 'asylum-seekers' are closely connected. The process of conceptualisation is not just about describing and defining individuals. Language and practice form a discourse which ultimately constructs 'asylum-seekers' for us. Research focused on the social construction of the asylum-seeker has mainly, been examined at the discourse and narrative level (Lynn and Lea, 2003; Lacroix, 2004; Goodman and Spear, 2007). However, little attention has been paid to the different social construction practices in the asylum determination process more generally, asylum and refugee policy, the media constructions of forced migrants more broadly and the practices of administrative procedures relating to the asylum determination process. As all of these processes play a role in the social construction of the 'asylum-seeker' category simultaneously. This thesis seeks to address this gap.

## Conclusion

This literature review has highlighted that there is an ambiguous relationship between the 'official' construction and social construction of asylum. Current scholarship on refugee and forced migration studies is unable to shed any light on the issue. I argue, that it is important to explore the relationship between the conceptual framing of the term 'refugee'

and the category 'asylum-seeker', to fully understand the changing meanings provided to the label 'asylum-seeker'. This chapter has explored the tensions between the ideology of the 'nation-state', the 'refugee' and the 'asylum-seeker'. Refugees are created as a consequence of the geopolitical structure. Modern constructs of citizenship are defined by a normative relationship between the state, the territory and citizen. Citizenship operates in ways to both differentiate and define 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers'. Rights to citizenship are organised around belonging to a specific nation-state. However, the key ideological and legal principle of a refugee crossing a border challenges the authority of the nation-state. Yet, simultaneously the act of claiming asylum reifies state sovereignty by the same refugee. The figure of the 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' have a dynamic and evolving relationship to state sovereignty which require further study. The process of globalisation has also presented a challenge to the fixed ideology of the nation-state (Massey, 1994; Ong, 1999), as it is no longer possible to view nation-states as fixed entities (Appadurai, 1990; Agnew, 1994; Robinson, 1998; Bauman, 2000; Collyer, 2014). Therefore, in the thesis it will be more helpful to view nation-states and borders as fluid.

In this chapter, I criticised the 'managed migration' framework, which has been adopted by policy-makers internationally, as it is impossible to maintain and separate the categories of 'migrant' and 'refugee'. Previous research in the field has missed the connections between the broader migration regime which the asylum determination and administration process is a part of. In the present day, the binary distinctions of 'forced', or 'voluntary' (King, 2010) and 'legal', or 'illegal' migration have become blurred and the drivers and modalities of migrations cannot be understood normatively. The 'asylum-migration nexus' centred on this principle however, is no longer used. This chapter has examined how the 'problem' of asylum has been constructed as an economic (Dummett, 2001), and a security threat (Scheel and Ratfisch, 2014; Scheel and Squire, 2014) manifested in the Brexit leave campaigns (Virdee and McGeever, 2017). I have also highlighted that research needs to connect thinking on the intersections of forced migration with immigration and asylum as well as racial (Jones et al., 2017; Virdee and McGeever, 2017) and gendered (Crawley, 2001; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014) paradigms. These are not always separate issues and studies which look at these subjects together would provide new insights.

Finally, this review has demonstrated that the term 'asylum-seeker' has evolved over the years and been constructed in contradictory ways. This occurs in complex ways through a multitude of actors however, the specific historical context is always significant. This presents us with an apparent paradox, as legally speaking there is an unchanging definition of an 'asylum-seeker', nonetheless, this does not necessarily translate into practice. Existing studies



on the social construction of asylum-seekers have been conducted at the discursive and narrative level in the UK (Lynn and Lea; 2003; Goodman and Spear 2007). However, different social construction practices in the asylum determination process, asylum and refugee policy, media constructions of forced migrants more generally have been neglected in research. Scholars in the field have either focused on the conceptual framing of 'refugee' or 'asylum-seeker', rather than exploring the intricate relationship of these terms together. This review has identified a gap in current literature which requires further study. The categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' have real-life implications for those individuals who are forced to move. 'Given how bleak a future so many refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants continue to face in cities and camps across the globe, a vibrant and engaged community of refugee and forced migration scholars is particularly crucial now and in the decades to come' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014, p.17). The thesis will attempt to explore the relationship between the official construction of an asylum-seeker and the social construction of an asylum-seeker across a range of actors.

The next chapter will outline the theoretical concepts that I have employed in the thesis

# Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

## Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated the theoretical, legal and social complexities which underpinned the term 'asylum-seeker', in literature and empirical studies. The literature review highlighted the ambiguous relationship between the official construction and social construction of asylum which the thesis attempts to address. As the purpose of this research is to shed light on this area, I have recognised that such an engagement is only made possible through working with a diverse range of concepts.

The purpose of this chapter is to define and develop the conceptual tools and theories that informed my analysis of the processes of social construction of asylum-seekers within asylum systems and determination processes. Rather than confining the discussion within a pre-existing theoretical framework and disciplinary tradition, this chapter discusses different concepts and approaches developed in various disciplines and areas of research around the connections between official categorization and identities. These theories collectively provide the conceptual toolkit for the thesis. I adopted a similar approach to other researchers who have created conceptual montages, or theoretical *bricoleurs* (Weinstein and Weinstein, 1991; Becker, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 1999), by employing different conceptual frameworks.

This chapter is developed around three areas. I start by exploring the theory of social construction which was the key orienting concept of the thesis, embedded within all of the analysis. I examine the foundations of social construction and the ways in which it provides a particular way of thinking about categories and categorisation. From this, I move onto highlighting research which has employed a social constructionist epistemology. The second part of the chapter examines different theories on the relationship between categorization and power and the importance of historical and social processes in understanding the changing meanings attached to categories. The final section discusses the significance of Zygmunt Bauman's work in understanding how the figure of the 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' have become criminalized in the current age of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000).

## The Foundations of Social Construction

Social construction, also referred to as social constructionism, is a theory applied in both philosophy and sociology, whose central principle is that human beings continually construct the world in which we live in. Social construction explores the development of shared constructed understandings of the world that formulate the basis for shared assumptions about reality. Social Constructionism is popular within the social sciences and humanities research. The foundational works of social constructionism are typically traced to texts such as Berger and Luckmann's, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), or Spector and Kitsuse's (1987), *Constructing Social Problems*. However, the theories of social construction originate from a wide variety of theoretical traditions both within and beyond the social sciences (Holstein and Gubrium, 2008). There is not a single interpretation of what social constructionism is (Hacking, 1999; Weinberg, 2014). Social constructionist views develop from 'a process of dialogue, a dialogue that is on-going' (Gergen, 2015, pp.3–4).

Emile Durkheim, Max Webber and Karl Marx set the main precedents for social constructionist social science (Weinberg, 2014). Darin Weinberg, maintains that although Durkheim is usually associated with the tradition of positivism, he influenced social constructivist research as his works including, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1965), and *Primitive Classification* (Durkheim and Mauss, 1963), claimed that 'systems of classification reflect the social organization of societies in which they occur' (quoted in Weinberg, 2014, p.4). This is one of the founding principles of social constructivist thought. There have been many scholars who have developed the tradition of social constructivism since its inception. Social constructionism is considered 'to be a realist account of the nature of a certain category: it is claimed that the category is a real feature of human beings, but it is determined by social, rather than natural or biological properties' (Diaz-Leon, 2015, p.1137).

For Berger and Luckmann (1966), social construction draws attention to what people conceive to be real and what is taken for granted in everyday life. They proposed that reality is socially constructed and the 'sociology of knowledge' was needed to analyse the processes by which this occurs. The term 'sociology of knowledge' was devised by Max Scheler (quoted in Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.20), in the 1920s. It is the study of the relationship between human thought and the social context in which it is formed and furthermore, explores the implications that ideas have on societies. Scheler claimed that 'human knowledge is given in society as an *a priori* to individual experience...This order although it is relative to a particular

socio-historical situation appears to the individual as the natural way of looking at the world' (quoted in Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.20). This idea was further developed by thinkers including Karl Marx, who argued that a 'sociology' of knowledge was derived from its root premise that a persons' consciousness was determined by their social being (Marx, 1859). Berger and Luckmann expanded these ideas further by stating that 'common-sense 'knowledge' rather than 'ideas' must be the central focus for the 'sociology of knowledge'. It is precisely this knowledge that constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist'(Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.27). The definitions of what is real have to be sustained by institutions and maintained by social mechanisms. The processes that shape our understanding of reality are collective. What we consider to be real is the result of the society which we inhabit; and the society in which we live is constructed by our own activity (Vera, 2016).

Some distinctions need to be made regarding the objects of construction. What exactly is being constructed? Hacking (1999), differentiates between the social construction of ideas and the social construction of objects. For example, 'motherhood and its meanings are not fixed and inevitable, the consequence of child bearing and rearing, they are the product of historical events, social forces and ideology'(Hacking, 1999, p.2). The understanding of motherhood is not set in stone, rather motherhood is given meaning according to the particular social and historical context and continually redefined. Within social constructionism what we take to be the truth about the world depends on the social relationships of which we are a part.

'Identity is formed by social processes, once crystallized it is maintained, modified, or even re-shaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure. Specific historical and social structures engender identity types which are recognizable in individual cases'(Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.194).

Within philosophy there are various types of social constructionism including epistemic and metaphysical social construction claims. Is it that X itself is socially constructed or is it our idea or conception of X which is constructed? For some social constructivists, it is our idea or conception of identity which is constructed, however for others it is identity itself. There are a number of studies on social construction, however there is a lack of clarity on what exactly is being constructed. For Hacking social constructionists claim that:

- 1.) 'X need not have existed, or need not be at all as it is. X, or X as it is at present, is not determined by the nature of things, it is not inevitable (Hacking, 1999, p.6).

The broad umbrella of social construction encompasses a diverse range of views. The term has been employed in very different ways. Point (1) claims that our concepts and ideas about X are a consequence of social factors. This does not seem to be a very controversial claim as the theories and beliefs we have about particular topics are to some extent the result of contingent social and historical factors (Haslanger, 2003). For Hacking, the proposition of (1) is to propose that 'X was brought into existence or shaped by social events, history, all of which could well have been different' (Hacking, 1999, p.7). Fundamentally, the claim that a particular category is socially constructed, is the proposition that a certain category is given meaning by society. A society is a group of people who are organized in a specific way with particular values and interests. Central to social construction is the belief that human beings are principally social agents rather than passive reactors that process information. For Berger and Luckmann (1966), social objects are not givens in the world but constructed, negotiated, reformed, fashioned and organised by humans to make sense of various events in the world.

## Application of Social Construction in Research

Social Constructionism is one of the most popular research approaches in the social sciences and humanities research. The most widely applied social constructionist theories have involved the study of human nature, such as gender. In Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, it was proposed that 'one is not born but rather becomes a woman' (Beauvoir 1949, p.267). Gender, in this conception is 'a constitutive social construction... Gender should be understood as a social category whose definition makes reference to a broad network of social relations, and is not simply a matter of anatomical differences'(Haslanger, 1995, p.130). Constructionists within gender studies have approached 'gender' in varied ways. According to Naomi Scheman (1993), the category gender is employed to benefit men over women. For Scheman, it is not only a particular gendered trait that is constitutively socially constructed such as being a wife, or mother, but the very idea of being a woman occupies a position of subservience. In this example, the category 'gender' is socially constructed.

In contrast, other feminist scholars including Judith Butler claimed that categories including 'gender' and 'sex' are socially constructed. 'Perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender... with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all' (Butler, 1990, p.7). Butler questions the systems of knowledge that presume that one's given sex is biological, essentially a given prior to human thought. Hacking (1999), points out that not all feminist works embrace or employ social

constructivist thought. The different ways in which gender identities and gender relations are socially constructed has continued to develop in the field. Fundamentally, in social constructivist thought gender, as currently understood, is not an inevitable consequence of biology but dependent on social and historical processes. This same principle has been applied by scholars in the social sciences to other categories of human nature including ethnicity.

Frederik Barth (1969) challenged the accepted view of anthropologists that ethnicity was a 'primordial attachment', something that a person was born into (Geertz, 1963). For many anthropologists ethnicity was understood 'as a sense of belonging to a group, based on shared ideas of group history, language, experience and culture' (Chatty, 2014, p.82). For Barth, ethnicity was socially constructed or created from the recognition of different neighbouring groups. Ethnic groups were not fixed, rather ethnic boundaries emerged, persisted and changed in situations (Barth, 1969). Barth claimed that

1. Ethnicity is not defined by culture but by social organisation.
2. Ethnic identifications are based on ascription and self-identification. They are situationally dependent and can change.
3. The roots of this social organisation are not cultural content but dichotomization, so that the ethnic boundary is a social boundary formed through interaction with 'Others' (quoted in Hummell, 2014, p.49).

Barth's conception of ethnicity has been challenged (Roosens, 1989), however he successfully highlighted the changing nature of ethnic groups and the central role of society in providing the meanings attached to the term 'ethnicity'. This supports the view that 'all social phenomena are constructions produced historically through human activity, no society is totally taken for granted' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.123). This once again indicates that the meanings provided to particular labels occur as a result of historical and social processes, a central principle adopted in this research.

Social construction has been applied in research on gender, ethnicity and race. In *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race* (1996), the authors demonstrate that nothing physical or biological corresponds to the racial categories that play an important role in our social lives today. Scholarly consensus has established that 'race' has no legitimate biological basis (Appiah and Gutmann, 1996; Smedley and Smedley, 2005; Machery and Faucher, 2007). The category 'race' was created as a social category, and has been applied to explain differences amongst groups of people. Therefore, the term 'race' has been socially constructed. It is not

only labels relating to human features that have been considered a form of social constructionism.

Anderson claimed that,

‘nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy’ (Anderson, 1983, p.48).

In Anderson’s work the concepts and ideology of ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’ become part of our cultural world by representing a ‘cultural artefact’ and they emerge as a result of historical events and processes. Importantly, the meanings attached to cultural artefacts evolve over time. Cultural artefacts such as the nation become internalized by individual participants (Ozgirili, 2000). In tracing the roots of nationalist ideology Anderson argued that communities are imagined ‘because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them’ (Anderson, 1983, p.49). Anderson’s work was very influential as it highlighted that a nation was not simply an ideological construct or narrative. For Anderson a nation was fundamentally a socially constructed community imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group.

Other social constructivists including Appadurai (1995), Malkki (1992) and Gupta and Ferguson (1992) claim that places and cultures are socially, politically and historically constructed. They argue that the concepts of culture and identity should be removed from the traditional territorialised nation-state ideology of place and space. Malkki explained that,

‘there has emerged a new awareness of the global social fact that now, more than perhaps ever before, people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, and invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases not in situ, but through memories of, and claims on, places, that they can, or will, no longer corporeally inhabit’ (Malkki, 1992, p.24).

Social Constructivists typically demonstrate that ideas and concepts do not operate in a vacuum and should not be accepted as givens, as the context is always important to understanding the meaning provided to particular concepts.

In *The Social Construction of Women Refugees* (1992), Helene Moussa proposed that a ‘woman refugee’ was socially constructed. Our initial response to this might be that there is

such a category as the 'female refugee' as certain women come to be refugees. However, Moussa noted that the concept 'woman refugee' appears to be a type of human being, a species like 'the whale'. What is socially constructed is not, the 'women refugees', it is the categorization, 'woman refugee'. This manner of classifying people is the product of social events, of legislation, of social workers, of immigrant groups, of activists, of lawyers and of the activities of the women involved. This kind of person, as a particular kind of person, is socially constructed. Moussa highlighted the ways in which particular beliefs can be shaped by social forces; the belief that there is a type of person, the 'woman refugee' who is deserving of humanitarian protection. The same principle can also be applied to asylum seekers. The majority of the British public may never encounter an asylum seeker in person yet they will be able to 'imagine' and form a social representation of who belongs into the collective group of asylum seekers. Collective identities are moulded through censuses and 'official designations' are factors that lead to 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983, p.6). The category 'asylum seeker' is not a real feature of human beings, rather the label is determined by social principles. This research proposes that the specific ways in which 'asylum-seekers' have been represented is not inevitable but socially constructed. Categories do not simply reflect a social reality, they also play a fundamental role in the construction of that reality (Kertzer and Arell, 2002).

The second part of this chapter will now move onto a discussion of theories of categorization and its relationship to power that helped in the analysis.

## Categorization and Power

'Categories are at the root of human action and society, embedded in our minds, discourses and social practices' (Harrits and Møller, 2011, p.229).

The role of categorization is central to this study. Categories are fundamental organizing principles in the manner in which we understand and behave in the world and furthermore, in the ways in which we interact with one another. The disciplines of; linguistics (Lakoff, 1987), sociology (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu, 1987; Jenkins, 2000), and psychology (Edwards, 1991), have been at the forefront in theorizing on categorization. For the purposes of this research the category 'asylum-seeker' is an official and legal categorization and also a social category. Is it possible to separate these categories from one another? This question



brings us to our main discussion of how the tradition of French epistemology and sociology may provide the conceptual toolkit needed for understanding categorization.

Michel Foucault's (1980; 1982; 1989), work provides an appropriate framework for understanding the relationship between categorization and power. Central in all of Foucault's work is the idea that knowledge is not separate from power.

'This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to' (Foucault 1982, p.781).

For Foucault, a human being is represented through a process of separation either within himself or others. In this process of social objectification and categorization human beings are granted both a social and personal identity. Foucault regarded categorization as a new form of social control connected with the development of a disciplinary society in Europe from the eighteenth century onwards. It is within this context that the state became involved with the care of the population and a new regime of power emerged (Foucault, 1984). Foucault's work examined classification discourse by comparing the earlier and later categorization systems to demonstrate how the manner in which we understand ourselves as subjects had changed. Categorizations are more than theoretical structures. Categorization usually either appears in official procedures or comes into force in official practices. Foucault considered classifications as social instruments and codes whose main purpose was 'to exclude, confine, or incarcerate 'deviant' types' (quoted in Snyder, 1984, p.210). Foucault provided numerous examples of how categorization has shaped intellectual and social reality by demonstrating that categorizations are inherently linked to power.

In *Madness and Civilization* (1988), Foucault traced the development of 'the great exclusion' that emerged in the mid-seventeenth century as the mentally ill, the poor and the unemployed were categorised as 'idle' and forced into asylums. By isolating those that were considered as mad in asylums, the conditions were created in which madness could be controlled and studied. This also led to new techniques for dealing with the mentally unstable and importantly, led to the production of a new order of knowledge, the discipline of psychology. Categorizations 'both reflect and direct our thinking. The way we order represents the way we think' (Snyder, 1984, p.211). In *Discipline and Punish* (1991), Foucault highlighted

that the careful division of labourers in the late eighteenth century factory allowed the organised supervision of workers and the production process, however, it 'also occasioned the recording and distilling of information about both the labourers and processes' (quoted in Snyder, 1984, p.211). In this instance, discipline 'organizes an analytical space, a space open to observation, calculation, and control' (Foucault, 1991, p.143). Foucault's work examined categorization by questioning the historical and institutional contexts in which they emerge and operate. Fundamentally, systems of categorization do not operate in a void.

Interestingly for Foucault, power is distributed across society, in different practices and institutions rather than concentrated in the state.

'Power is everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere ... Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society' (Foucault, 1980, p.93).

For Foucault, the production of knowledge is 'linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it and to effects of power which induce and which extend it' (Foucault, 1980, p.131). Each society, Foucault argues, produces a 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1980). 'Regimes of truth are the result of scientific discourse & institutions & are reinforced (& redefined) constantly through the education system, the media & the flux of political and economic ideologies' (Foucault, 1991, p.63). Central to Foucault's (1980), argument is that what we think we 'know' in a particular period about, for example, crime affects how we regulate, control and punish criminals. Knowledge does not operate in a void. It is put to work, through various technologies and strategies, in specific situations, historical contexts and institutional systems.

'Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned... the same of those who are charged with saying what counts as true' (Foucault, 1980, p.131).

For Foucault discourse is linked to the production of knowledge. In *the Archaeology of Knowledge* (1989), he explained that the representation of knowledge was through 'discourse' or 'discursive formations' (Foucault, 1989). Foucault does not define discourse in the same manner as the discipline of linguistics. Rather, discourse is 'about the production of knowledge through language. But... since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and

influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect’ (Hall, 1997a, p.44). A specific discourse does not operate in a void; it is linked to and interacts with, the system of discourses, or discursive formations (Hajer, 1995), which form an overall societal discourse. Stuart Hall’s interpretation of Foucault, is that discourse is defined as a system of representation, which produces meaning. ‘Discourse constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge’(Hall, 1997a, p.29). To study the topic of asylum, it is important to assess how the combination of discourse and power has produced particular ‘conceptions’ of asylum and the ‘asylum-seeker’. Foucault was interested in the production of knowledge and meaning, not through language but through discourse (Hall, 1997a). For Foucault the categorization of individuals is central to modern governments and strategies of governmental control. Categorizations are allocated according to power relations.

Ian Hacking (1990) also examined the role of categorization in the production of power. He developed Foucault’s theories by coining the ‘looping effect’ of classifying individuals (Hacking, 1995). According to Hacking categorization changes people. There is no single underlying structure according to which ‘looping’ occurs. For Hacking, human beings are essentially a product of modern social sciences. Child abuse, homosexuality, teenage pregnancy, and multiple personality are new creations of human kinds. What differentiates human kinds from natural kinds is that they have specific looping effects. Human kinds are created as a result of social scientist’s classifications and change the people that are categorised. There is an interactive causal relationship between the scientific classifications and the subjects that are classified. In *Governing the Soul*, Nikolas Rose examined the new ‘normative expertise of childhood, family life and subjectivity’ (Rose, 1989, p.119). These new ways of conceptualising the family and childhood also demonstrated a change in how individuals were governed. Foucault, Hacking and Rose all maintained that categorising processes of the social sciences were part of the bureaucratic practices of governments of the modern state. Labels not only contribute to the definition of group identities but also serve as instruments of a political system.

Following Foucault, Rose and Hacking, categorization is not always simply routine. The official category ‘asylum-seeker’ is a legal and official term, however it also has a social meaning. ‘Identities exist and are acquired, claimed and allocated within power relations’ (Jenkins, 2004, p.23). For Richard Jenkins, identity is bound up with categorization. How we identify ourselves and how others identify us is an on-going process which leads to social identification (Jenkins, 2000). Identity is produced and reproduced by individuals interacting in institutionalised contexts. A national identity entails both collective and individual narratives of the ‘self’ and by others in relation to the nation (Jenkins, 1996). Identity is something that

needs to be established. Identity is about meaning and meaning is not an essential property of words or things. Meanings are always the outcome of agreement and disagreement, always a matter of contention and innovation (Jenkins, 2004).

The final section of this chapter examines another aspect of the conceptual toolkit that I applied in the thesis, turning to Bauman's conceptualization of the figure of the refugee and the asylum-seeker in today's era of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000).

## Liquid Modernity

As highlighted in the earlier discussion of this chapter, the historical and social context is always central to understanding the changing meanings attached to categories. Bauman's work (1990; 2000; 2002; 2007; 2017) has focused on the changing forms of displacement, racism and the criminalization of refugees. Although Bauman has received mixed responses within the field of sociology (Tester and Jacobsen, 2006), his theories and questions provide interesting insights in relation to the thesis. Bauman's work demonstrates how social processes have resulted in the criminalization of the most vulnerable in society; the refugee and the asylum-seeker.

Bauman's work centres on the relationship between globalization<sup>6</sup> and contemporary society. He has highlighted the global inequality and polarization of the current state system. Globalisation is a contested term (Zimmermann, 2013) and provokes much debate within public discourses and the social sciences. Similar to other thinkers (Castells et al., 2007), Bauman refers to globalization as the changes brought about in space and time through the use of new technologies and communication. These changes dramatically altered the meaning of distance for societies. Distance loses its initial meaning as travelling across borders is common practice and investments are global. Bauman draws attention to the negative impact of globalization on society today. 'To put it in a nutshell: rather than homogenizing the human condition, the technological annulment of temporal/spatial distance tends to polarize it' (Bauman, 1998a, p.18). Globalization has increased the disparity between the rich and the poor across the world.

For Bauman, contemporary society is a consumer society which he characterises as 'liquid or fluid modernity' (Bauman, 2000). 'Modernity has been 'fluid' since its inception' (Bauman, 2000, p.3). Modernity refers to different periods of history or qualities dependent on

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Two, (pages 26- 27) for discussion on globalisation

the field (Marshall, 1988). According to Bauman the solid phase of modernity ended with the collapse of Communism (Bauman, 1991). 'Liquidity' refers to a world that has 'melted', changed beyond recognition when compared to its previous 'solid' form. Mobility, the temporary nature of events and a shortage of long-standing governments are the central characteristics of liquid modernity (Bauman, 1998b; Bauman, 2000). Liquid modernity does not remain fixed as nothing remains the same. Individuals are continuously in a state of 'painful and sickening feeling of perpetual uncertainty in everything regarding the future' (Bauman, 1997, p.192). Bauman proposed that identities may appear to be fixed and 'solid', however this is 'only when seen, in a flash, from outside. Whatever solidity they might have when contemplated, from the inside of one's own biographical experience appears fragile' (Bauman, 2000, p.83). For Bauman, modernity is a process which has melted the solid structures and accepted way of life. Whilst previous social structures were organised according to solidity, in the present condition, social structuring is ordered around liquidity.

Importantly, for Bauman, the state has lost its controlling power that it once exercised over its territory. Globalization is understood as the cause for creating a 'frontier-land' (Bauman, 2002, p.90), full of 'international corporations, organized crime, security agencies and terrorist groups' (Bauman, 2007, p.7). For Bauman, globalization initiated the melting of state, nation and territory, the three 'solids' which are necessary for societies to remain 'solid' (Jacobsen and Marshman, 2008). This is relevant to the thesis as discussed in Chapter Two, the topic of asylum has become problematized over the past few decades. This has been in response to the increasing numbers of individuals on the move applying for humanitarian protection. Globalisation has been acknowledged as a central factor causing international migration to increase to unprecedented levels (Castles and Davidson, 2000).

Modernity has always been depicting considerable segments of the population as useless in Bauman's world-view (2004). People are expected to find their own solutions to socially and globally produced problems (Bauman, 2007). Poverty is criminalized in 'liquid modernity'. By linking poverty and criminality societies no longer have any moral obligations towards the poor.

'Being poor is seen as a crime; becoming poor, as the product of criminal predispositions or intentions—abuse of alcohol, gambling, drugs, truancy and vagabondage. The poor, far from meriting care and assistance, deserve hate and condemnation—as the very incarnation of sin' (Bauman, 1997, p.44).

Bauman maintained that globalization has played a role in creating new and distinctive categories of individuals as either 'tourists' or 'vagabonds'. The 'tourist/vagabond' dichotomy

describes the manner in which everyone is on the move in liquid modernity. The vagabonds are 'the have-nots', they are stigmatized for their poverty and lack of opportunities' (Jacobsen and Marshman, 2008, p.808). Bauman reasoned that tourists and vagabonds are the 'heroes' and 'victims' of postmodernity (Bauman, 1997). Binaries play an important role in Bauman's framework. 'Binary oppositions' are intimately involved in the production and reproduction of power relations with one pole signifying the dominant one against which the other pole is defined (Hall, 1997b). Today, individuals are either framed as 'tourists' or 'vagabonds'. The use of binaries influence how ideas are put into practice and utilised to regulate the conduct of others. The 'vagabond' represents the figure of the refugee today. Vagabonds have no place in tourist society. All production creates waste and for Bauman the waste of globalised production is not only material but also human (Bauman, 2004).

Refugees are viewed as 'the waste of the world which has dedicated itself to tourist services' (Bauman, 1998a). Refugees are the latest and the largest segment of people who have been labelled useless by modernity. 'The world today is full of, (there is nowhere unexplained, or inhabited which is habitable) and so there is nowhere to transport this excessive, redundant population as there would have been in colonial times' (Bauman, 2004, p.5). According to Bauman, all models of order are selective and necessitate the separation of different sections of the population as unfit for them. The unfit members of the population are grouped together as waste (Barmaki, 2009). Outside of the developed world there are now millions of people who are on the move. According to the UNHCR, 'we are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 68.5 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 25.4 million refugees' (UNHCR, 2018a). Human beings are migrating for a variety of reasons including economic and political motivations in the 'liquid world'. For Bauman, 'the refugees, the displaced, asylum-seekers and migrants, the *sans papiers*, they are the waste of globalization' (Bauman, 2004, p.58). Individuals on the move cannot be included in the modern economy as workers or consumers. 'Everybody may be cast into the mode of the consumer, everybody may wish to be a consumer and indulge in the opportunities which that mode of life holds. But not everybody can be a consumer' (Bauman, 1998a, p.85).

For Bauman the figure of the 'refugee' is the legal term applied to 'the 'collateral damages' of globalization' (quoted in Barmaki, 2009, p.261). This removes the moral responsibility associated with the category refugee (Bauman, 2004). Once outside of their home countries, the refugee enters into a legal no-man's land and becomes the most vulnerable of society, as the refugee becomes stateless. 'They do not change places; they lose a place on earth, they are catapulted into a nowhere' (Bauman, 2002, p.112). According to

Reza Barmaki, Bauman's work highlights the psychological limbo that refugees experience as they are on a journey with no return, as its final destination remains unclear. 'From their present dumping site there is no return and no road forward, unless it is a road towards even more places'(quoted in Barmaki, 2009, pp.261–262). The concept of liminality is helpful in highlighting the forced migrant's positionality here. Liminality describes moments of transition and the experience of being 'in-between' moments involving a change in status (Turner, 1967; Thomassen, 2014; Thomassen, 2015). Asylum-seekers and refugees are individuals who are away from their home countries and waiting to be accepted into a host country. This unique positionality results in the experience of liminality or limbo. Both asylum-seekers and refugees occupy an 'in-between' transitory status. Liminality is typically characterized by uncertainties and ambiguities that arise from the situation of transitoriness (Thomassen, 2014). Refugees do not enjoy permanent settlement as any type of settlement is always temporary.

'Out of their camps, they are out of place, viewed as obstacles and trouble; inside their camps, they are forgotten. All the while, the walls, the barbed wire, the controlled gates, the armed guards; all measures to insure ensure the permanence of their exclusion... They have no sense of individuality or identity, and no right to self-determination' (Bauman, 2002, p.112).

Today the absence of a permanent address results in exclusion from citizenship rights for many individuals who are on the move. 'The globalized world has continued to exclude and keep the figure of the 'other', the different, the strange and the foreign at a distance' (Bauman, 2000, p.108). Bauman's conceptualization of 'the stranger', is someone who enforces and symbolises social and cultural boundaries and perpetuates the 'us and them' division (Best, 2016). Every society, produces its own 'stranger'; strangers are 'neither friends nor foe...they cause confusion and anxiety' (Bauman, 1990, p.55). Fundamentally, for Bauman the refugee is an individual who is unwanted, 'they are natural objects of stigmatization, fear, scapegoating and criminalization' (quoted in Barmaki, 2009, p.262). As a result the refugee encounters incredibly restrictive immigration laws. Increasingly, refugees are associated with the newest fear of the current times: terrorism (Bauman, 2004).

Bauman's ideas provoke much debate amongst sociologists (Tester and Jacobsen 2006), his work has been heavily criticised for a lack of empirical evidence and for only providing an overview of topics (Smith, 1999; Elliott, 2007). Nonetheless, for the thesis, Bauman's theorization of contemporary society provides a conceptual framework for understanding the incredibly rapid changes that the nation-state system has encountered as a consequence of globalization. The metaphor of 'liquid modernity' demonstrates the evolving

nature of social practices, where power is not exclusively concentrated in the state. Following Foucault, who viewed power 'as something that is exercised rather than possessed; it is not attached to agents and interests but is incorporated in numerous practices' (Barrett, 1991, p.135). Bauman also describes a complex account of how modern institutions operate. It is the heterogeneity of power relations that challenge the 'solidity' of institutions in 'liquid modernity'. Globalization has led to increased levels of inequality and poverty across the globe resulting in high numbers of individuals who are on the move. Importantly, for Bauman, the refugee and the asylum-seeker have become criminalized. The main message from Bauman's work is that all identities are fluid and nothing remains fixed or 'solid' in the current age of 'liquid modernity'.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have developed the conceptual framework for the thesis focusing on three key areas; social construction, the relationship between categorization and power and liquid modernity. Each concept and the relevant theories have been analysed separately. Instead of confining the discussion within one specific discipline, I have tried to build up a framework of analysis which utilises concepts and theories developed in different disciplines and areas of research around the connection between official categorization and the social construction of identities.

I started the chapter by discussing the foundations of social construction and explored studies of; gender (Beauvoir, 1949) , ethnicity (Barth, 1969), nations (Anderson, 1983), places and cultures (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Malkki, 1992; Appadurai, 1995) and 'woman refugee' (Moussa, 1992) that have adopted a social constructivist epistemology in their work. Social constructionists have very different views on what is being constructed. Is X constructed or is it our idea of X that is socially constructed. For the thesis, I adopt the principle that the category 'asylum-seeker' is socially constructed. Social construction rests on the notion that concepts do not emerge in a vacuum and the historical and social context is incredibly important in understanding the changing meanings attached to concepts. This is particularly useful for the thesis.

The second part of the chapter focused on the complexity between the relationship between categorization and power. I drew attention to Foucault's work on categorisation, power and discourse. Official labels are not simply descriptive. Official categories are prescriptive and embedded in the discursive construction of collective identities. Foucault's framework allowed me to explore how the official construction of asylum is produced,



reproduced and consumed in society in the analysis. The final part of this chapter discussed the significance of Bauman's conceptualisation of contemporary society. The nation-state system has experienced a number of changes as a result of globalization. There are large numbers of individuals who are on the move for a variety of reasons. Globalization has necessitated increased levels of poverty and inequality across the world. In this context both asylum-seekers and refugees have been criminalized. Importantly, for Bauman all identities have become fluid in the current age of 'liquid modernity'.

This chapter has discussed the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis including the main ideas and theories that have formed my overall approach to engaging with the research. I have found that working with the above concepts has enabled me to engage with the wide ranging policy, media discourses and participants views to identify the key themes of analysis

The next chapter will draw on my conceptual framework and outline the methodological approach of this research.

# Chapter Four: Methodology

## Introduction

I defined my conceptual framework which was developed around three areas; social construction, the relationship between categorization and power and liquid modernity, in the previous chapter.

This chapter follows on from the earlier discussion by outlining the methodological approach of the thesis. I provide the rationale and background behind adopting a social constructivist epistemology. I outline the qualitative multi-method approach which was employed to collect data, and in addition explain my approach to data analysis.

Research methods should follow the framing of questions (Silverman, 2000; Mason, 2002) and respond to specific 'intellectual puzzles' (Mason, 2002, p.13). Therefore, it will be helpful to start this chapter by returning to the main research question and 'intellectual puzzle' of the thesis. This research examines the interplay between the official construction of asylum and the implementation and representation of the term 'asylum-seeker' in society. The Home Office, media and practitioners of asylum, are the three actors examined in this study. These three actors are involved in the construction, labelling, observing, dissemination and implementation of the category 'asylum-seeker'. Utilising an eclectic conceptual framework, drawing on Foucault's work on categorisation, power and discourse (outlined in Chapter Three), I explored how the official label 'asylum-seeker' was produced and reproduced. The central research question examined; ***What role does the official construction of asylum play in the social construction of asylum-seekers?***

The objectives of the research project were to review the ways in which 'asylum seekers' were socially constructed (represented) and this can be broken down into the following steps:

- 1.) Examine the ways in which governmental policy constructs 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees'
- 2.) Critically explore the categories and definitions used by the media when reporting on forced migration
- 3.) Investigate the ways in which practitioners of asylum interpret and implement the 'official categories' of asylum

#### 4.) Examine how 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' are differentiated by practitioners

To answer my central research question, there was neither a single or correct method of addressing such a broad and complex area of investigation. Every research method offers insights and can help illuminate one or several of the many angles of my 'intellectual puzzle'. This chapter provides the rationale for the work I have carried out. This research has required a relatively long process of reflecting. Some of the research process was unpredictable, more complex than expected and chaotic at times. As has been noted, 'the choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context, what is available in the context, and what the researcher can do in that setting' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.5).

I will now discuss my epistemological perspective and provide the framing for the overall methodological discussion.

### Epistemological standpoint

The adoption of a social constructivist epistemology (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), which proposes that our understanding of reality is socially created, is appropriate for my work as it points to the historical and cultural specificity of the world we create as a society. It suggests that categories employed in every day discourse are defined through a process of selection and construction that is dependent on societal dynamics and processes, which are historically contingent. The view that categories such as 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' are not givens in the world but constructed, negotiated, reformed, fashioned and organized by individuals to make sense of the world, encourages the ideology that all human beings are principally social agents rather than simply passive reactors that process information. Within the tradition of philosophy there are various types of social construction including not just epistemic but also metaphysical social construction claims. 'Is it that X itself is socially constructed or is it our idea/conception of X which is constructed?' (Sveinsdóttir, 2015, p.884). For this research, I apply the epistemic claim that the category 'asylum-seeker' is socially constructed and explore how this social construction takes place.

I am aware that there are limits to 'radical' constructivism and there is the risk of relativisms. If there is no single reality and there are multiple socially constructed realities then what is the 'criteria for judging the trustworthiness of an account?' (Seale, 1999, p.46). However, it is important to differentiate between radical and social constructionism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The researcher can overcome the relativist epistemological challenge by

explaining that there are multiple realities which are created but they do correspond to something real in the world (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The thesis argues that the specific ways in which 'asylum-seekers' have been represented is neither inevitable nor simply a policy response to their existence. This perspective draws upon Foucault's (1980), ideas of power and knowledge (discussed in Chapter Three). To study the topic of asylum, it is important to assess how the combination of discourse and power has produced particular conceptions of asylum and the 'asylum-seeker'. Foucault was interested in the production of knowledge and meaning, not through language but through discourse (Hall, 1992).

Truth isn't outside power... Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned... the same of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980, p.131).

Meaning is understood here as a product of 'regimes of truth', the official categorization of asylum has political consequences and is intimately tied to power. Policy representations and media reporting reinforce particular notions of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' through discourse. However, it must be noted that practitioners are not passive recipients of those messages, rather, they reproduce, construct or can resist these social constructions. The relationship between representations of 'asylum-seekers' in policy documents and the manner in which 'forced migrants' are portrayed by the media is not a one way process either, as both influence each other and are constantly reconstructed.

I will now turn my attention towards the more methodological aspects of my research.

## A Qualitative Study

This study is based on qualitative methodology, as the research is focused on the 'constructions' present in policy documents, media reporting and in practitioner narratives. One of the advantages of qualitative methods is that they allow participants to define the situation in their own terms. In qualitative research, language is not simply an expression of subjectivity but rather the element which shapes it. Discourse is 'a specific ensemble of ideas,

concepts and categories that are produced, reproduced, and then transformed to give meaning to physical and social relations. It establishes interpretations of a phenomenon that then become taken for granted' (Hajer, 1995, p.44).

Qualitative research, typically deals with words rather than numbers, as the interest lies in depth rather than breadth, words in contrast to numbers, have multiple meanings (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Qualitative research does not claim to be representative as it does not utilize a large sample of any particular category of participant, instead the research attempts to acquire in-depth information from a smaller group of participants. However, the lack of representativeness does not compromise a study's conceptual generalisability that emerges as a consequence of the robustness of analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000). The aim of qualitative research is to learn how people construct meanings.

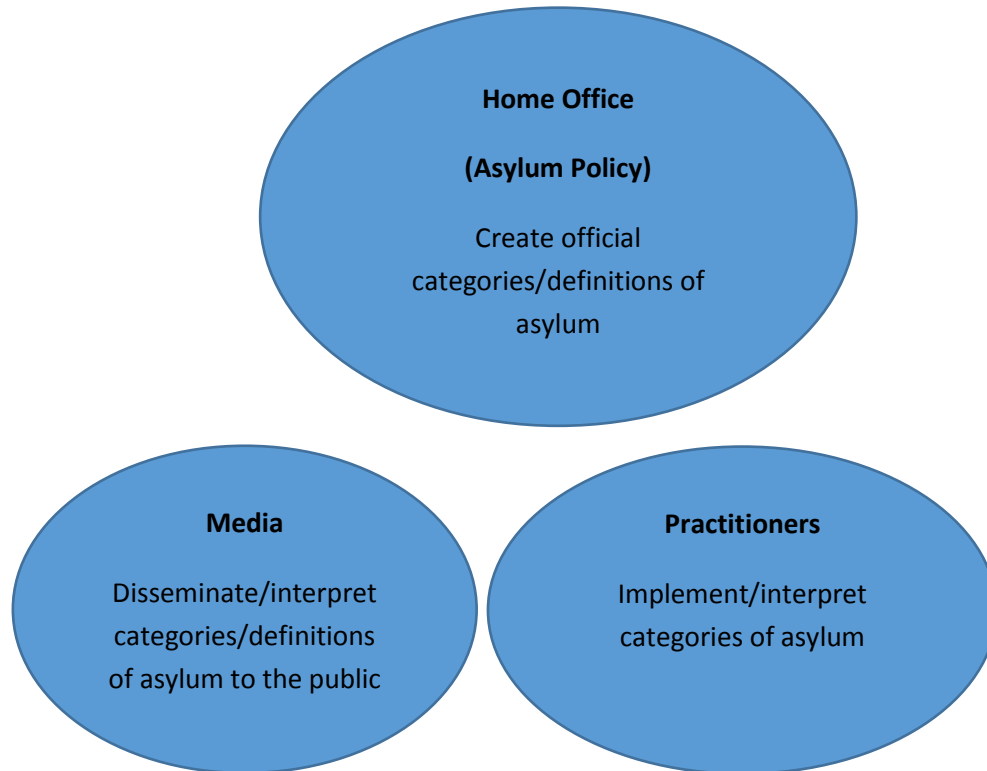
Furthermore, the topic of asylum is not static, therefore it is important to recognize the fluidity that characterises the research environment. The literature review (Chapter Two), indicated that the context was important, government policies towards asylum-seekers have shifted from a humanitarian protectionist framework, to deter asylum-seekers from entering the UK, to address the 'problem of asylum' and to explore how the term 'asylum-seeker' has been constructed by different audiences' points towards a qualitative methodology. 'The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured... Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed natures of reality' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.14). Therefore a qualitative constructivist approach is the most appropriate methodology for the thesis.

## Official Categorization

I want to explore the relationship between, on the one hand, the construction of the 'official categorisation' of asylum and, on the other hand, the implementation and representation of an 'asylum-seeker' in society. An investigation into category constructions is required to examine the messages created by policymakers on asylum and also the active contribution of those involved in the implementation of that policy. Following a constructivist perspective, the practice of categories is not taken as a given (Brubaker, 1996); rather the analysis will explore the process by which categories are constructed and articulated through to implementation (Zetter, 1991; Zetter, 2007; Sigona, 2009). The Home Office create the 'official categories' and definitions of asylum, the media play a crucial role in not only

disseminating those categories and definitions but also interpreting the key messages provided by policy-makers to the public. Practitioners of asylum play a role in implementing and interpreting those 'official' categories of asylum. Figure 2 provides an illustration of this.

**FIGURE 2. THE THREE ACTORS EXAMINED**



All of the actors in Figure 2 are social agents rather than simply passive reactors that disseminate and implement the 'official categories' and definitions of asylum.

## Methods

The thesis employs multiple methods in order to generate new knowledge through a synthesis of findings from different approaches (Silverman, 1993). Qualitative methods have transformed as the researchers concerned with qualitative research methods consist of a varied community (McKendrick, 1999; Brewer and Hunter, 2006; Collier and Elman, 2008). Researchers within the social sciences utilise both different theoretical perspectives and also very different types of research methods. Multi-method research is one approach.

'To apply the multimethod approach to any stage, it is usually necessary to analyze a social phenomenon's structure, setting, and constituent social processes far more fully

than when only a single method is used. By enlarging the scope of the research to which it is applied, the multimethod perspective holds out the larger promises of more sociologically significant conclusions and greater opportunities for both verification and discovery' (Brewer and Hunter, 2006, p.9).

Qualitative multimethod research employs a range of traditional qualitative techniques (Collier and Elman, 2008). The fields of forced migration and refugee studies are both interdisciplinary<sup>7</sup> and multidisciplinary<sup>8</sup> (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014). This research is interdisciplinary in its approach and the use of multiple methods will increase our levels of understanding into the complex relationship between the official categorization of asylum and the implementation and representation of the label 'asylum-seeker' in society. Therefore, a multimethod approach was employed, as the theoretical complexity of the topic (discussed in Chapters Two and Three) has necessitated a complex research design through the adoption of four different methods of investigation:

- Analysis of discourses present in policy documents
- Examination of media representations of 'forced migrants'
- Analysis of interviews with media professionals
- Analysis of interviews with practitioners

These range of methods allowed the analysis to explore the varied ways in which the same issues were framed. The social construction of 'asylum-seekers' was explored from contrasting angles; its representation in official government discourse reflected in asylum and refugee policy, the manner in which forced migration was understood and disseminated by the media, and the ways in which an 'asylum-seeker' was defined and implemented by practitioners who might be reiterating or challenging those discourses. These elements fed into each other and became a reflexive process to contribute to my understanding and theorisation of how an 'asylum-seeker' was socially constructed.

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<sup>7</sup> Contains different disciplines

<sup>8</sup> Offers contrasting perspectives on the same topic

## Pilot

I conducted a pilot before I began the data collection process. I wanted to establish the main issues that would be discussed in the interviews with the participants and the pilot allowed me the opportunity to test, the wording and order of the questions.

‘Good pilot studies increase the likelihood of success in the main study. Pilot studies should warn of possible project failures, deviations from protocols, or problems with proposed methods or instruments and, it is hoped, uncover local politics or problems that may affect the research’(Lewis-Beck et al., 2004).

Conducting a pilot study does not guarantee success, however researchers maintain that it does increase its likelihood (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). The pilot phase was conducted with the Asylum Help team at Migrant Help in Dover. Migrant Help are a national charity which provide advice to vulnerable migrants in the UK. The Asylum Help team were contracted by the Home Office to provide free independent advice to asylum-seekers. Selection procedures were based on convenience as the participants at Asylum Help were selected by management. However, care was taken to ensure that the participants represented a diversity of views in terms of professional experience, age, gender and geographical location.

The pilot’s purpose was to determine and finalise the main issues and interview questions of the research. I generated information on the topics below:

- How do practitioners define an ‘asylum-seeker’? Is this the same definition as the Home Office ‘official’ definition of an asylum-seeker?
- How do practitioners differentiate between ‘asylum-seekers’ and ‘refugees’?
- How do practitioners obtain their information on ‘asylum-seekers’?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five individuals from Asylum Help who provided assistance to asylum-seekers. This involved individuals who worked with asylum-seekers on the phone as well as face to face. The interviews lasted between 30 and 50 minutes. I found the pilot phase incredibly beneficial as it helped me to determine the research design of the study. I realised that participants responded better to situational rather than abstract questions.

The thesis is comprised of three studies which have a particular research focus to enable me to examine the ways in which an ‘asylum-seeker’ is socially constructed.



## Policy Document Analysis- Study One

Initially I planned to interview Home Office officials who worked in the area of asylum, however, unfortunately it was not possible to interview Home Office employees. The Home Office directed me to their website <sup>9</sup>(see Appendix 1) to understand the official construction of asylum; this was the starting point for the policy study. I employed documentary thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009) to explore the social construction of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in official discourse. Importantly, for the purposes of this research, official asylum policy documents provide the official framework of asylum in the UK. The official framework of asylum is produced, reproduced, and employed by the actors under investigation in this study. The media disseminate the key messages from official policy in reporting on forced migration, and practitioners implement official asylum policy in their daily roles. Asylum policy documents construct particular types of representations of 'asylum-seekers' utilising official language.

In society today writing is an important activity and documents have been an important resource for researchers. Bloomfield and Vurdubakis (1994) have highlighted that textual communication and practices are an integral way in which organisations constitute reality and forms of knowledge related to it. Furthermore, writing is conceptualised as a form of technology as the shift from oral to written culture dramatically altered the technological potential of society (Ong, 1982). However, scholars maintain that contemporary documentary materials are rarely given the attention they deserve in the social sciences (Platt, 1981; Prior, 2008; Mogalakwe, 2009). Fundamentally, a document is a written piece of text. Documents can be divided into public, private and personal documents. Document analysis 'requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meanings, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge' (Bowen, 2009, p.27).

Policy discourse is largely defined as a collection of ideas, or categories, through which meaning is given to phenomena (Hajer, 1993). Drawing on a Foucauldian framework, in Study One, discourse is defined as a selection of statements 'which provide a language for talking about; i.e. a way of representing, a particular kind of knowledge' (Hall, 1992, p.201), about asylum-seekers and refugees. I use the analysis of discourse as a method for understanding how the social construction of 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' takes place in policy documents. Following Prior (2011), asylum policy documents have been treated as social products, rather than neutral reflections of asylum. Documents are constructed according to particular norms

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<sup>9</sup> [www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/asylum](http://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/asylum)

and specific discourses and are dependent on collective production and consumption (Atkinson and Coffey, 2011). Documents both represent and make particular elements visible (Prior, 2008). Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser also highlighted the ranking of documents in research, 'in matters of sociological investigation documents ought to be regarded as akin to the anthropologists informant or a sociologists interviewee' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.163). The use of documentary sources is not a new research method. Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim, who are considered as classical social theorists used documentary sources extensively (Mogalakwe, 2009).

Scott (2011), has outlined four criteria for handling documentary sources which are authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. Authenticity looks at the origin of the document and whether the material is genuine and reliable. Credibility refers to whether the material is free from error and distortion. The issue of representativeness does not apply to all documents and essentially assesses whether the document is typical of its kind. Meaning refers to whether the material is clear and comprehensible. For Scott, the purpose of examining documents is to understand the literal and interpretive meaning and significance of what is included within the document. I analyse official asylum policy documents directly from the Home Office website, therefore, the documentary material is authentic, credible and clear in meaning. The documentary material is also publicly available.

Prior (2011) has identified four approaches to the study of documents. The first approach focuses on what is contained within the document. The second method focuses on how the document content came into being. The third strategy centres on how documents are utilised by human actors for purposeful ends and the fourth approach focuses on how documents function and impact on schemes of social interaction and organisation. Researchers adopt one of the above four strategies according to the particular research question. The sub-research question that I explore is: *How does policy discourse construct asylum-seekers and refugees?* The first approach is therefore the most appropriate. A diverse range of methods have been utilised to conduct a documentary analysis of what is contained within a document. Researchers have adopted content analysis, thematic analysis and grounded theory to search and code texts for what they contain (Platt, 1981; Payne and Payne, 2004; Mogalakwe, 2009; Ahmed, 2010). The policy study does not evaluate existing asylum policy, rather the focus is on highlighting the main discourses present in official policy documents on asylum.

The documents analysed were: '*Asylum Policy Instruction: Assessing credibility and refugee status*' (Home Office, 2015); '*Immigration Act 2016 Factsheet: Border Security*' (Home

Office, 2016b); *'Immigration Act 2016 Factsheet: Support for certain categories of migrants'* (Home Office, 2016c) and *'Refugee Leave'* (Home Office, 2017b). I selected *'Asylum Policy Instruction'* (API) on credibility as I was directed to this API by the Home Office<sup>10</sup>, this API is the government's asylum and refugee policy which is implemented by asylum case-workers and decision makers. This policy was central to the analysis. The remainder of the documents were selected for two reasons, firstly they were the most recent asylum and refugee policies during the duration that the research was conducted and secondly these policies centred on defining adult asylum-seekers and refugees. In my analysis of policy documents I considered the following:

- Purpose of the document
- Origin of the document
- How a given document constructed *'asylum-seekers'* and *'refugees'*

## Media Analysis- Study Two

The second component of the research examined the media's role in the construction of *'forced migrants'*. The media study did not replicate a full-scale media analysis, as previous studies (Kaye, 1998; Lynn and Lea, 2003; Goodman and Speer, 2007; Khan, 2013; Goodman, Sirriyeh and McMahon, 2017). Rather, in Study Two, I conducted a small-scale media monitoring of newspaper headline coverage of forced migration from September 2014-September 2016. I employed a summative approach to qualitative content analysis (Holsti, 1969; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Assarroudi et al., 2018). Headlines orient the reader to process news stories in a pre-determined narrative (Dijk, 1992). In addition, newspaper headlines reveal the fundamental ideologies and attitudes within a news story (Teo, 2000). Research which adopts a summative approach to qualitative content analysis involves identifying and quantifying particular words, or content. *'This quantification is an attempt not to infer meaning but, rather to explore usage'* (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1283). The analysis would be quantitative, concentrating on counting the frequency of particular words, if it stopped at this point. However, a summative approach to qualitative content analysis includes latent content analysis. This refers to the process of interpretation of content (Holsti, 1969). Essentially, the analysis focuses on discovering the meanings of the words or content (Hsieh

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 1 for correspondence with Home Office

and Shannon, 2005). Study Two responds to the sub-research question: *How do the media construct forced migrants in news reporting?*

The media analysis explored how ‘discursive formations’ (Hall, 1992, p.205) produce ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1991) regarding ‘forced migrants’ in the media. As discussed in Chapter Three, for Foucault, discourse is ‘about the production of knowledge through language. But... since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect’ (Hall, 1997a, p.44). The media study examined how discourses in newspaper headlines construct particular ways of thinking about ‘forced migrants’.

Eight newspapers, including both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers were selected according to the most circulation and popularity across a diverse group of the British public (see Table 1). I followed the same sampling procedures that researchers employed in the *Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU*, report (Berry et al., 2015, p.29). In order to provide a general overview of the British national press, I examined a range of both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers from both the left and right of the political spectrum.

**TABLE 1. NEWSPAPER SAMPLE**

<b>Media source</b>	<b>Political Standing</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Circulation Figures</b>
The Guardian	Centre Left	Broadsheet	Daily print circulation of approx. 175,000 copies
The Observer	Centre Left	Broadsheet	Print circulation of approx. 205,007
The Daily Telegraph	Centre Right	Broadsheet	Daily print circulation of approx. 480,000
The Times	Centre Right	Broadsheet	Daily print circulation of approx. 400,000
The Independent	Centre Left	Broadsheet	Daily print circulation of approx. 55,000
The Daily Mirror	Centre Left	Tabloid	Daily print circulation of approx. 900,000 copies per day
The Daily Mail	Centre Right	Tabloid	Sells approx. 1.7 million copies per day
The Sun	Centre Right	Tabloid	Sells approx. 1.8 million copies per day

Any media analysis is confronted by the methodological problem of choosing timelines. This was the case for this study. The date range of the sample was selected in order to capture as much of the media coverage of the humanitarian crisis of 2015 as possible. I

conducted two different Boolean searches using the Lexis Nexis database employing the keyword searches 'MIGRANT' and 'CRISIS', and 'REFUGEE' and 'CRISIS' (from the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2014- 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2016). The summative content analysis not only examined the word frequency of the key terms employed in headlines using NVivo, the analysis also explored the lexical selection, the choice of words including adjectives and descriptive phrases applied within headlines to represent 'forced migrants'. The newspaper headline findings were supplemented with two in-depth semi-structured interviews.

## Interviews- Study Two and Study Three

For qualitative researchers, the most popular tool for collecting information is interviews (Cassell, 2005). As individuals, we mostly engage in a form of interview on a daily basis, either as interviewers or interviewees. Mason (2002) has offered a range of reasons for researchers choosing to employ qualitative interviews of which the following are important for this study: 'an interest in people's perceptions, understandings, experiences and interactions which can only be constructed or reconstructed in interviews' (Mason, 2002, p.64). Interviews were conducted with two media reporters (Study Two), to learn how journalists selected particular categories in reporting on forced migration. In Study Three, twenty-one practitioners were interviewed to explore the sub-research questions; *how do practitioners construct asylum-seekers? How do practitioners differentiate between asylum-seekers and refugees?* The interviews were understood as an encounter and a performance in which 'meanings and understandings are created in an interaction which is a co-production involving researcher and interviewees' (Mason, 2002, p.62). 'The interview method is heavily dependent on people's capacities to verbalise, interact, conceptualise and remember' (Mason, 2002, p.64). To facilitate conversation, I purposefully asked open questions (see Appendix 5), to encourage participants to speak and direct the conversation in their own way. The research design endorsed a flexible approach when conducting research with all participants.

Individuals were the unit of analysis in the interviews. Participants from the media and practitioners were selected according to purposeful sampling where 'you decide the purpose you want from informants to serve, and you go out to find some' (Patton, 2002, p.230). A prerequisite for practitioners was experience of working with asylum-seekers. The sample included individuals who worked at charities, NGO's, local authorities and service providers. I contacted media professionals who had written articles on forced migration at all of the eight newspapers in the media study sample (see Table 1). However, only two journalists were able

to participate in the study. The research also utilised snow-ball sampling when interviewing participants to obtain referrals. However, I must acknowledge that 'the main problem with snowballing is that there is a possibility of interviewing people within one network... More isolated members of a group, who may have had different experiences, are less likely to be included in the study' (Seale, 2012, p.145). I have attempted to overcome this difficulty as the participants were selected from multiple starting points to ensure that I would have access to more than one network. The sample sizes were confirmed once the field research started. Data was gathered through semi-structured, face-to-face and telephone interviews (see Appendix 6).

## Approach to Coding

'Coding is neither a philosophy nor a way of viewing the world, it is simply a heuristic for achieving some sense of clarity about the world from your data and your deep reflections on them' (Saldana, 2012, p.42). All of the interview transcripts and policy documents were coded so labels could be assigned to the data to enable me to group several elements under one concept so that I had fewer codes (Flick, 2014). The categories generated connected the broader patterns within the data (Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014). The aim of coding was to develop the data by producing interpretations that explained the meaning of the original documents (Flick, 2014).

Before I started the coding process I organised the interview information into a format suitable for classifying and ordering (Miles and Huberman, 1994). All of the interview audio tapes were transcribed into verbatim written format. I followed a thorough process to ensure that all the transcripts were checked multiple times for any errors or omissions to ensure rigour. Qualitative research is heavily criticised for not being transparent in the coding and analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2011; Watts, 2014; Lichtman, 2017). Whilst there have been many attempts to create a more scientific process all researchers use 'analytic imagination' (James, 2013) as part of the approach. 'Imagination and creativity of the researcher, moves from design, collection and processing of data to the act of making meaning' (Lichtman, 2017, p.318). Essentially data analysis is about following a process and providing an interpretation of the data collected. Coding is the critical link between data collection and their explanation of meaning (Charmaz, 2001). 'Coding is not a precise science, it is primarily an interpretive act' (Saldana, 2012, p.5). Qualitative data analysis involves 'one of

two approaches either coding data and looking for themes or developing narratives' (Lichtman, 2017, p.317).

I employed theoretical thematic analysis to code the interview and policy data. The categories for analysing the data were developed in response to the nature of the material collected and revised throughout the research process. The iteration of the qualitative analysis continued until I felt satisfied that the data had been fully explored and interpreted (Payne and Payne, 2004). Some themes were identified from the literature review so the data generated from the interviews provided first-hand experience on how media professionals and practitioners understood the term 'asylum-seeker'. Therefore, the categories employed to code the interview and policy data stemmed from both the material generated and prior theoretical knowledge. 'The identification of analytical categories is therefore not a separate and bounded event in research process' (Sigona, 2009, p.86). Coding, data analysis and interpretation merged into one another but depended on the rigorous groundwork of the first stage of coding (Payne and Payne, 2004).

'Thematic analysis is rarely acknowledged, yet widely used as a qualitative analytic method' (Braun and Clarke, 2011, p.77). What counts as a theme? 'A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun and Clarke, 2011, p.82). The analysis is presented at a latent level, so it transcends the semantic content of the data. 'For latent thematic analysis the development of the themes themselves involves interpretive work and the analysis that is produced is not just description but is already theorized' (Braun and Clarke, 2011, p.84). Thematic data analysis originates from a constructionist paradigm (Burr, 1995). The importance of a theme is not solely dependent on quantifiable measures but rather on whether it captures something significant in relation to the research question.

The coding process was an extensively reflective process and followed the six phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2011).

1. Familiarize yourself with the data
2. Generate initial codes
3. Search for themes
4. Revise themes
5. Define and name themes

## 6. Produce report

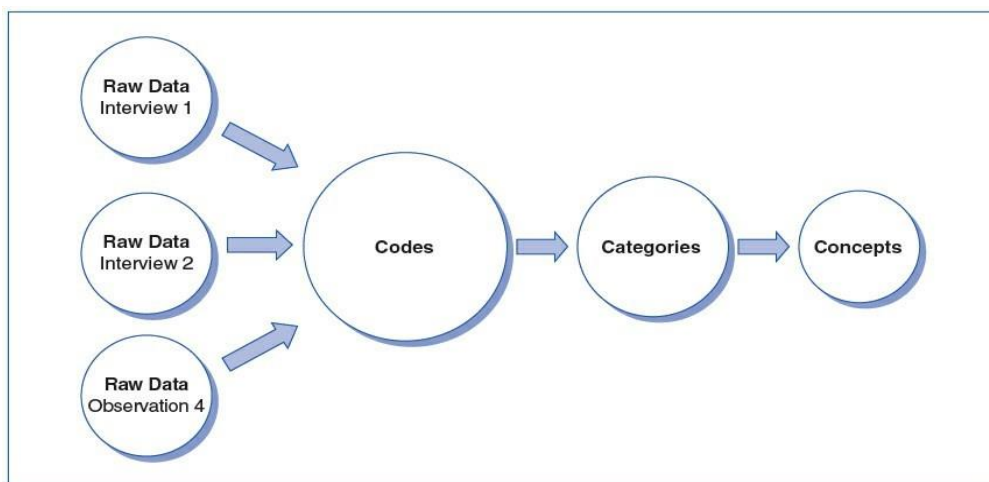
I utilized Watts's (2014) two level 'what/how' coding system to generate the initial and final codes. 'The what/how system works effectively because it pressures the researcher to engage with the data and its meaning in the first-person or, in other words, from the participant's perspective' (Watts, 2014, p.5). 'An initial code can be a word, a phrase or the respondent's own words. You come to it by careful reading of the text' (Lichtman, 2017, p.329). The first level of coding was descriptive and asked what the participant or policy document was talking about. This same question was asked repeatedly throughout the entire document. This preliminary stage of coding involved moving from the raw data to identifying important elements. It was a repetitive process and continuously shifted as I became more familiar with the data. 'Qualitative research uses an inductive strategy. Its purpose is to examine the whole in a natural setting to get the ideas and feelings of those being interviewed or observed' (Lichtman, 2017, p.320). I began with a large amount of material from the text of the interview and policy documents, this data was dissected and organised into codes. This same process was followed for all of the interview transcripts and policy documents. The iterative process continued until all of the transcripts and policy documents had been coded. The codes generated were continuously reviewed to check for any categories that overlapped or were redundant. Codes were constantly renamed. The second level of coding was interpretative and asked how the participant or policy was representing what they were talking about at that point in the transcript or policy document. Once the interpretative coding was completed the data was reviewed again to bring together the emergent and sub-themes.

Although Watts's 'what/how' coding structure provided a detailed guide on how to carry out the first and second stages of coding for thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2011). Watts was less clear on how to identify the key themes in the data, therefore I supplemented Watts's 'what/how' coding framework with Lichtman's (2017) approach to coding. Combined together the three approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2011; Watts, 2014; Lichtman, 2017) to coding provided me with a framework for both the coding and analysis of the data. Lichtman outlines a process for researchers who are looking for themes and concepts as 3 C's, coding, categorizing and concepts.



**FIGURE 3. THE THREE Cs OF DATA ANALYSIS: CODES, CATEGORIES, CONCEPTS**

(Lichtman, 2017, p.328)



I utilised Lichtman's (2017, p.328) six steps to coding.

1. Initial coding- going from responses to summary ideas of responses
2. Revisiting initial coding
3. Developing an initial list of categories
4. Modifying initial list based on additional re-reading
5. Revising your categories and subcategories
6. Moving categories to concepts or themes

For Lichtman the goal in this process, which is not always linear, is to move from coding initial data through identification of categories to the recognition of important concepts. When organising codes into concepts the researcher's task is to decide the most informative or logical manner of sorting. Most qualitative researchers argue that as a general rule, even large data sets do not reveal more than 5-7 concepts about a topic (Creswell, 2012; Saldana, 2012; Lichtman, 2017). For Lichtman, the final themes should reflect the meaning that has been attached to the data. It is better to have a 'smaller number of well-developed and supported concepts that make for a much richer analysis than many loosely framed ideas' (Lichtman, 2017, p.331). Furthermore, I selected the extracts for the analysis according to the first-person and third person analytic perspectives employed to code the data (Watts, 2014). In reading and coding the data, I attempted to view the world through the participant's eyes. I asked myself which extracts would enable me to communicate the participants' and documents' overall representations most effectively. I maintained this same first person perspective in

order to select the policy and interview extracts. The extracts were 'used to illustrate/support an analysis that goes beyond their specific content, to make sense of the data, and tell the reader what it [the extract] does or might mean' (Braun and Clarke, 2011, p.94).

## Use of NVIVO

The NVIVO software package is designed for a grounded theory approach to data analysis, as researchers have demonstrated that NVIVO can facilitate many of the aspects of the iterative process associated with grounded theory (Bringer et al., 2006). Grounded theory originated in the 1960s through the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), who developed the notion of generating new theory from data as opposed to testing existing theory (Birks and Mills, 2015). I chose to utilise the NVivo software to analyse my data as there was a large quantity of interview, policy and media data, to manage. NVivo allowed me to increase my focus on ways of examining the meaning of what was recorded in the data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). NVivo's computer software has the capacity to help in recording, sorting matching and linking concepts. It is a 'qualitative software designed for researchers who need both closeness and distance to data' (Richards, 1998). NVivo was used to ensure the rigour and quality of the analysis (Seale, 1997), as I employed some of NVivo's features including word frequency and query searches to provide further checks on the initial codes that I generated. One function of NVivo which I found to be very useful in the early coding stages was the coding stripes function. Coding stripes allow the researcher to view sections of text, to see what additional codes are coded to that specific section of text. This facilitated the task of comparing categories and concepts (Bringer et al., 2006), and ensured 'a more complete set of data for interpretation that might occur when working manually' (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013, p.3). It must also be highlighted that the developers of NVivo 'promise only to provide a set of tools that will assist you in undertaking an analysis of qualitative data' (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013, p.2), rather than carry out the analysis for you. NVivo has been utilised by researchers in a wide variety of ways (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013), as the software allows you to carry out data analysis according to multiple research methodologies.

To summarise these are the steps (see table 2) that I undertook in the coding and analysis of the data to ensure both rigour and quality. For a detailed list of the coding categories and definitions see Appendix 6.

**TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF CODING AND ANALYSIS**

<b>Approach to Data Analysis</b>			
<b>Braun &amp; Clarke Thematic Analysis</b>	<b>Simon Watt's 'what/how' coding system</b>	<b>NVIVO</b>	<b>Lichtman's 6 steps</b>
Familiarize yourself with data		Import data into NVivo	
Generate initial codes	First Level 'what' descriptive coding	Use of coloured coding stripes	Initial coding- going from responses to summary ideas of responses
		Run word frequency searches	Revisiting initial coding
		Run query searches	Developing an initial list of categories
	Second Level 'how' interpretative coding	Use of coloured coding stripes	Modifying initial list based on additional reading
			Revising your categories/subcategories
Search for themes			
Revise themes			Moving categories to themes
Define and name themes		Run word clouds, tree maps, cluster analysis from themes	
Produce report			Select supporting evidence quotations from data

Combined these three approaches were complementary and provided a framework for me to code (Watts, 2014) and analyse the data (Lichtman, 2017) by employing thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2011).

**TABLE 3. EXAMPLES OF CODING DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES FOR POLICY AND INTERVIEW CODING**

<b>Descriptive first level (what) Concepts</b>	<b>Coding Principles</b>	<b>Interpretive second level (how) Concepts</b>	<b>Coding Principle</b>
Definition of asylum-seeker	Statements/Discourse which refers to definitions and understandings of an asylum-seeker are coded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Official/Legal</li> <li>➤ Credibility</li> <li>➤ Humanitarian</li> <li>➤ Problem to be Managed</li> <li>➤ Unofficial</li> <li>➤ Negative</li> <li>➤ Temporal Liminality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ References to the legal definition of 'asylum-seeker' are coded.</li> <li>➤ References to the reliability of proving an asylum-seeker's claim are coded</li> <li>➤ References concerning the human welfare of asylum-seekers are coded</li> <li>➤ References concerning the abuse of the asylum-system</li> <li>➤ References in contrast to the legal definitions of 'asylum-seeker' are coded.</li> <li>➤ References regarding the negative portrayal of asylum-seekers are coded</li> <li>➤ References regarding the temporary, in-between nature of asylum status coded</li> </ul>

<p>Definition of Refugee</p>	<p>Statements/discourse which refers to definitions and understandings of refugees are coded</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Official/Legal</li>   <li>➤ Evolving</li>   <li>➤ Status</li>   <li>➤ Temporal liminality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ References to the legal definition of 'refugee' (1951 Convention) are coded.</li>   <li>➤ References to the changing nature of the term refugee coded.</li>   <li>➤ References to the privileges and entitlements of the refugee label coded.</li>   <li>➤ References regarding the temporary, in-between nature of refugee status coded</li> </ul>
<p>Border Security</p>	<p>Policy discourse which refers to the issue of border safety are coded</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Problem to be Managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ References concerning the danger and importance of border control.</li> </ul>

TABLE 4. EXAMPLES OF POLICY CODING

<p><b>Asylum Policy Instruction: Assessing credibility and refugee status</b></p>	<p><b>Descriptive/First level Code (s)- WHAT</b></p>	<p><b>Interpretive/Second Level- HOW</b></p>
<p>The Convention defines a refugee as a person unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. The principal obligation for signatory states is not to return (<i>'refouled'</i>) refugees to a territory where they risk persecution or serious harm. The consideration of asylum claims deserves the greatest care - 'anxious scrutiny' as the UK courts express it - so that just and fair decisions are made and protection granted to those who need it.</p>	<p>Definition of Refugee  Definition of Asylum-Seeker</p>	<p>Official/legal  Humanitarian Official/Legal</p>
<p>No asylum decision should be made unless the claimant has been fingerprinted to the requisite standard for IABS and Eurodac. Where there is evidence that the claimant previously claimed asylum in another identity, see the AI on Multiple Applications. Fraudulent claims will make the claimant liable to prosecution under Section 24A of the Immigration Act 1971.</p>	<p>Definition of Asylum-Seeker</p>	<p>Official/Legal  Problem to be Managed</p>
<p>This means that a person already in the UK can fall within the definition of a refugee <i>'sur place'</i>, usually when a change of circumstances occurs in their home country which gives rise to a well-founded fear of persecution. But people may also become refugees <i>'sur place'</i> as a result of activities they have engaged in or beliefs they have come to hold since leaving their country of origin.</p>	<p>Definition of Refugee</p>	<p>Evolving</p>

<b>Immigration Act 2016 Factsheet – Support for certain categories of migrants (Section 66)</b>		
In 2014-15, an estimated £73 million was spent supporting failed asylum seekers and their dependants. At 31 March 2015, an estimated 15,000 failed asylum seekers and their dependants were receiving Home Office support. The Immigration Act aims to reduce the scope for such support to remove incentives for failed asylum seekers to remain in the UK illegally	Definition of Asylum-Seeker	Problem to be Managed
<b>Refugee Leave</b>		
Those who qualify for refugee status under paragraph 334 of the Immigration Rules should normally be granted limited leave to enter or remain under paragraph 339Q. This will normally include the following period of leave and associated benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an initial period of 5 years' limited leave, immediate and unrestricted access to the labour market, recourse to public funds and the opportunity to apply for a refugee integration loan</li> <li>• a 5 year route to settlement for those who continue to need protection</li> </ul>	Definition of Refugee	Status  Temporal Liminality
<b>Immigration Act 2016 Factsheet – Border Security (Sections 74-76)</b>		
Security at the border is our priority and we need our officers to have powers to stop these criminal gangs from attempting to smuggle people into Britain.	Border Security	Problem to be Managed

TABLE 5. EXAMPLE OF CODED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

<b>Coding frame</b>		
<b>Transcript Mike</b>	<b>Descriptive/First level Code (s)- WHAT</b>	<b>Interpretive/Second Level- HOW</b>
Asylum-seeker, I would describe as a person who is leaving his country and claiming asylum, formally claiming asylum to another country to protect his life actually. To protect his life, and seeking asylum. But his application is still with the Home Office. I would say that this is an asylum-seeker, it hasn't been concluded yet. Leaving his country and claiming asylum in another country for protection.	Definition Asylum-seeker	Official/legal
<b>Transcript John</b>		
I think especially during the 90's and 2000's in some people's minds asylum-seeker, particularly asylum-seeker became almost a term of abuse and was seen as a shameful thing and like it became so often in political and media discourse associated with the bogus asylum-seekers. They were just elided into the same thing so asylum-seeking was seen as something bad and almost illegal and there shouldn't ever be, we should never have any.	Definition Asylum-seeker	Unofficial  Negative
<b>Transcript of Stewart</b>		
Well a refugee is someone who's been recognised as the United Nations 1951 Article 3, so you've been recognised internationally as a refugee. You've applied for asylum possibly. You've been recognised by that host	Definition of Refugee	Status



country, that you're now in danger in your own country and that's a refugee, that's someone who's been recognised as a refugee'.		
<b>Transcript Mike</b>		
That is the problem, with things that people are in a limbo position and they don't know what will happen to their lives and where they will be, and their position in the future. How they are staying here, are they going back to their country, and they don't have the right paper to go into that institute, to go to that education.	Definition Asylum-Seeker	Temporal Liminality
<b>Transcript of Rosie</b>		
A refugee is someone who has got the status to be in the UK, technically, there not, that doesn't mean that all their problems are solved (laughs). You know, it's a battle enough just to get the refugee status... They'll get the status for maybe five years, and then sometimes it can be withdrawn, after that time. If the Home Office thinks that their country of origin is ok now, or safe to return to, so it's not, it's not a guarantee you know that they're going to be here.	Definition of Refugee	Status  Temporal Liminality

## Ethics: anonymity and consent

The issue of ethics, anonymity and confidentiality were very significant to all aspects of the research. I took measures relating to the storage and security of interview transcripts during and after the collection of data. I removed any possible identifiers so that individuals

and locations were all protected. All data was stored on my laptop which is password protected and all hard copies of data were stored in a lockable drawer. The information that provided the identity of the participants was kept in a lockable filing cabinet and password protected spreadsheet.

I had to gain the trust of my participants in order for the interviewees to agree to take part in the research. I asked all of the respondents before the interviews if they preferred to remain anonymous. The two media professionals from *The Guardian* wanted me to use their real names. I received mixed responses from different practitioners as the majority wanted to remain anonymous to ensure their personal identities were protected. Therefore, all the interviewees from the practitioner group were provided with pseudonyms. All personal information has either been changed or omitted to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. This relates to any information relating to residence, and names of interviewees they disclosed in their responses such as friends, spouses have been changed.

I obtained both verbal and written consent from the participants before recording the interviews. Seeking consent was a reiterative process. Interviewees were reminded that they could contact me in the event that they would like to raise any issue, retrieve or amend any comment relating to the interview; or even retract the whole interview. As it turned out, none of this happened. The interviewees choose the time and location of the interviews. The majority of the interviews were conducted at the participants' work place and lasted between 30 minutes to 1.5 hours. Some of the interviews were conducted on the phone.

## Researcher positionality

Researchers (Silverman, 2000; Mason, 2002; Seale, 2004; Jones et al., 2017) have emphasised that there is a need to recognise the positionality of researchers in all research. 'Knowledge is always mediated by pre-existing ideas and values, whether this is acknowledged by researchers or not' (Seale 1999, p.26). Everything we know is ultimately informed by our ways of knowing, including the language we use to make sense of the world. 'Interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher' (Denzin, 1986, p.12). I am aware that my positionality as a young South Asian female, Muslim, researcher with leftist leanings affected the results of my work in ways that I am both conscious of and also unaware of. I acknowledge that I was required to perform different roles, and interacted with my participants according to the various 'rules of engagement' and adjusted my profile to the circumstances that I encountered.

Research interviews can be regarded as a form of social relationship. Both the participants and interviewers bring personal and social identities to the interview, as well as actively constructing identities through the duration of the interview (Elliott, 2005). These identities affected the content and style of the interviews, contributing to the construction of the knowledge produced. Our understanding of the world is not only based upon our beliefs, and identities, but also upon the identities of those we interact with. Knowledge is created and constructed through the interactions between people. The knowledge gained through interviews was therefore knowledge that was constructed in a particular time and place between those particular identities interacting, identities which are themselves in part created through that interaction (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004).

Although, the research started once I secured the PhD scholarship at Canterbury Christ Church University. I do not feel that this marked the beginning of my research journey as it had not even begun yet. The most important sense of this research journey commenced when I conducted the pilot interviews and approached the field for the first time. Speaking to practitioners who worked with asylum-seekers helped me to realise the significance and potential impact of my research beyond academia. The experience also gave me the confidence to pursue my intended research questions. I feel that my research journey began in the middle of my second year, as that was the first time that I saw the potential of the thesis to explore the relationship between official categorization and asylum-seeker identities.

The next stage that was important in the research journey occurred after I completed the fieldwork. At this point, I was involved in the coding and analysis of the interview transcripts. This was a challenging period of the study as it involved a lot of time reflecting. I underestimated the amount of time that was required in the coding process. Transcribing twenty-one practitioner and two journalist interviews was time intensive. Coding and analysing the interview data was an iterative process and continued until I felt satisfied that the data had been fully explored and interpreted. I had not realised how important it was to reflect on my findings to ensure both closeness and distance during the coding process. The preliminary stages of coding involved moving from the raw data to identifying important elements. It was a repetitive process and continuously shifted as I became more familiar with the data. Towards the end of the coding process, coding, data analysis and interpretation merged together and allowed me to identify the key themes (Payne and Payne, 2004).

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the rationale behind employing a social constructivist epistemology and outlined the qualitative multi-method approach of the research. Furthermore, I have discussed the different methods of data collection and my approach to data analysis. The thesis consists of three studies all with a specific research focus. The first study is a policy document analysis centred on how 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' were represented in policy documents. The second study focused on the media's role in the construction of 'forced migrants'. Practitioner perspectives were explored in Study Three. These three studies allowed the analysis to examine the ways in which an 'asylum-seeker' was constructed.

The presentation and analysis of data extracts begins in the next chapter.

# Chapter Five. Study 1: Policy Representations of ‘Asylum-seekers’ and ‘Refugees’

## Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology and selected multi-method approach to the collection and analysis of data. The three components of the thesis have a particular research focus to allow me to explore the multiple ways in which an ‘asylum-seeker’ is socially constructed.

Home Office policy documents are central to this study as they provide the official framework of asylum. This chapter examines the representations of ‘asylum-seekers’ and ‘refugees’ in policy discourse. I respond to the first sub-research question of this study; *How does official policy construct asylum-seekers and refugees?* Policy documents construct particular depictions of ‘asylum-seekers’ and ‘refugees’ using official language. Importantly, the official framework of asylum is produced, circulated, and employed by the actors under investigation in this study. Practitioners implement official asylum policy in their daily roles and the media disseminate the key messages from official policy in reporting on forced migration.

## Method

This study employs documentary thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009), to explore the social construction of ‘asylum-seekers’ and ‘refugees’ in official discourse. Policy discourse is broadly defined as a collection of ideas, categories, and thoughts through which meaning is given to phenomena (Hajer, 1993). Drawing on a Foucauldian framework, in this study, discourse is defined as a selection of statements ‘which provide a language for talking about; i.e. a way of representing, a particular kind of knowledge’ (Hall, 1992, p.201), about asylum-seekers and refugees.

‘There are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse’ (Foucault, 1980, p.93).

The manner in which asylum is perceived and the language in which it is discussed is incredibly significant in setting the terms on which policy options are considered. This study uses the

analysis of discourse as a method for understanding how the social construction of ‘asylum seekers’ and ‘refugees’ takes place. In order to understand asylum policies, it is important to review the complex processes through which they emerge (Spencer, 2011). Document analysis is a system which allows the researcher to interpret documents to give meaning around a topic (Bowen, 2009). Following Prior (2011), asylum policy documents have been treated as social products, rather than neutral reflections of asylum. Documents are constructed according to particular norms and specific discourses which are dependent on collective production and consumption (Atkinson and Coffey, 2011). This study does not evaluate existing asylum policy, rather the focus is on highlighting the main discourses surrounding asylum in official policy documents.

The documents analysed in this study are: ‘*Asylum Policy Instruction: Assessing credibility and refugee status*’ (Home Office, 2015); ‘*Immigration Act 2016 Factsheet: Border Security*’ (Home Office, 2016b); ‘*Immigration Act 2016 Factsheet: Support for certain categories of migrants*’ (Home Office, 2016c) and ‘*Refugee Leave*’ (Home Office, 2017b). I was directed to ‘*Asylum Policy Instruction*’ (API), on credibility by the Home Office<sup>11</sup>. This policy was implemented by asylum case-workers and decision makers, as this was the key API on asylum and refugee issues in the UK. This policy was central to the analysis. The remainder of the documents were selected for two reasons, firstly they were the most recent asylum and refugee policies during the duration that the research was conducted and secondly these policies centred on defining adult asylum-seekers and refugees.

In my analysis of policy documents I considered the following:

- Purpose of the document
- Origin of the document
- How a given document constructed asylum-seekers and refugees

Thematic analysis was employed to code the data, using Watts’s (2014), two level ‘what/how’ coding system to generate the initial and final codes in NVivo (see Tables 4 and 5 for more details). The findings are presented thematically. The policy extracts for the analysis were selected according to the first-person and third person analytic perspectives employed to code the data (Watts, 2014). I will provide a brief overview of some of the key changes in asylum legislation in the UK, before moving to the analysis.

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix 1 for correspondence with Home Office

## Summary of Changes in Legislation Affecting Asylum

This section reviews the main shifts in legislation in the UK, which have resulted in tougher policies to manage and control the number of asylum-seekers (see Table 6). The political background is central to understanding the processes through which policy options emerge (Spencer, 2011), as asylum policy does not operate in a void.

The first legislation in Britain that allowed the granting of asylum was the Aliens Act passed in 1905. The Act introduced immigration controls and registration, and in addition, made the Home Secretary accountable for all immigration and nationality matters. The significance of the Act was that it differentiated between 'refugees' and 'migrants' for the first time. The Act of 1905 declared that 'undesirable immigrants' (5 Edw. 7. c 13, p.1), would be refused entry to Britain. Whilst refugees were not named as a distinctive category, the law ensured that certain migrants would not be declined admission to the UK who were seeking entry, 'solely to avoid persecution or punishment on religious or political grounds, or for an offence of a political character or persecution resulting in a danger of imprisonment or danger to life, or limb on account of religious beliefs' (5 Edw. 7. c 13, p.4). It set an important precedent in British law, asylum was to be an act of charity, in which the claim of the applicant was to be determined on a subjective basis by the officials of the Home Office (Schuster and Solomos, 1999). This had significant long term consequences for British immigration policy, granting the government freedom 'to admit those whom it chooses and to reject those it does not want or need' (Schuster and Solomos, 1999, p.54). The 1905 Act, also led to the historical beginnings of asylum as an official process and concept (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter, 2011), recognised today. The restrictions targeted Jewish and Eastern European immigrants (Dummett and Nicol, 1990; Schuster and Solomos, 1999; Wray, 2006; Feldman, 2007; Bashford and McAdam, 2014). Importantly, the 1905 Aliens Act juxtaposed the 'desirable', against the 'undesirable,' aliens. This became the defining ideology of immigration policy which has continued today.

The 1970s and 80s were identified as the period where refugee issues became subsumed under the broader immigration agenda, as a consequence of large numbers of asylum-seekers seeking refuge in the UK (Kaye, 1994). In 1989, '11,640 applications were received... almost a threefold increase on those of the previous year. By 1991, the figure reached 44,840' (Stevens, 2004, p.164). Immigration and asylum became electoral issues in the 1990s, addressed in the 1992 General election (Spencer, 2011). It was during this period that a new vocabulary entered the discourse on asylum, Britain was regarded as a 'soft touch' for

'bogus refugees', perceived to be abusing the system and taking advantage of the British people (Spencer, 1998). A culture of disbelief surrounding 'asylum-seekers' emerged (Robinson, 1999; Stewart, 2004; Borjas and Crisp, 2005). The UNHCR also acknowledged, 'the undeniable abuse of the asylum channel by growing numbers of people who were trying to enter the labour market rather than escape persecution'(UNHCR, 1993, p.36). Scholars have pointed out, that whilst some asylum applications were fraudulent, the vast majority of all asylum applicants came from countries where human rights violations were widespread (Schuster, 2003a; Schuster, 2003b). Nonetheless, both Conservative and Labour governments respectively, responded with new statutory controls on asylum.

The 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act, attempted to address the increase in the number of asylum applications. It was also the first implementation of refugee and asylum policy in the UK. The Act empowered immigration officers to detain and fingerprint asylum applicants, their dependents and extended carriers liability legislation to transit passengers. A 'fast-track' system was introduced, to increase the speed and efficiency of the asylum process. Asylum applicants whose cases were considered uncomplicated were processed more quickly allowing a few days for the initial decision, and any appeals before the applicant could be removed. Importantly, the 1993 Act provided the legal framework for asylum policy in the UK, whereby the asylum-seeker first encountered measures of deterrence and exclusion (Schuster and Solomos, 2001; Stevens, 2004). The implications of the 1993 Act were far ranging, as it had a dual approach. It introduced further measures to ensure the safeguarding of individuals fleeing persecution according to the 1951 Geneva Convention criteria, yet in tandem introduced polices to deter asylum-seekers from entering the UK.

The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, was another policy which aimed to discourage asylum applicants and unauthorised immigration to the UK, through further restrictive measures. The 1996 Act granted the Secretary of State new powers to assign 'safe countries' from which asylum applications were concluded to be unfounded, as there was no serious risk of persecution. This became known as the 'white list'. The Act also denied social welfare benefits to those asylum-seekers who did not make their application upon arrival to the UK. Furthermore, the Act created a new offence for assisting illegal immigration, or asylum applications, and increased the penalties for immigration offences by strengthening the arrest and search power of immigration officials (Ryan, 1997). Significantly, the debates surrounding the 1996 Act advanced the idea that 'bogus' asylum seekers came to the UK to exploit the welfare state, rather than escape persecution (Bloch, 2002). The provisions in the 1996 Act allowed the Home Secretary to, 'create a rebuttable presumption against the application for asylum' (Stevens, 2004, pp.171–172). The 1996 Act revealed the underlying negativity



associated with asylum applicants. Seeking asylum had been perceived as a means of evading immigration control (Borjas and Crisp, 2005).

Following the 1993 and 1996 Acts, the Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999 was passed. The previous policy changes had been unsuccessful in deterring asylum applicants. The 1999 Act introduced the dispersal of asylum-seekers, to relieve the burden on local authorities near London, ports and airports. The National Asylum Support System (NASS) was set up to provide support and accommodation for asylum-seekers, rather than through the benefit system. The government's dispersal policy was widely criticised (Robinson et al., 2004; Bloch and Schuster, 2005; Allsopp et al., 2014). The Act of 1999, focused on unwanted migrants and the discourse indicated that migration was viewed negatively (Mulvey, 2010). A key feature of the 1999 Act was its focus on criminal activity in asylum and immigration. The Act increased previous legislation (employers' liability), through new areas of immigration control (marriage registrars' duty). Importantly, the measures adopted by the 1999 Act highlighted that the issue of asylum had become problematized in policy (Bigo, 1998; Geddes, 2003; Mulvey, 2010). During the 1990s four statutes were passed within nine years targeting asylum, which essentially 'gave rise to a panicked response' (Stevens, 2004, p.219), to the pressures on the post-war asylum regime. Fundamentally, asylum policy in the UK throughout the 1990s shifted from 'regulated' sanctuary to outright restrictionism and deterrence' (Zetter and Pearl, 1999, p.239). The 'panicked' approach towards asylum and immigration has continued with the Coalition government (2010-17 Conservative and Liberal Democrats), and presently with the Conservative and the Democratic Unionist Party. In order to understand how 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' are constructed in policy, it is necessary to examine the government's approach to immigration more generally. The Conservative Party have maintained that immigration in the UK is too high;

'Our plan to control immigration will put you, your family and the British people first. We will reduce the number of people coming to our country with tough new welfare conditions and robust enforcement. We will: keep our ambition of delivering annual net migration in the tens of thousands' (The Conservative Party, 2015, p.29).

Immigration, and more significantly immigration control has been at the heart of political debates and policy concerns for the past two decades. The 2015 Conservative Party manifesto presented immigration as a threat, and a problem requiring management, in order to protect the British people. The party promised to tackle this important issue through restrictive measures targeting welfare. Concerns over immigration extended to policies which targeted the illegality and securitisation of migration (Bigo, 1998; Huysmans, 2000; Guiraudon and

Joppke, 2003; Huysmans, 2006; Squire, 2009; Léonard, 2011; Scheel and Squire, 2014). The Immigration Act of 2014 was introduced by the then Home Secretary Theresa May. The purpose of the legislative changes was to create a 'hostile environment' for illegal migrants. Theresa May explained,

'Most people will say it can't be fair for people who have no right to be here in the UK to continue to exist as everybody else does with bank accounts, with driving licences and with access to rented accommodation. We are going to be changing that because we don't think that is fair' (The Guardian, 2013).

The Immigration Act of 2014, made it difficult for those without leave to remain to live in the UK through a number of measures targeting; appeals, removals and access to services (Wallace, 2017). The powers of immigration authorities were extended to check fingerprints, search for passports and verify the status of people leaving the country. The grounds were reduced on which an individual could appeal an immigration decision. The main changes affected; access to services involving housing and the NHS (Immigration Act, 2014). Undocumented individuals were prohibited from entering into tenancy agreements and landlords became legally responsible for verifying the immigration status of those to whom they rented. The Act also made it challenging for immigrants to access health services, with the introduction of an 'Immigration Health Surcharge' to be paid during the visa or immigration application process. 'The Immigration Act 2014 effectively lays the groundwork for a sharp shift to the right in immigration policy making'(Wallace, 2017, p.286). High levels of immigration including illegal migration continued to be depicted as a problem in political discourse. The 2014 Act demonstrated that the ideology of 'controlling', and 'reducing' immigration through the 'hostile environment' had extended border controls and policing to everyday activities.

The 2014 Immigration Act was quickly followed by the 2016 Immigration Act. The Immigration Act of 2016 was significant, as it included measures which increased the powers of immigration officers and expanded immigration enforcement within mainstream services (Burnett, 2016). Landlords and employers faced legal penalties for housing, or paying individuals who were undocumented. The responsibility for border control had extended to British citizens. Whilst the extension of immigration control into everyday life was not new, the implementation of the 'hostile environment' took this further. 'Rolling out 'right to rent' checks on a national scale, made immigration profiling a legal duty, with landlords facing penalties of up to £3,000 per tenant if they fail to comply' (Burnett, 2016, p.44). Borders entered 'into domestic spaces, as citizens are increasingly required to check the visa status of

those they live with, work with, and serve' (Jones et al., 2017, p.6). The changes brought about by the 2016 Immigration Act necessitated increased surveillance and the policing of the most basic daily transactions. The measures introduced by the 2016 Act, 'make ordinary people who are unqualified to understand often complex legal immigration documents – liable for the maintenance of border control inside a territory'(Jones et al., 2017, p.6).

In July 2016, a number of Byron burger branches were searched in London by Immigration Enforcement. Byron announced that they assisted the Home Office in their raids, as a consequence of the new legislation passed in 2016 (Bales, 2017). The new measures introduced by the 2016 Act solidified the boundaries between the 'citizen' and the 'non-citizen'. This is of central significance to this research, as the area of citizenship rights also affects asylum-seekers and refugees. Borders are not simply territorial, but take a variety of forms (Brah, 1996). The 2016 Act, effectively extended the powers of border enforcement to civil society.

The UK's history of asylum legislation demonstrates that legislation, and in turn, policy has changed dramatically over the past three decades. The framing of asylum has continually been problematized, which has justified stricter measures in order to address the problem of asylum for the nation (Nyers, 1999). Statutory controls have centred on detaining, deporting, and restricting the lives of asylum-seekers. Restrictive asylum legislation has attempted to reform the asylum system to protect it from abuse. This provides the background for this study and also highlights the climate in which practitioners have been operating.

**TABLE 6. TIMELINE OF CHANGES: ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION IN THE UK**

(Adapted from Stevens, 2004; Spencer, 2011; Craig and Flynn, 2012, p.74-75)

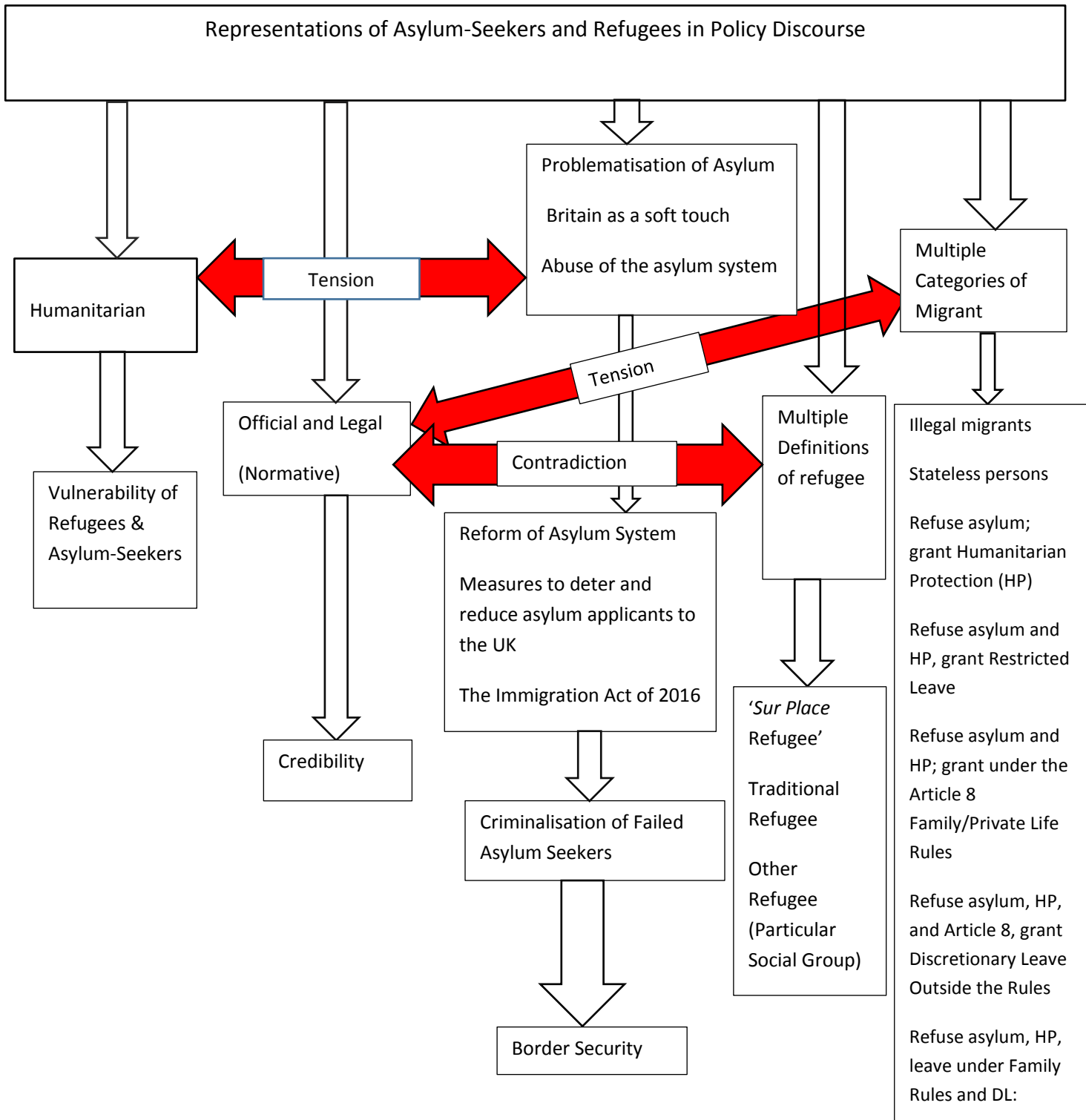
<b>Date and Act</b>	<b>Changes to Policy and Significance</b>
The Aliens Act 1905	Differentiated between 'refugees' and 'migrants' for the first time
Alien Restriction Act of 1914	
Alien Restriction (Amendment) Act of 1919	
1948 British Nationality Act	All citizens of the commonwealth countries had a dual status. They were citizens of commonwealth countries
Creation of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the 1950s	
1951 Geneva Convention	Officially recognized definition of refugee agreed
1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act	
1969 Immigration Appeals Act	
1971 Immigration Act	Commonwealth citizens were only granted the right of abode in the UK if they, their parents, or grandparents were born in the UK
1981 British Nationality Act	Act replaced citizenship by place of birth with citizenship by blood
1985 Schengen Agreement	France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg committed to removing internal borders
1987 Immigration Carriers Liability Act	Imposed financial sanctions on carriers bringing passengers to the UK who were not in possession of necessary documents
1988 Immigration Act	It becomes easier to deport illegal immigrants
1990 Dublin Convention	Determining the state responsibility for examining applications for asylum. Claim for asylum was to be considered in the first place, not necessarily by the state to which the application was first made
1990 Schengen Convention	Reinforce external border controls to permit free movement within participating states
1992 Maastricht Treaty of the EU & Nov 1993	Granted EU legal compliance to deal with visa controls, immigration, asylum, policing, internal security, law and conventions
1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act	Incorporated the 1951 United Nations Geneva Convention relating to the status of Refugees into British law and the UK formally obliged to acknowledge Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
1993 (1 <sup>st</sup> of September) Schengen Convention in operation	
1995 March Schengen Convention	Implemented in individual EU member states except Denmark, Ireland and the UK parties

1995 Council of Ministers approved a resolution on the minimum guarantees for asylum procedures, outlining procedural rights and obligations	
1996 Council of Ministers agreed a Joint position on the harmonized application of the definition of the term 'refugee'	
1996 Asylum and Immigration Act	Reduced welfare support for asylum seekers
1997 (1 <sup>st</sup> of September) Dublin Convention implemented officially but in operation by states before then	
1997 Treaty of Amsterdam	Commitment by member states to develop common immigration and asylum policies within 5 years
1999 UK opted for non-free movement of aspects of Schengen II (Europol/ Schengen Information Systems)	
1999 Immigration & Asylum Act	Introduction of forced dispersal and replaced benefits for asylum seekers through National Asylum Support Service (NASS)
2000 April Voucher Scheme	Asylum seekers received support in vouchers
2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act	Introduced regular reporting/ biometric registration
2004 Asylum and Immigration Act	Section 9 removed financial and housing support from unsuccessful asylum seeking families who failed to take reasonable steps to leave the UK. Paved way for children from asylum seeking families without support to be taken into care
2005 Controlling our Borders	5 year plan Immigration and Asylum. Removal of 'failed asylum seekers' and controls to prevent 'abuse' of asylum system
2006 Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act	
2007 UK Borders Act	
2014 Immigration Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removed the rights of appeal, replaced with a right to seek an administrative review of the Home Office decision</li> <li>• Granted the Home Secretary powers to strip a person of British citizenship obtained through naturalisation</li> <li>• Prevents private landlords from renting accommodation to undocumented individuals</li> <li>• Prevents illegal immigrants from acquiring driving licenses and bank accounts</li> </ul>
2016 Immigration Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 39 makes it a criminal offence for a landlord;</li> <li>• If the premises are occupied by an adult who is disqualified as a result of their immigration status from occupying premises under a residential tenancy agreement</li> <li>• The landlord knows or has reasonable cause to believe that the premises are occupied by an adult who is disqualified as a result of their immigration status</li> </ul>

## The Contradictions in Asylum Policy

The analysis revealed some of the inconsistencies in policy documents in the manner in which 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' were depicted. On the one hand, policies iterated the responsibilities of the state towards individuals fleeing persecution, and the importance of upholding human rights. However, simultaneously the discourse in policy documents also centred on the need for restrictive measures towards asylum claimants and the removal of failed asylum-seekers. These conflicting ideas highlighted the tensions between upholding human rights, and the criminalisation of illegal migration, and its impact on asylum which has become the accepted norm in policy-circles not just in the UK but across Europe. There were normative understandings of refugees and asylum-seekers present in official discourse. However, simultaneously there were also evolving multiple understandings of refugees and migrants depicted in policy documents.

**Figure 4.** Flow chart: policy tensions



## Humanitarian Portrayals of Forced Migrants

Policy documents stressed the importance of the UK's continued commitment to upholding its humanitarian obligations and also revealed humanitarian approaches to both 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees'.

'Every asylum caseworker is part of the UK's tradition of providing a place of refuge to those in fear of persecution. Properly considering claims and making well-reasoned decisions is one of the UK's fundamental responsibilities under the Refugee Convention...The consideration of asylum claims deserves the greatest care - 'anxious scrutiny' as the UK courts express it - so that just and fair decisions are made and protection granted to those who need it'(Home Office, 2015, p.4).

'The UK has a proud record of providing protection for those who genuinely need it, in accordance with our obligations under the Refugee Convention'(Home Office, 2017b, p.4).

Policies typically opened with a protection discourse which emphasised the government's historical commitment to offering sanctuary to those in need. All asylum caseworkers played a critical role in fulfilling the UK's obligations under the Refugee Convention. Asylum decisions were not to be taken lightly, as asylum claims were to be considered and judged appropriately. The principle of 'anxious scrutiny', was to be applied in the asylum determination process. 'Anxious scrutiny' refers to the rigorous level of scrutiny that is applied to human rights cases. For further details see Fordham (1996). An asylum application pleaded to an individual's human rights, including the right to life itself. It was imperative that decisions were made objectively to ensure that sanctuary was granted to the most vulnerable and needy. Humanitarian protection was only to be granted to those individuals who truly deserved it. The humanitarian portrayals of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' emphasised their vulnerability.

'While recognising that all asylum seekers are potentially vulnerable, ensuring that particularly vulnerable claimants are given help in accessing appropriate services, for example, where there are concerns over physical and mental health, experience of torture, trafficking, sexual or domestic violence or child protection concerns'(Home Office, 2015, p.5).

The extract from the above policy differentiated between the 'vulnerable', and individuals who were most at risk. Policy discourse acknowledged, that 'asylum-seekers' were some of the most vulnerable individuals in society, who had been denied fundamental human



rights, whose lives had been threatened. Asylum-seekers who had escaped torture, imprisonment, and highly traumatic circumstances were to be differentiated as '*particularly vulnerable claimants*', and referred to additional health and support services, in order to be provided the care they needed. Vulnerability is a debated concept (Stewart, 2005), policy discourse referred to the powerlessness, helplessness and exceptional traumatic conditions of those seeking humanitarian sanctuary. Asylum-seekers were considered a vulnerable group, as they were denied key rights both within and between political domains (Watts and Bohle, 1993). Policy documents explicitly referred to the vulnerability of asylum applicants to highlight the importance of humanitarian approaches towards 'asylum-seekers'. However, the protectionist and humanitarian representations of 'asylum-seekers' revealed in the introductory sections of the policy documents were not demonstrated in the remainder of the body of the content. The main representations of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in policy documents focused on the legal and official ideology underpinning both labels.

## Official/Legal Representations of Asylum-seekers and Refugees

Unsurprisingly, policy discourse defined refugees and asylum-seekers according to legal frameworks.

'The Convention defines a refugee as a person unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. The principal obligation for signatory states is not to return (*'refoule'*) refugees to a territory where they risk persecution or serious harm (Home Office, 2015, p.4).

'Asylum claims are correctly decided, in accordance with our international obligations under the Refugee Convention and the ECHR, in a timely and sensitive way and on an individual, objective and impartial basis' (Home Office, 2015, p.5).

A 'refugee' was defined according to Article 1A (2) of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees, and its 1967 Protocol. The United Nations Refugee Convention was coined after the Second World War and the aftermath of the Holocaust, it provides the framework of refugee ideology in the UK. Fundamentally, a refugee is any individual who fears persecution as a result of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. Policy discourse pointed to the significance of the principle of *non-refoulement*, which prohibits removal, deportation, or the return of refugees to their country of origin, or another state where there is a risk that their life or freedom would

be in danger on discriminatory grounds. Similarly, policies defined an 'asylum-seeker' according to legal international obligations. The 1950 Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also referred to as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), was an important instrument for the protection of asylum-seekers throughout Europe. It must be noted that the ECHR does not apply to asylum decisions, as the right to asylum is not a 'civil right' within the definition of Article 6 (1) (European Court of Human Rights, 2019, p.6). However, the ECHR provides the grounds of protection in relation to removals. The courts prohibit removal where an 'asylum-seeker's' return to their home country, would otherwise result in a 'real risk' of ill treatment including, instances where an 'asylum-seeker' does not qualify for refugee status, as the principle of *non-refoulement* under the Convention covers cruel and inhumane behaviour (Ristik, 2017).

Asylum applications were assessed according to the criteria and standards outlined in the Refugee Convention and the ECHR. Policy discourse framed asylum as a legal and official process which respected the human rights of asylum claimants.

Asylum policy also described successful asylum-applicants with reference to the Immigration Rules.

'Part 11 of the Immigration Rules sets out the provisions for the consideration of asylum claims and reflects our obligations under the Directives' (Home Office, 2015, p.6).

The granting of asylum is left up to each individual signatory state. In the UK the decision is determined by the Secretary of State according to the Immigration Rules. Interestingly, there is no international legislation which defines asylum. 'Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights simply says that, everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution' (quoted in Goodwin-Gill, 2014, p.42). The Refugee Convention is not the sole basis for determining, the eligibility of an asylum claim in the UK. The legal process also involves the Immigration Rules being satisfied and the Secretary of State has the final verdict. Five conditions have to be fulfilled in order for the Secretary of State to conclude a positive outcome on an asylum application; An asylum-seeker must apply for asylum once in the UK, or at a UK port, must be a 1951 Convention refugee, must not be a security risk, or been convicted of a serious crime, and when the refusal of the application would result in a return to a country where the asylum-seeker's life would be threatened as a result of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (Home Office, 2015, p.20). Importantly, if the Secretary of State concludes that an asylum

application is not credible, the application is refused. It is not enough to simply meet the criteria of refugee status as outlined in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

The legal ideology, and importantly, the legal asylum determination process in the UK is in many respects at odds with the UK's commitment of upholding its humanitarian obligations. The asylum process is not designed to be easy and this creates numerous challenges for those applying for asylum to achieve refugee standing. Asylum is only granted to those individuals who are considered 'credible'.

'A key element of the decision making process is to 'assess the validity of any evidence and the credibility of the claimant's statements' UNHCR Handbook (paragraph 195)'(Home Office, 2015, p.11)

'The burden of substantiating a claim lies with the claimant, who must establish to the relatively low standard of proof required (see section 5.2) that they qualify for international protection'(Home Office, 2015, p.8).

Central to the asylum system is the legal determination process. Assessing 'credibility' is an important feature in determining refugee status. 'Credibility' as a concept was utilized in a variety of different ways in policy discourse with severe legal consequences. 'Credibility' was applied to demonstrate the validity of a particular case, and in other instances it was employed in relation to the acceptability of the claimant's unsupported statements as evidence. By introducing some fundamental concepts from the law of evidence, the level of credibility can be set much lower than proven. As a consequence credible but unconfirmed statements could play a significant role in meeting the standard of proof required in the asylum process. However, the issue of 'credibility' became confused in policy discourse with proof.

'A material fact goes to the core of a claim and is fundamental as to why an individual fears persecution. For example, someone who claims to have been detained and ill-treated because of their political or religious beliefs must show that they genuinely hold such beliefs and that they suffered detention and harm' (Home Office, 2015, p.11).

'Distinguishing between truth and falsehood and whether to accept other aspects of the claimant's account once there is evidence of substantial (or even total) falsehood can be challenging. A claimant's testimony may include lies or exaggerations for a variety of reasons, not all of which need reflect adversely on other areas. Depending

on their relevance to the totality of the evidence, falsehoods will be troubling but do not mean that everything the claimant has said must be dismissed as unreliable.

However, materially fraudulent asylum claims made, for example, in a false identity or nationality will render the claimant liable to prosecution under Section 24A of the Immigration Act 1971' (Home Office, 2015, pp.12–13).

The asylum case-worker has the important and difficult task of judging the credibility and eligibility of an asylum claim. Many individuals who claim asylum are fleeing persecution, however applicants must demonstrate their 'credibility' by proving that they have escaped persecution. This becomes challenging if the applicant's statements have included fabrications, or embellishments. Asylum policy claims that this does not affect the decision-making process, as the evidence of the case needs to be judged as a whole, rather than concluding the claimant's case is false due to certain aspects of the claimant's evidence being incorrect. This may appear straightforward in theory, however, in practice this is incredibly challenging. There are severe legal consequences for those applications that are concluded to be false, as they fall under the fraudulent category resulting in prosecution under the Immigration Act of 1971. This suggests an underlying tension between upholding humanitarian legal obligations and policies targeting fraudulent asylum applications. Policy discourse highlighted the importance of the case-workers' role in the determination process. Case-workers investigated the asylum applicant's past and current situations to assess the validity of a claim. The search for material facts is a negotiation process. It is important to note that unlike other legal processes the asylum system is characterized by a lack of evidence (Thomas, 2006). Policy discourse requires caseworkers to depend on facts to legitimize their decisions. However asylum policy is unclear on what constitutes a fact. This suggests that officials can to some extent influence the outcome of an application, as they indirectly have the definitional power over what constitutes a fact and what parts of a claimant's testimony affect, and are dismissed in the decision-making process. The concept of 'credibility' was central to policy discourse in all stages of the asylum decision-making process. However, there were ambiguities as to what constituted a material fact in order to determine the 'credibility' of an application.

Asylum was also framed as a policy problem which required management.

## Problematisation of Asylum

Successive British governments have attempted to reform the British asylum system as highlighted in the earlier discussion, and this was also a theme revealed in the analysis.

‘We will introduce new rules to support those who genuinely need it, but send out a very clear message to those who seek to exploit the system that Britain is not a soft touch’ (Home Office 2016c, p.1).

The view that Britain was a ‘soft touch’ for asylum abuse started in the 1990s (Spencer, 2011). The media iterated this issue in reporting, ‘Soft-touch Britain, the asylum seeker capital of Europe: We let in more than anyone else last year’ (The Daily Mail, 2012). ‘End asylum soft touch, says Hain’ (The Guardian, 2002). ‘Why is Britain regarded as such ‘a soft touch’ to the rest of the world?’ (The Telegraph, 2001). ‘Widdecombe says Britain is a soft touch for asylum-seekers’ (The Independent, 1999). Asylum was transformed into a political issue, as asylum-seekers gained increasing media coverage. Consecutive Conservative and Labour governments believed that ‘asylum-seekers’ chose the UK, as their destination because jobs and welfare support were too readily available (Spencer, 2011). Interestingly, this narrative has continued today and asylum policies have struggled to tackle this issue. ‘Europe sees UK as soft touch on migration, says Archbishop’ (The Times, 2016b). ‘Killers on the streets: Albanian criminals are tricking their way into ‘soft touch’ Britain by posing as refugees from the Kosovo war’ (The Sun, 2017). Media reporting has continually presented the asylum system in the UK as too ‘soft’, suffering abuse and exploitation by migrants posing as ‘asylum-seekers’ with no legitimate claim to humanitarian protection.

To address the abuse of the asylum system, successive British governments introduced restrictive laws targeting asylum, as discussed earlier. This demonstrates that the manner in which asylum is perceived and the language in which it is discussed is incredibly significant in setting the terms on which policy options are considered (Spencer, 2011).

‘The UK provides support for asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute until their claim is finally determined, in line with our international obligations... In 2014-15, an estimated £73 million was spent supporting failed asylum seekers and their dependants. At 31 March 2015, an estimated 15,000 failed asylum seekers and their dependants were receiving Home Office support. The Immigration Act aims to reduce the scope for such support to remove incentives for failed asylum seekers to remain in the UK illegally’ (Home Office, 2016c, p.1).

‘Restrict the support we give to people whose claims for asylum have been rejected (and their dependants) to those who are destitute and face a genuine obstacle to leaving the UK, through changes to the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999’(Home Office, 2016c, p.1).

Policy discourse highlighted the numbers of failed asylum-seekers (and their dependents) who received financial support from the government. To address this problem, policy solutions centred on eliminating the motivations for failed asylum-seekers to remain in the UK. Failed asylum-seekers were regarded as illegitimate individuals with no right to remain in the UK. This premise was employed to justify the introduction of the Immigration Act of 2016. The issue of asylum had been presented as a problem in policy discourse. Policy documents iterated that the measures introduced by the 1999 Immigration Act, did not do enough to prevent the abuse of the asylum system, as welfare support continued to be provided for failed asylum-seekers and their dependents under Section 94 (5) of the Act. The Immigration Act of 2016 ended welfare support for failed asylum-seekers and their dependents. The discourse in policy documents consistently reiterated the UK’s responsibility in providing refuge and aid to individuals fleeing persecution. However, in tandem policy discourse also constructed the problem of false asylum-claims, and focused on introducing stricter measures. The idea of ‘Britain as a soft touch’ has resulted in the criminalisation of failed asylum-seekers in policy today.

## Criminalisation of Failed Asylum-Seekers

Asylum-seekers who were not judged as ‘credible’, were categorised as ‘illegal migrants’.

‘The UK has a proud history of offering sanctuary to those who need it – but people who do not need our help and who refuse to return home are here illegally’(Home Office, 2016c, p.1).

‘From April 2013 to March 2015 there were more than 8,700 enforced removals of migrants who had sought asylum at some stage and been found not to need it...People who do not need our protection and who can and should leave the UK voluntarily cannot expect to be supported by the taxpayer until they have to be forcibly removed’(Home Office, 2016b, p.2).

Policy discourse reconceptualised ‘failed asylum-seekers,’ or ‘false asylum-seekers’ as criminals under the broad umbrella of ‘illegal migrants’. Similar to dangerous offenders, ‘failed asylum-

seekers' faced severe legal repercussions. Both removals and forced removals were presented as the solution to the immigration crimes committed by criminals who had no right to remain in the UK, as they had entered the country under false pretences. Targeting the abuse of the asylum system was the main concern in policy discourse, this took primacy over the obligation to protect asylum-seekers. Furthermore, there was a strong emphasis on the 'illegality' of irregular migration in policy documents. Irregular migration through clandestine channels was criminalised. Similarly to previous policies, the Immigration Act of 2016 attempted to reform the immigration system through increased measures, targeting the illegality of migration through border security with significant consequences for asylum-seekers.

'This government makes no apologies for refusing people access to the UK if we believe their presence is not conducive to the public good. "Every passenger arriving at any UK airport must be directed to immigration control. It is a criminal offence for an airline or airport operator to fail in this duty. "Security at the border is our priority and we need our officers to have powers to stop these criminal gangs from attempting to smuggle people into Britain' (Home Office, 2016b, p.1).

Immigration crime has been constructed as a problem and a crisis in policy discourse. This has necessitated tougher security controls at the border. All travellers entering the UK are subject to immigration control. The burden is on airline operators to ensure undocumented passengers are not allowed to travel. This is justified as a policy initiative to prevent illegal gangs from smuggling undocumented individuals into the UK. However, this policy response is directly at odds with the UK's humanitarian obligations, as it serves as a barrier to prevent individuals with an asylum claim from entering the UK. 'This increases the criminalisation of migration and the industry of false documents, the existence of which is then used to justify further controls' (Spencer, 2011, p.59). Stricter border controls cause refugees to take greater risks to reach safety. Policies targeting the criminality and abuse of the asylum system have consistently resulted in the asylum system operating in a way to deter asylum-seekers from applying and entering the UK.

'No asylum decision should be made unless the claimant has been fingerprinted to the requisite standard for IABS and Eurodac. Where there is evidence that the claimant previously claimed asylum in another identity... Fraudulent claims will make the claimant liable to prosecution under Section 24A of the Immigration Act 1971 (Home Office, 2015, p.7).

Individuals charged with crimes are the only other group in the UK who are fingerprinted. Fingerprinting was employed as a strategy to ensure that asylum-seekers filed their application in the first safe country (signatory to the Convention), that they reached, as agreed with the 1990 Dublin Convention. Eurodac (European Asylum Dactyloscopy<sup>12</sup> database), is a computerised system which provides a central database of biometric data between Member States. Member States are required to record the fingerprint data of all persons requesting asylum, and those apprehended crossing borders irregularly. Policies emphasised that fraudulent asylum claims would be prosecuted.

Asylum policy targeted the criminality of illegal migration through increased security at the border. However, these measures made it incredibly difficult for asylum-seekers to enter the UK. The process of seeking asylum in the UK requires all asylum applicants to claim asylum once arriving into the UK. This once again highlighted some of the inconsistencies in asylum policy. The practice of seeking asylum in the UK has become very difficult as a result of policies targeting the problem of the abuse of the asylum system. The analysis highlighted how the 'managed migration paradigm' created asylum-seeker and refugee identities through the use of binaries as either 'credible' individuals who were permitted to seek sanctuary, or as 'disingenuous' individuals who should be excluded from protection rights and removed from the UK. This highlights how 'discourse' constructs the topic of asylum. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge' (Hall, 1997 a, p.29).

The final section of this study explores additional portrayals of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in policy discourse.

## Multiple Representations of Asylum-Seekers and Refugees

The categories 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' were presented as normative legal categories in policy documents. However, the analysis revealed instances of multiple understandings of refugees and asylum-seekers. Whilst the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol has remained unchanged since its origin, the interpretation of the Convention has advanced.

'The Refugee Convention is a living humanitarian instrument and the interpretation of what constitutes persecution or the identification of a particular social group (for example) is not fixed for all time. Where protection needs have been established, caseworkers should be wary of rejecting claims as non-Convention based, without

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<sup>12</sup> Fingerprints database



careful examination of whether there is in fact a connection to a Convention ground and thus a valid claim to refugee status. This is most likely to be the case where membership of a particular social group could be established (Home Office, 2015, p.27).

Asylum policy highlighted that the conditions outlined in the Refugee Convention were not set in stone, as the Convention was an evolving system which allowed for interpretation. There were instances where, an individual qualified for refugee status even though they did not meet the Convention criteria, as long as the claim to persecution was established according to the Convention framework. This was most likely to occur in instances where persecution occurred as a result of membership of a particular social group (PSG). The 1951 Refugee Convention does not prescribe measures to determine the eligibility of an individual's claim to refugee status. The granting of refugee protection is primarily the responsibility of States. Gender is not listed as one of the refugee criteria in the Convention, yet, gender can play an important role in shaping an individual's experience of persecution. This is mentioned in asylum policy,

'For instance, in a society where traditional male attitudes are deeply entrenched, there may be expectations about the behaviour of women but not men (e.g. their clothing, who they associate with, the jobs they do etc.). If women were beaten or killed if they failed to observe those traditions and State protection was unavailable, the underlying reason for the persecution would be the gender of the victims and refugee status would be appropriate' (Home Office, 2015, p.32).

'Left-handed men are not a social group. But, if they were persecuted because they were left-handed, they would no doubt quickly become recognisable in their society as a particular social group. Their persecution for being left-handed would create a public perception that they were a particular social group. But it would be the attribute of being left-handed and not the persecutory acts that would identify them as a particular social group.' (Home Office, 2015, p.32)

The Refugee Convention does not explicitly define a refugee as someone who fears gender-related persecution. Scholars suggest that this was a result of a lack of understanding that individuals may suffer different forms of persecution when the Refugee Convention was drafted (Edwards, 2003). However, feminist and gendered analyses of forced migration have criticised the neglect of gendered causes and experiences of forced migration (Greatbatch, 1989; Rathgeber, 1990; Crawley, 2001; Pittaway and Bartolomei, 2001; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014). Asylum policy takes this into account, allowing for the interpretation of the Refugee Convention to include gender. To be recognised as refugees, women asylum seekers must

demonstrate that they fear persecution on account of their membership of a Particular Social Group (PSG). In addition, there may be instances where certain groups are not considered a social group yet, they face persecution, as a consequence of being a member of a particular social group. For example, left-handed men are not a social group, however if they faced persecution on account of being left-handed, they would be identified as a social group, and their claim to refugee status would be granted. Although the Refugee Convention has not been amended either explicitly, or through practice to provide for a revised definition of a refugee, it is interpreted in an expansive fashion, relying heavily on its object and purpose. Determining that an asylum-seeker is a member of a PSG is one of the criteria that is required in order to be recognised as a refugee in situations where an individual suffers persecution for reasons not listed in the Refugee Convention. UK asylum policy allows for the interpretation of the Refugee Convention, this indicated that the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' do not simply have a normative fixed definition.

Policy documents also discussed the significance of the changing situation of countries of origin in determining an 'asylum-seekers' claim to refuge. Asylum policy referred to Country of Origin Information which the Home Office produces, to aid case workers determine the eligibility of an asylum claim.<sup>13</sup>

'Decisions must be supported by reliable, relevant and referenced country of origin information (COI). Caseworkers must be familiar with the current CIG reports (or COIS reports) before an interview to ensure that the claimant is given an opportunity to explain any inconsistencies between their account and the COI' (Home Office, 2015, p.9).

'In addition to the claimant's statements and any other evidence submitted, the relevant Country of Origin Information Service (COIS) reports, Operational Guidance Notes (OGNs) and County Information and Guidance reports (CIGs) must be consulted before and after the interview. Interviewers may also find it useful to take a break to consult COI if a previously unknown religion, political group or other unfamiliar element is brought within the claim. This will enable a more focused probing of this additional material fact'(Home Office, 2015, pp.8–9).

Country of Origin Information (COI) is used by decision makers to assess whether an asylum-seeker's fear of persecution is well-founded. Country of Origin Information (COI) is produced by a team of specialist researchers, part of the UK Border Agency (UKBA), who

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<sup>13</sup>For further Country of Information documentation, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-policy-and-information-notes>

research and compile information on those countries who produce the highest number of asylum applications in the UK. The information provides guidance on which types of asylum claims are most likely to be granted asylum and humanitarian protection. As discussed earlier, policy discourse maintained the UK's legal obligations towards those who risk persecution, yet in tandem policies justified and introduced tougher measures to punish those who exploit the asylum system as a means of entering the UK. Information on the situation in a particular country is fundamental for judging an asylum claim. Case workers therefore, require access to reliable and current information. Country of Origin Information enables consistency. It is important that case workers do not reach considerably different conclusions on the same material as that would render the decision-making process unfair. In instances where a new religion, political group, or any unknown aspect is part of the claim, then case-workers are advised to pause the interview and review the COI. The UNHCR also echoed the importance of COI in asylum adjudication.

‘The competent authorities that are called upon to determine refugee status are not required to pass judgement on conditions in the applicant’s country of origin. The applicant’s statements cannot, however, be considered in the abstract, and must be viewed in the context of the relevant background situation. A knowledge of conditions in the applicant’s country of origin –while not a primary objective – is an important element in assessing the applicant’s credibility’(UNHCR, 2011, p.12).

COI is integral to asylum decision-making in the UK at all stages of the asylum process and this information changes dependent on the situation in countries of origin across the globe. This indicated that the labels ‘asylum-seeker’ and ‘refugee’ evolve over time. An individual can also become a refugee ‘*sur place*’, as a result of a change in conditions in their home country.

‘A person already in the UK can fall within the definition of a refugee ‘*sur place*’, usually when a change of circumstances occurs in their home country which gives rise to a well-founded fear of persecution. But people may also become refugees ‘*sur place*’ as a result of activities they have engaged in or beliefs they have come to hold since leaving their country of origin’ (Home Office, 2015, p.22).

Asylum policy described different categories of refugees. A ‘*sur place*’ refugee is not a refugee after leaving their country of nationality, but becomes a refugee at a later date, and is therefore, not a traditional type of refugee. The traditional refugee leaves their country of origin to seek humanitarian protection in another country according to the 1951 Refugee Convention criteria. Policy documents also described an additional category of refugee who

qualified for refugee status, but did not meet the Convention criteria (persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion), on the premise that the claim to persecution was established according to the Convention framework e.g. gender related persecution. The political situation in countries is always shifting. Afghani, Iranian and Pakistani nationalities have been in the top five nationalities applying for asylum in the year ending March 2010 in the UK and remained in the top five in the year ending March 2017 (Home Office, 2017a). Zimbabwe was ranked first for asylum applications in the year ending March 2010, but fell to twenty-first position in the year ending March 2017 (Home Office, 2017a). Iraq became the third highest nationality for asylum applications in the year ending March 2017, but fell to twenty-first position in the year ending March 2012 and 2013 (Home Office, 2017a). This demonstrates that asylum applications according to nationality are always changing in the UK and are not fixed.

Policy discourse described different types of migrants who may also be categorised as asylum-seekers. This once again conflicted with the normative representation of an asylum-seeker. Terms including 'illegal migrants' and 'stateless persons' applied to migrants as well as asylum-seekers.

'Stateless persons may seek asylum and establish a well-founded fear of persecution in their countries of habitual residence in exactly the same way as nationals of those countries... Any asylum claim accepted for substantive consideration takes priority over a stateless application, whether lodged before the application for stateless leave or disclosed in the course of consideration of that application. No consideration of stateless leave (on application by the individual) will take place until that individual's asylum claim has been finally determined or withdrawn' (Home Office, 2015, p. 22).

'There is no general obligation on local authorities to support illegal migrants who intentionally make themselves destitute by refusing to leave the UK when it is clear they are able to' (Home Office, 2016b, p.2).

In situations, where an individual had applied for both asylum and stateless leave, case workers were advised to prioritise the asylum application. Policy categorisations may appear to be normative in theory nonetheless, in practice individuals could be positioned in two or more categories simultaneously. As discussed earlier in this chapter, rejected asylum applicants were grouped together as 'failed asylum-seekers' and also criminalised as 'illegal migrants'. Policy discourse indicated the significance of immigration policies and their relationship to understanding the 'asylum-seeker' category.

Policy documents also referred to additional categories of migrants who were granted permission to reside in the UK although they may have been refused asylum. A migrant could be denied asylum, yet granted Humanitarian Protection for 'five years' (Home Office, 2015, p.38). This applied to cases where individuals required protection under EU law even if they did not meet the requirements for protection under the Refugee Convention. There were also other occasions,

'Where an Article 8 (family or private life only) claim is made out, leave under Appendix FM (family life) and paragraphs 276ADE(1) to 276DH (private life) of the Immigration Rules the Rules will normally be granted if they are not criminal cases' (Home Office, 2015, p.38).

Discretionary leave could also be granted to migrants who were refused asylum, Humanitarian Protection and Article 8 at the discretion of case workers outside of the Immigration Rules (Home Office, 2015, p.38).

'All individuals excluded from the protection of the Refugee Convention by virtue of Article 1F but who cannot be immediately removed from the UK due to Article 3 of the ECHR will be dealt with under the Restricted Leave policy (RL).' (Home Office, 2015, p.38).

Policy documents referred to multiple understandings of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. There was a tension between normative representations of asylum-seekers and refugees and the manifold constructions of the same labels. Refused or 'failed' asylum-seekers could fall into a range of additional categories and in some instances were granted the right to remain in the UK under different criteria. The analysis revealed some of the complexity involved in categorisation. Whilst, normative understandings dominated policy representations of asylum-seekers and refugees. There were also additional categories which applied to refugees and asylum-seekers, as individuals who migrate encompass contrasting immigration statuses and can also be situated in two categories.

## Conclusion

This chapter has contributed to increasing our understanding of the social construction of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in policy discourse. Unsurprisingly, official discourse framed 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' according to normative legal frameworks. However,

surprisingly there were also additional evolving representations of asylum-seekers and refugees present in policy documents. Furthermore, the analysis revealed the contradictions inherent in the depictions of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in asylum and immigration policy. On the one hand, there was a consistent message that the British government continued to protect the human rights of individuals fleeing persecution. However, in tandem the discourse in policy documents frequently prioritised the need to introduce further restrictive measures and policies to prevent and deter asylum-seekers from accessing their protection.

The social construction of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in policy discourse occurs through a complex set of factors which contribute to how asylum is defined, understood and fundamentally managed. Assessing 'credibility' was an important feature in determining refugee status. Political discourse has constructed increased asylum applications and high levels of immigration as a problem. This points to a culture of disbelief surrounding 'asylum-seekers'. There is an underlying assumption that asylum applicants are attempting to abuse the asylum and welfare systems. The notion of 'Britain as a soft touch', has been employed to justify the criminalisation of failed asylum-seekers and irregular migrants. These conflicting depictions of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' demonstrate the tensions between upholding human rights and the criminalisation of clandestine, or irregular migration. Asylum policy has focused on preventing asylum-seekers from accessing their protection, as it has become subsumed under the broader political agenda of 'managed migration'. However, policy documents do not present the total picture of how the social construction of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' takes place. It is important to explore how practitioners interpret and negotiate these policy discourses. There is a complex relationship between the policy discourses discussed here, which shape the 'official' understandings of asylum and practitioner and media attitudes and knowledge that will be reviewed in the following chapters.

The next chapter explores the media portrayals of forced migrants in news reporting to develop our understanding further.

# Chapter Six. Study 2: Media Representations of Forced Migrants

## Introduction

The previous chapter explored the contradictions inherent in the representations of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in asylum and immigration policy. There was a conflict at the heart of the government's approach to asylum policy: discourses around the problematisation of asylum, the criminalisation of failed asylum-seekers and the control of borders, existed in tandem with discourses which stressed the responsibilities of the state towards individuals fleeing persecution. There were competing discourses between preserving the human rights of those who fled persecution and the criminalisation of irregular migration. Interestingly, the 'managed migration' framework had an impact on the social construction of asylum-seekers. This is an area which requires further examination.

This chapter is the second study which examines the social construction of the asylum-seeker category in connection to the terms 'forced migrant' and 'refugee'. I critically examine media portrayals of 'forced migrants' in news reporting. This research was carried out during the events of the European humanitarian crisis of 2015. It became important for the thesis to investigate the multiple ways in which the events of 2015 were categorised and reported on by the British press. Whilst, the focus of the thesis is on the UK context, this chapter examines the period of 2015 characterised by increasing numbers of individuals migrating across the Mediterranean to arrive into the European Union.

The first part of the chapter focuses on how the events of the European humanitarian crisis of 2015 were categorised by the British media. The second half of the chapter considers the views of two journalists at *The Guardian*, who report on asylum in the UK to explore how particular categories were selected in reporting, and furthermore, identifies some of the challenges that journalists faced when representing forced migrants in news stories. This chapter responds to the sub-research question: *How do the media construct forced migrants in news reporting?*

## Method

It is worth reiterating that this study is not trying to replicate a full-scale media analysis, as stated in Chapter Four. The analysis provides the context of forced migration reporting for the research at the time of the interviews (Chapter Seven Parts One and Two). This study employs a summative approach to qualitative content analysis (Holsti, 1969; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The small-scale media monitoring focused on the newspaper headline coverage of forced migration from September 2014-September 2016. Headlines orient the reader to process news stories in a pre-determined narrative (Dijk, 1992). In addition, newspaper headlines reveal the fundamental ideologies and attitudes within a news story (Teo, 2000). This study explores how 'discursive formations' (Hall, 1992, p.205), produce 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1991), on forced migration in the media.

Eight newspapers, including three tabloids (*The Daily Mirror, The Daily Mail and The Sun*) and five broadsheets (*The Guardian, The Observer, The Daily Telegraph, The Times and The Independent*), were selected according to the most circulation and popularity across a diverse group of the British public (see Table 1 for further details). I followed similar sampling procedures as researchers employed in the *Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU*, report (Berry et al., 2015). The date range of the sample was selected to capture as much of the media coverage of the 2015 humanitarian crisis as possible. I conducted two different Boolean searches using the Lexis Nexis database, applying the keyword searches 'MIGRANT' and 'CRISIS', and 'REFUGEE' and 'CRISIS' (from the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2014- 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2016). The summative content analysis not only examined the word frequency of the key terms employed in headlines using NVivo, the analysis also explored the lexical selection (selection of words including adjectives and descriptive phrases), applied within headlines to represent 'forced migrants'. These findings were supplemented with two in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Theoretical thematic analysis was employed to code the interview data using Watts's (2014), 'what/how' coding framework to generate the codes. The interview extracts for the analysis were selected according to the first-person and third person analytic perspectives employed to code the data (Watts, 2014). The findings are presented thematically.

## Categorization of the 2015 Humanitarian Crisis

In 2015, Europe experienced the arrival of over one million people (UNHCR, 2018b), who undertook life-threatening journeys from war torn countries. The global attention focused



on the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the large arrival of asylum-seekers at European borders in 2015. However, the conflicts in the regions of Burundi, Iraq, Libya, Niger and Nigeria also led to the rise in globally displaced people (UNHCR, 2015a). The categorisation of these individuals by the press had a significant impact on how the events of 2015 were understood by the public. In 2015, the (then) Prime Minister David Cameron described the individuals who reached Europe as a 'swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean, seeking a better life, wanting to come to Britain because Britain has jobs' (The Daily Mail, 2015). David Cameron received much criticism for adopting inflammatory language, which fundamentally dehumanized the men, women and children who travelled across the Mediterranean to flee for their lives (BBC, 2015a). Labour's interim leader, Harriet Harman reminded the prime minister that he 'should remember he is talking about people, not insects' (BBC, 2015a). The use of words such as 'swarm', to represent 'forced migrants', played a role in constructing the individuals as products rather than people.

All of the newspapers in the sample employed the terms 'migrant' and 'refugee' to categorise the individuals who migrated from their home countries to reach Europe in 2015. This volatile situation was described as a 'refugee crisis', or a 'migrant crisis'. How forced migrants are described and reported upon does not simply reflect the events that are occurring. The process of categorization itself also actively contributes to and constructs our understanding of what particular events mean (Hall, 1997a). The narrative of 'crisis' was very powerful in explaining the story of forced migration in 2015. The labels 'migrant' and 'refugee', necessitate very different implications on the legal protections provided to the newly arrived. The category 'refugee' is typically reserved for individuals who have an international right to humanitarian protection, whereas the term 'migrant' guarantees no rights to protection. Interestingly, the analysis revealed that the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' were used interchangeably in newspaper headlines to refer to the same events.

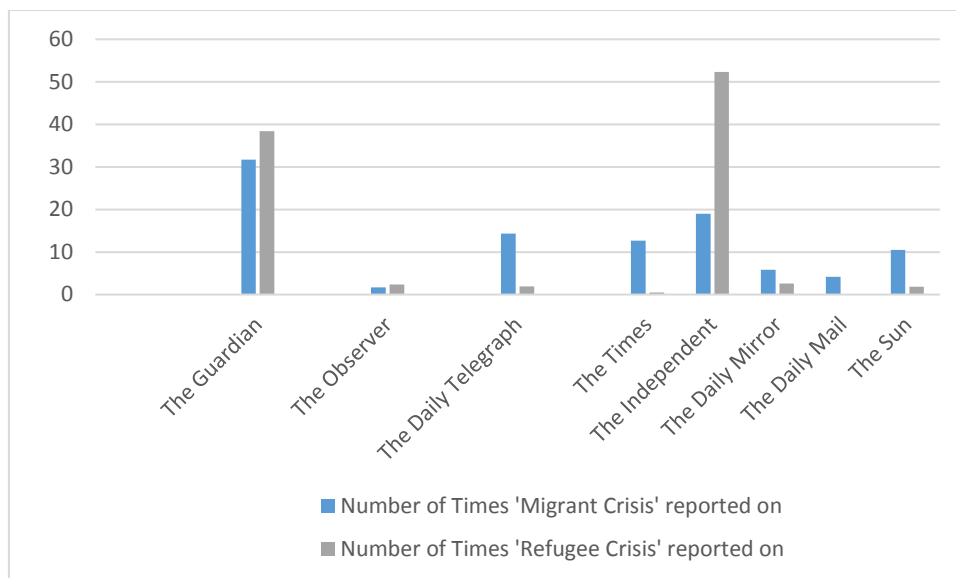
**TABLE 7.** EXAMPLE OF HEADLINES: TERMS ‘REFUGEE’ AND ‘MIGRANT’ USED INTERCHANGEABLY

Headline	Newspaper
600 <b>Refugees</b> will be told: You Can’t Stay; <b>Europe Migrant Crisis</b> ; Direct Provision Hell for Arrivals	(The Daily Mirror, 2015a)
The tragic but brutal truth: They are not REAL <b>refugees</b> ! Despite drowning tragedy thousands of <b>economic migrants</b> are still trying to reach Europe	(The Daily Mail, 2016)
The <b>refugee</b> tide on the doorstep of Clooney’s Italian lakeside idyll; Exclusive resort of Lake Como becomes a flashpoint in crisis as <b>migrants</b> seek route into Switzerland	(The Telegraph, 2016b)
<b>Migrants</b> on Frontline to Reach Britain; <b>Refugee Crisis</b> spreads along Normandy Coast Exclusive	(The Sun, 2016b)
Can \$2bn for Africa stem the <b>refugee crisis</b> ?; A new trust fund for African leaders has been set up to stop <b>migrants</b> leaving for Europe	(The Guardian, 2015a)
A modest proposal to solve the <b>migrant crisis</b> ; If every sensible suggestion for tackling Europe’s <b>refugee problem</b> is ruled out, the only option left is truly radical	(The Times, 2016a)
The <b>refugee crisis</b> is waking old fears in central Europe; Muslim <b>migrants</b> are finding little welcome in countries such as Hungary and Croatia	(The Observer, 2015b)
<b>Refugee crisis</b> : Austria refuses entry to <b>hundreds of migrants</b> for lying about their nationality; Hundreds of thousands of <b>migrants</b> have crossed through Austria since the start of the crisis	(The Independent, 2015b)

All of the eight newspapers in the sample (see Table 8) conflated the terms ‘migrant’, and ‘refugee’ within the same headline, when depicting the humanitarian crisis of 2015. How we define and understand a refugee is at the heart of the field of refugee and forced migration studies. Academics and practitioners continue to engage in these debates, as there is no definitive consensus amongst researchers (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014), on where the boundaries of refugee and forced migration studies should be drawn. Although in theory the categories ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ are easily separated as administrative categories, practically, the differentiation of these terms is very problematic. Many who meet the refugee definition are clearly fleeing both political oppression and economic dislocation (Crisp, 2003a; King, 2010). Journalists who reported on the humanitarian crisis of 2015 also struggled on how best to categorise and report on the individuals who travelled to Europe (Marsh, 2015; The Guardian, 2015b).

The bar chart below (see Figure 5), compares the number of times ‘Migrant’ and ‘Crisis’ were employed by the newspapers in the headlines in the sample in contrast, to ‘Refugee’ and ‘Crisis from the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2014- 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2016.

**FIGURE 5. NEWSPAPER HEADLINE COMPARISON**



The terms ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ were conflated in headlines by all of the selected tabloids; *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, and broadsheet newspapers; *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times* and *The Independent*. It was surprising to see how inconsistent news reporting had been on the 2015 humanitarian crisis as the findings indicated that the media reported on ‘immigration’ and ‘asylum-seeking’ interchangeably. *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* reported on the ‘Migrant Crisis’ more frequently than the ‘Refugee Crisis’. The results also revealed that the political standing, left or right of centre of the newspaper did not affect the tendency of the newspapers to switch between employing labels which had very different meanings within the same headlines. The UK’s leading centre left quality newspapers, *The Independent* and *The Guardian* reported on the ‘Refugee Crisis’ more frequently than the ‘Migrant Crisis’. However, both newspapers, similarly to the other papers in the sample, followed the trend of reporting on the ‘Migrant/Refugee Crisis’ interchangeably.

All of the newspapers in the sample reported on forced migration in broadly similar ways. The tendency for newspapers to switch between adopting labels which had very different meanings blurred identities. Conflating refugees and migrants can undermine public support for refugees and the asylum system. Furthermore, the use of such categories implied that the terms ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ were well defined and individuals could be separated

into either 'refugees' or 'migrants'. This also indicated 'discursive formations' in operation by the media, as the merging of the labels 'migrant' and 'refugee' confused the boundaries between the identities of these individuals, by implying there was no difference between them. The terms 'migrant' and 'refugee' provide very different levels of protection offered to newcomers. The events of 2015 led many to challenge the media to refer to the individuals on the move as 'refugees' rather than 'migrants', which, it was argued, undermined the rights of individuals who were fleeing persecution (Malone, 2015). However, both of these terms are complex and cause debate in the field (Vernant, 1953; Long, 2013; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014; Crawley and Skleparis, 2018), as well as within the press itself (Malone, 2015; *The Guardian*, 2015b; *The Independent*, 2015b).

Media professionals including editors and journalists disputed which categories were the most appropriate to report on the humanitarian crisis of 2015. *The BBC* referred to the 'migrant crisis' and explained that,

'the BBC uses the term migrant to refer to all people on the move who have yet to complete the legal process of claiming asylum. This group includes people fleeing war-torn countries such as Syria, who are likely to be granted refugee status, as well as people who are seeking jobs and better lives, who governments are likely to rule are economic migrants' (BBC, 2015b).

For the BBC the term 'migrant' encompassed different types and motivations for migration including forced and economic. It was a broad category employed to describe individuals on the move from their home countries including asylum-seekers, refugees and economic migrants. In contrast, *Al Jazeera English* explained that, 'the umbrella term migrant is no longer fit for purpose when it comes to describing the horror unfolding in the Mediterranean. It has evolved from its dictionary definition into a tool that dehumanises' (Malone, 2015). *Al Jazeera English* (Malone, 2015) announced that it would no longer refer to 'migrants' when reporting on the individuals who attempted to reach Europe in 2015, as the term had evolved in meaning and become a term of abuse. Furthermore, *The Guardian* also released a statement to address the press debates.

'You will still see the word "migrants" or "migration" in the Guardian as a general expression to cover people who for whatever reason have moved, or are moving, from the country of which they are nationals to another. But "refugees", "displaced people" and "asylum seekers", all of which have clear definitions, are more useful and accurate terms than a catch-all label like "migrants", and we should use them wherever possible' (Marsh, 2015).

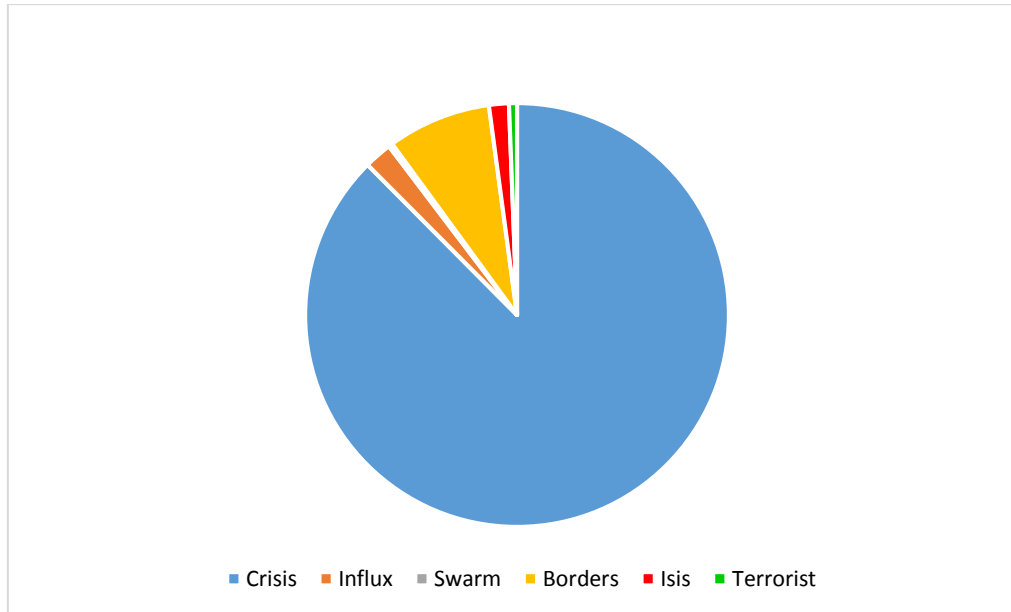
In contrast to *The BBC*, *The Guardian* adopted a similar stance to *Al Jazeera English*, as the newspaper preferred to categorise individuals on the move according to their distinctive immigration status, rather than under the umbrella term ‘migrant’ wherever possible. This indicated the importance of accurate categorization in reporting. Furthermore, *The Guardian* also published an editorial on the semantics of migration, which highlighted that the term ‘migrant’ had become a derogatory term (Guardian, 2015b). *The Independent* chose to report on ‘*Europe’s refugee crisis; rather than Europe’s migrant problem*’ (The Independent, 2015c). *The Independent* claimed that the label ‘migrant’ was employed by the press to stir hatred and feelings of suspicion towards people in need of humanitarian assistance. The majority of newspapers in the sample did not provide any explanation as to why particular categories were adopted in reporting on the 2015 crisis. Only *The Guardian* and *The Independent* provided a statement, the remainder of the newspapers; *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, *The Observer*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* did not shed any light on the matter.

Although *The Guardian* and *The Independent* released statements, which claimed they avoided the use of migrant terminology in forced migration reporting in 2015, the analysis (see Figure 5) revealed that both *The Guardian* (31.7%), and *The Independent* (19%), heavily reported on the ‘Migrant Crisis’ in headlines. This demonstrates the polarisation and inconsistency in news reporting on the humanitarian crisis of 2015. The media’s framing of forced migration issues shapes audience responses, encouraging certain interpretations and understandings. The labels ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ have contrasting meanings that carry very different international obligations, and if conflated, can mean the difference between life and death.

## Representation and Presentation of a Crisis

The main theme in the portrayal of ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’ during the period of 2015-2016 was the notion of crisis. In the context of 2015, a crisis was socially constructed through the problematisation of events by the media. The term ‘crisis’ evoked a sense of fear and uncertainty and these feelings were provoked by recurring narratives that characterised ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’ as a danger and a risk to the host community. The numbers of those on the move were highlighted to emphasise the overwhelming nature of the crisis that Europe faced. Furthermore, through the use of certain linguistic choices, ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’ were portrayed as a burden on the receiving country (see Figure 6).

**FIGURE 6. TERMS USED TO REPRESENT CRISIS IN THE HEADLINES**



News reporting focused on the crises that European countries faced as individuals attempted to enter Europe rather, than those who risked death, or died on their route. This indicated an 'us and them' dichotomy (Lynn and Lea, 2003), where the 'Non-European' 'migrants', or 'refugees' were the troublesome 'them', compared to the European 'us'. The crisis was predominately framed as a crisis for Europe, rather than a humanitarian crisis (Goodman, Sirriyeh and McMahon 2017). 'Migrants' and 'refugees' were represented as a burden within newspaper headlines. This was achieved through the use of descriptive phrases such as 'influx' and 'swarm'. Furthermore, the headlines stressed the large numbers of newly arrived individuals. Lexical choices such as 'influx' and 'swarm' were employed to amplify the events. The following examples demonstrate the ways in which 'migrants' and 'refugees' were represented as a threat and burden to the receiving country:

Calais crisis: Cameron pledges to deport more people to end 'swarm' of migrants (The Guardian, 2015a)

Migrant crisis: Macedonian police use tear gas and stun grenades on desperate migrants attempting to cross border from Greece; Country declared a state of emergency on Thursday following the massive influx of migrants (The Independent, 2015b)

Refugee crisis: Berlin so swamped by migrants that city is in ruins; Influx of 90,000 refugees has left Germany's capital facing humanitarian crisis (The Sun, 2016c)

A migrant crisis: this time it's a real swarm (The Times, 2016c)

There was a lack of explanation surrounding the circumstances of those who migrated to Europe in the headlines. This denied sympathy towards them. The use of 'swarm' and 'influx' exaggerated the numbers of people who arrived in Europe and promoted a state of crisis created by the perceived invasion. Importantly, it also dehumanised the individuals, as products rather than people. The metaphor 'swarm' was applied in a variety of ways in the headlines. In *The Guardian* headline, the newspaper was clear that they did not endorse the use of the term 'swarm' to describe migrants. In contrast, *The Times* had no problem referring to those on the move as a 'swarm', which indicated an anti-migrant sentiment. The increasing numbers of individuals who arrived in Europe suggested a sense of powerlessness of the state and created the perceived strain on the system. Describing the events of 2015 as a 'crisis' was not accurate as the numbers of migrants as a proportion of the global population had been stable, and the proportion of migrants in European countries were not high by global standards (Gamlen, 2015). 'Swarm' is typically associated with the movement of insects. Metaphors employed in reporting are important, 'they are a crucial element in the structuring of our conceptual systems, providing cognitive frames that make issues understandable'(Anderson, 2017a, p.12). Insects travel in swarms and the metaphor of 'swarm' added to the fear and anxiety of those newly arrived 'outsiders' or, 'foreigners'.

In addition, 'migrants' and 'refugees' were also associated with terrorism and criminality. This promoted the belief in a security crisis that European states faced from unknown outsiders. Typically headlines reported on 'borders', 'Isis' and 'terrorism' in relation to the individuals who entered Europe. This revealed how newspapers depicted 'migrants' and 'refugees' as potential terrorists in disguise, as highlighted in the headlines below:

Isil using refugee crisis to target UK; Intelligence officials fear jihadists are trying to enter Europe by posing as migrants ; Isil jihadists try to enter Europe using false passports' (The Telegraph, 2016a)

Calais migrant crisis: UK Government announces plans to fly migrants out of Europe to bring an end to the border emergency (The Independent, 2015a)

Shadow of Isis hangs over horror of refugee crisis (The Daily Mirror, 2015c)

Migrant crisis is weakening Europe's security while terrorists are plotting huge attack, says police chief (The Sun 2016a)

The figure of the 'refugee' was portrayed as both dangerous and suspicious. There was an assumption that 'terrorists' posed as 'refugees' to enter Europe. In the headlines, the 'refugee' was constructed as a potential threat to border and national security. This suggested that

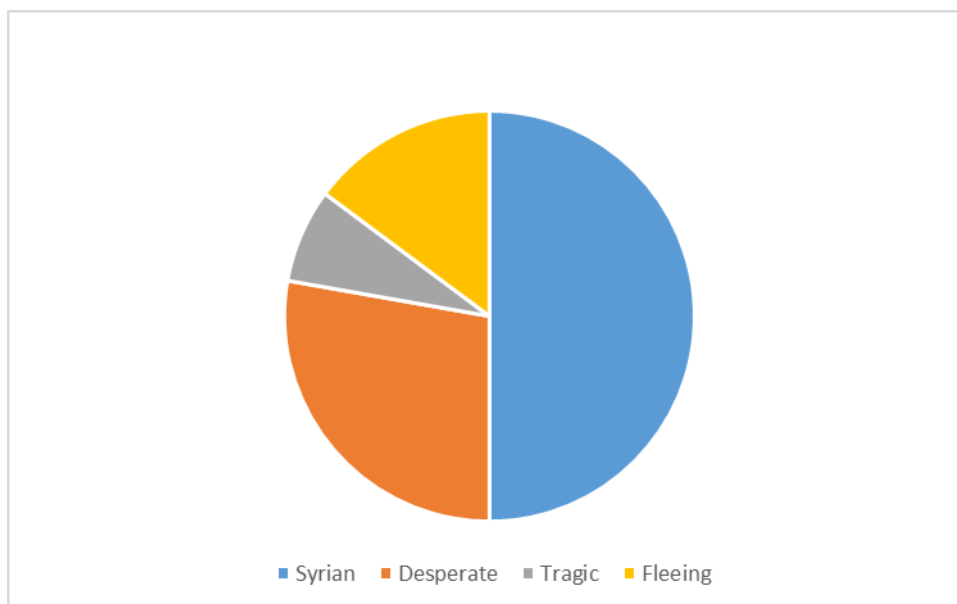
'refugees' were not to be immediately welcomed by European states. The language employed to report on the crisis presented 'migrants' and 'refugees' in a threatening manner and created a sense of fear. The headlines (above), suggested the need for increased security and border control. The nature of the perceived crisis was heightened through the representation of 'refugees' as terrorists which justified an exclusionary approach by nation states to protect and prioritise national security over humanitarian assistance. European states were perceived as vulnerable to terrorist attacks from individuals who were posing as refugees to enter Europe.

However, the analysis also revealed a more positive approach to reporting on the humanitarian crisis of 2015 which focused on the plight of Syrian refugees.

## Representation of a Syrian Humanitarian Crisis

The negative anti-refugee and anti-migrant perspectives in news reporting were not the only representations of 'forced migrants' in the headlines. The analysis revealed alternative portrayals which centred on highlighting the victimhood of refugees (see Figure 7 below). Headlines reported on the circumstances created by the Syrian civil war which forced Syrians to flee and seek humanitarian protection. Contrary to the popular discourse centred on suspicion and fear, this frame employed linguistic strategies to represent 'refugees' as victims.

**FIGURE 7. TERMS USED TO PRESENT SYRIAN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**





Syrians were exclusively represented as 'refugees', as highlighted in the headlines below:

UK must do more to help reunite Syrian families separated in the refugee crisis (The Guardian, 2016)

A plea to Europe: Don't turn your back on Syrian refugees (The Independent, 2015a)

Our moral duty to the migrants is to make Syria safe to live in again; Creating secure havens in the war-torn country is the only long-term answer to this humanitarian crisis (The Telegraph, 2015b)

These are not just refugees, they are real people; The Migrant Crisis is quickly turning into a humanitarian catastrophe on a huge scale (The Sun, 2015d)

Syrians were constructed as 'genuine refugees' who required humanitarian protection and aid. Syrians had been forced to flee as a result of the Syrian conflict, which had created an inhumane environment. British foreign policy has consistently valued Syria's role and importance to stability in the Middle East (Scott, 2016). The Arab Spring protests started in 2011 and resulted in violence and protests, demanding President Assad's removal. At the time of writing this thesis, the Syrian crisis has been ongoing since 2011. The UK has continued to publicly support the humanitarian needs of Syrians who have been threatened by the military offensive of the Assad regime and Russia (Foreign Commonwealth Office, 2018).

'We are supporting diplomatic efforts that lead to an end to violence and to a process of genuine political transition - as well as investigations into the desperate human rights situation. The UK is also providing almost £2.71 billion in response to the humanitarian crisis inside Syria and neighbouring countries' (Department for International Development, 2019).

Newspaper headlines also described the humanitarian plight and desperation of refugees to evoke feelings of sympathy. Interestingly, in *The Sun* headline, refugees were juxtaposed against '*real people*', revealing a hostility towards refugees. In this instance, *The Sun* described those on the move in a positive light, as people rather than products, to provoke feelings of compassion for those in need of humanitarian protection. The lexical choices within the news discourse were fundamental in maintaining the identity of 'refugees' as helpless victims. Descriptive terms such as, 'desperate', 'tragic' and 'fleeing' were employed in the headlines to achieve this.

Refugee crisis: Following the tragic journey of Aylan Kurdi's family from Syria to Kos (The Independent, 2015b)

Kos shows there is no escape from the migrant crisis; The tourists unsettled by the desperate people around them avert their eyes. As does our prime minister (The Observer, 2015a)

In Jordan, we understand a refugee crisis; International agencies must recognise the efforts our country has made to support fleeing Syrians (The Telegraph, 2015a)

Police branded 'savages' after beating desperate refugees trapped in 'hell' (The Daily Mirror, 2015b)

The headlines (above), represented 'refugees' as a vulnerable group. Syrians were described as legitimate refugees who had suffered tragedy and were portrayed as helpless victims. Syrian refugees were positioned as helpless, in order to appeal to the state to help the plight of refugees. This revealed a positive stance adopted by the newspapers which advocated support and assistance towards Syrian refugees by focusing on their vulnerability and forced nature of their migration. The image of the drowned Syrian boy, Aylan Kurdi, provoked a sympathetic and supportive response. 'Everyone who saw these pictures last night could not help but be moved, said the UK Prime Minister David Cameron' (The Independent, 2015a). Some argue (Mortensen, 2017) that the image of Aylan Kurdi was iconic in transforming the hostile reception of forced migrants to one of compassion and empathy for Syrian refugees who had suffered persecution. Studies have suggested that public debate and opinion on refugees can be influenced by visuals (Höijer, 2004; Bleiker et al., 2013; Mortensen, 2017). The image of Aylan Kurdi embodied the humanitarian tragedy created by the Syrian refugee crisis.

The analysis has highlighted that newspaper headlines consistently focused on the vast numbers of individuals causing Europe's crisis. The main representations of the 'migrant/refugee crisis', presented a linear flow of people who migrated to Europe. However, many of the individuals who arrived into Europe during 2015 had been living for months, or in other instances for years in countries other than their birth country (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018). The many conceptual, social and legal complexities of those on the move during 2015 were dismissed in news reporting and portrayed simplistically as either 'refugees' or 'migrants'. In addition, the categories 'migrant' and 'refugee' were regularly conflated in headlines. Both positive and negative frames were utilised to report on the humanitarian crisis of 2015. The analysis revealed that news reporting in the UK presented contradictory narratives to represent 'migrants' and 'refugees'. Chapter Five also drew attention to the contradictory depictions of 'refugees' in policy discourse.

The use of different categories to portray individuals on the move became deeply politicised during the height of the crisis. The terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' were employed to justify both policies of inclusion as well as exclusion by politicians. It is impossible to ignore the role of the media in influencing both public and elite political attitudes and perceptions towards migration. The UNHCR published a report on the press coverage of the refugee and migrant crisis in the UK, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Sweden in 2015, and concluded that contradictory frameworks appeared in all of the news stories in the sample (Berry et al., 2015). Interestingly, the report also highlighted that news reporting in the United Kingdom was the most negative and most polarised in the sample. The distinctions between 'migrant' and 'refugee', and in turn whether an event was referred to as a 'migration crisis', or a 'refugee crisis', strengthened the divisions between those that were 'wanted, 'unwanted' and fundamentally the 'deserving' and 'underserving' groups. By referring to individuals as 'migrants' we are framing them in a political discourse, rather than within the framework of humanitarian rights which the designation 'refugee' automatically causes us to identify with ethically and legally. The conflation of 'migrant' and 'refugee' identities, contributes to and constructs our understanding of those identities. News reporting focused on presenting the 'migrant' and 'refugee' crisis interchangeably. This is problematic as it reflects a trend of conflating immigration and forced migration in reporting. This also demonstrates the process of 'discursive formations' in operation by the media, as the blurring of the terms 'migrant' and 'refugee', merged the boundaries between individuals. This is important as the contrasting labels provide very different levels of protection to newcomers and can mean the difference between life and death. This process also plays a role in providing the changing meanings attached to the terms 'migrant' and 'refugee'. The conflation of the terms 'migrant' and 'refugee' produces a 'regime of truth' (Hall, 1992, p.205).

The next part of the chapter draws on the experiences of two journalists from *The Guardian*, who report on forced migration to provide further insights into how particular categories were selected when reporting on forced migration in the UK.

## Reporting on Forced Migration

The challenge for the journalist is to; correctly label the individuals they are reporting on. This task is not always easy as Frances and Kate revealed. Frances was a North of England reporter with over four years' experience in news reporting. Kate was a Commissioning editor for special projects and had been in the field over six years.

Frances explained her approach when categorising individuals on the move.

*'We have a Style Guide which is written by our senior sub-editors. So when you're writing an article for the Guardian and you're not sure when to use the term refugee, or migrant, you can look it up in the Style Guide and it will tell you what we use.... So I've just googled refugee and it says 'refugee', according to the Refugee Council, a refugee is defined as a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, and membership of a particular social group, or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself to the protection of that country. The Refugee Convention of 1951 is the key legal document in defining who is a refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of the state towards refugees. Let me look at migrant, but yeah that answers that question, if you want the detailed descriptions of what Guardian journalists, how were expected to describe things then you can look it up in there. So migration. A migrant, migrates from one country to another. An "economic migrant", is how right-wing newspapers, and politicians describe someone who immigrates to the UK to do what emigrants from the UK do when they migrate to other countries' (Frances, North of England reporter).*

Frances's account referred to the process which journalists at *The Guardian* followed when in doubt about which categories were the most appropriate to depict forced migrants in reporting. *The Guardian's* Style Guide, authored by the senior sub-editors was employed to determine the correct categorization of individuals on the move. The Style Guide defined the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' normatively. A 'refugee' was characterised according to the legal ideology which underpinned The 1951 Refugee Convention. 'Refugees' were individuals who feared persecution in their home countries as a result of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. Refugees were entitled to humanitarian protection. In contrast, the label 'migrant' classified individuals who travelled from one country to another. The Style Guide differentiated between 'migrants' and 'economic migrants'. The label 'economic migrant' was adopted by right-wing newspapers and politicians to classify individuals who settled in the UK, similar to British emigrants. Frances's account suggested that correctly categorizing individuals on the move was not a difficult process. The Style Guide was utilised as a guideline and reference point, in situations where the reporter was unclear, whether the term 'migrant', or 'refugee' was the most appropriate to categorise individuals on the move.

In contrast, Kate shared some of the difficulties in categorisation when reporting on forced migration.

*'So if you're talking about a particular person, then it's sort of your job to know and that's an easy one to say did you get refused asylum or granted asylum? When you're talking more generally, that's difficult and when you're talking about you know, do you call it the refugee crisis for example, they're not all refugees, is it a migration crisis? Migration is a word that makes it feel like there's more choice, more volition, it's not forced migration. You know what language do you use? And we had this problem when we launched the New Arrivals, when we were discussing a name for the series the original thought and we've done this in a way is to have each newspaper follow a family and their country over the course of the year... But we really struggled with naming it, because you had all different manners of people, so you had in our German family that Der Spiegel are following, are a Syrian family who are granted refugee status very quickly upon arrival in Germany. By the time Der Spiegel started with them they were already technically refugees. But then you had our family who were asylum-seeking, and were going through the asylum process, so you can't call them refugees and to do so sort of pre-judges their case which is unfair, you know it's unfair to the Home Office who have to make these determinations about people's cases and then. But you also have people in Spain who are not all of them were actually seeking asylum some of them were seeking other immigration statuses in Spain so it became very tricky what language do you use? We were like...do you call it refugees and other migrants? You know that doesn't work. The New Arrivals worked very well because that fits all of the cases, you can arrive and there's no judgement on your, on your immigration status. Yeah so it's a tricky one because you want to be accurate but accuracy sometimes means you have to use words that have connotations that aren't necessarily fair' (Kate, Commissioning Editor).*

Kate's extract suggested that it was the reporter's job to determine which type of forced migrant they were reporting on. In individual stories it was very easy to establish if the person was an 'asylum-seeker' or not, as the reporter would simply ascertain if the individual was in the asylum process and whether they had received a decision on their application. The same determination process could not be applied in situations where there was more than one person involved. Kate's account revealed that categorizing large numbers of individuals on the move proved to be challenging for journalists during the events of 2015. Not all of the individuals on the move were 'refugees' and neither, were they all 'migrants'. Accurate categorization was important in reporting. Kate's extract highlighted that the term 'migrant', removed the forced nature of the migratory journey, by describing the freedom of movement and therefore, had very different connotations to the term 'refugee'. As a consequence, the

use of the label, 'migrant' in news reporting presented a different account of events. The terminology employed to portray migration was not neutral, and the language employed to report on events in 2015 proved to be difficult, as the reporter's role was to be impartial. Interestingly, in the extract Kate suggested that categories including 'asylum-seeker' and 'migrant' had negative connotations and were not neutral terms. Similar to the earlier newspaper headline analysis of forced migration, both Kate and Frances's accounts likewise demonstrated that the process of categorisation played a role in contributing to understandings of forced migration during the events of 2015.

Furthermore, Kate's account highlighted the complexity involved in correctly categorizing individuals according to their immigration status. Kate was responsible for the New Arrivals Series at *The Guardian*, which followed the journeys of three families who migrated to Europe in 2015. Kate struggled with naming the new series as all of the families had contrasting immigration statuses and in some instances were 'in-between', categories. The terms 'refugee', 'migrant,' and 'asylum-seeker' were not appropriate terms to describe all of the individuals. One family had been granted refugee status, a second family was waiting for a decision on their asylum application, and an additional family was not seeking asylum but an alternative immigration status. Kate's extract indicated that she chose not to employ the different categories interchangeably to refer to the families that arrived in Europe in 2015. Kate's account also revealed that it was difficult to select categories, which were not loaded in any way. Ultimately, Kate employed the title; *The New Arrivals*, for the series as that involved no judgement, as it deliberately did not refer to any of the immigration statuses of the families. Journalists similar to academics in the field encounter a number of challenges when categorising 'forced migrants' in news reporting.

Frances, similarly to Kate, also suggested that that it was important not to use the labels 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' interchangeably in reporting.

'Researcher: In your reporting how would you define an asylum-seeker?

*Participant: Someone who is in the process of applying for asylum. So it would be different from a refugee because it's again, I'm not an expert but I define it in a just a very straightforward legal term. Do they have an application for asylum? Kind of in process, underway and if they do then there an asylum-seeker' (Frances, North of England Reporter).*

In Frances's account the category 'asylum-seeker' was understood normatively and applied to an individual who requested asylum. An 'asylum-seeker' was not the same as a 'refugee', as an 'asylum-seeker' was involved in a legal process to determine their eligibility, they had applied for asylum and were waiting for a decision on their application. Interestingly, at various points in the interview, Frances claimed that she was not a specialist on forced migration terminology. She may not have considered herself an expert; nonetheless, she had written a number of articles on asylum and forced migration covering the whole of the UK. Kate also reiterated the importance of employing the correct terminology in reporting.

*'I mean asylum-seeker has a particular legal definition and asylum-seeker and refugee are not the same thing, and they shouldn't be used interchangeably, and that's very important, that someone is seeking asylum before they've had a decision on their case, maybe after if they've been refused, if they're then going on for fresh submission they're an asylum-seeker. You are a refugee once you've been granted protection under the Refugee Convention' (Kate, Commissioning Editor).*

Kate also pointed to the uncomplicated legal definitions of an 'asylum-seeker' and a 'refugee', and explained that both terms were distinct and should not be employed interchangeably to refer to the same person. The category 'asylum-seeker' was reserved for those who had applied for asylum. In contrast, the label 'refugee' was employed for individuals who had successfully been granted humanitarian protection according to the Refugee Convention. Both Kate and Frances's accounts signified the legal normative underpinnings of the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee', interestingly, the normative nature of these terms was also discussed in Chapter Five.

The findings also revealed alternative understandings of asylum, and the negativity surrounding the category 'asylum-seeker' in general, which also created difficulties in reporting. Similar to the analysis in the first part of this chapter, the findings highlighted that the terms employed to categorise both groups and individuals on the move play a role in framing our understandings by providing the meanings we attach to those groups and individuals. In addition, this demonstrates the circulation of power as the manner in which 'forced migrants' were framed in reporting also affected their reception and treatment.

## Other Challenges in Reporting on Forced Migration

Both Kate and Frances encountered a range of difficulties when reporting on forced migrants. Kate highlighted that the label 'asylum-seeker', had a multitude of meanings. Whilst

it was important for journalists to employ the correct terminology in reporting, this proved to be more difficult in practice.

*'The words are loaded in different ways and the phrase asylum-seeker is very hard to get sympathy from readers... It seems like readers struggle to care about asylum-seekers in a way they might care about refugees. I think that comes from a history of decades, to be honest, of coverage that's painted asylum-seekers as sort of queue jumping benefit scrounging people who are here to take from the country rather than genuine refugees who are in need of help. Even though of course, almost every genuine refugee who's in the country was at one point an asylum-seeker. But it's really important to be technically correct'* (Kate, Commissioning Editor).

For Kate the label 'asylum-seeker' has underlying negative connotations. This was a consequence of media coverage repeatedly portraying 'asylum-seekers' as freeloaders, benefiting from the generosity of the state. 'Asylum-seekers' were consistently depicted as economic migrants in disguise, abusing the system in news stories. This understanding was very different to the official and legal construction of an 'asylum-seeker'. Kate suggested that 'asylum-seekers' had been juxtaposed against '*genuine refugees*'. The public were less sympathetic towards asylum-seekers compared to refugees. In Kate's account, 'asylum-seekers' were perceived as disingenuous individuals rather than 'genuine' refugees. Kate also highlighted the close relationship between the terms 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee', as most refugees started off as asylum-seekers. Kate maintained that it was very important for journalists to adopt the correct terminology in reporting, however this was challenging as the label 'asylum-seeker' was not a neutral term. Frances also highlighted the public negativity-surrounding asylum.

*'The trouble with writing about asylum-seeker housing is that there is the idea, I think among people generally, that if you are seeking asylum, or you are a refugee in the UK, then you are receiving our charity and you should be endlessly grateful for the small amounts that we as a state, and a country give you as charity... Lots of people when my piece was published responded by saying well we're giving them a roof over their heads for free what are they complaining about? You know if they don't like it go somewhere else, you know that kind of thing'* (Frances, North of England Reporter).

Frances, similarly to Kate, highlighted the negative public perceptions towards 'asylum-seekers', as some members of society believed that asylum-seekers and refugees should be constantly thankful for the minimal support they are provided by the state. Frances revealed that after publishing stories on asylum-seeker housing she received lots of criticism



from members of the public, who demonstrated no sympathy for asylum-seekers, and claimed that if asylum-seekers were not happy with the accommodation provided, they should leave the UK. This suggested that 'asylum-seeker' issues were not seen as a worthy cause, as they were not welcomed into the UK. The category 'asylum-seeker' may appear to have a very straightforward legal and official definition, however the term has a range of meanings and not all of them were positive. This created difficulties for Frances as the public did not always respond well to asylum-seeker stories.

Furthermore, Frances revealed that obtaining official information on asylum-seekers was always challenging.

*'Because immigration generally is such a big issue for the general public. But it's also a big issue for the UK's right wing newspapers and so the Tory government is constantly on the defensive so it's very hard to get clear information from them because they don't want it to be taken and contributed to this narrative of how the UK is like overrun with immigrants. Basically, it's really hard to get information out of the Home Office about it. I would say that's one of the difficulties'.* (Frances, North of England Reporter).

Frances explained that she struggled to obtain information on asylum from the Home Office directly. This was a key challenge when she reported on asylum issues. Immigration had become a key political and decisive issue, therefore the Conservative government were reluctant to speak to journalists. As the government did not want to fuel the debates that the UK had been taken over by foreigners. Immigration had become a topical issue for the public and politicians alike, and this created challenges for reporters in accessing the official information on asylum from the Home Office.

Kate also struggled to receive information from the Home Office.

*'I mean the Home Office provide regular statistics and numbers, that's really useful for unpacking the sort of the data behind how they're going with processing claims, where people are sent to... Yes so you get that official perspective but the Home Office is not very open in terms of talking with journalists, they will provide several of the same answers often to press enquiries about refugees. It's very difficult to get more than that from them'* (Kate, Commissioning Editor).

Kate's account indicated that journalists utilised the Home Office quarterly asylum statistics as they were publicly available. Asylum figures formulated the 'official perspective' from the Home Office in news stories. Other than that, journalists struggled to obtain

information directly from the Home Office. Although Kate and Frances had different backgrounds and varying levels of experience in news reporting on forced migration, they both revealed some interesting insights. Academics and practitioners in the field continue to debate the correct uses of the terms 'migrant' (Anderson and Blinder, 2016), and 'refugee' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014), journalists also faced the same difficulties. The accounts of both Kate and Frances suggested that they tried to utilise the 'official' and legal categories and definitions in reporting, however the terms 'asylum-seeker' and 'migrant' were not neutral terms encompassing multiple meanings and interpretations beyond the straightforward legal and official.

## Conclusion

This chapter has increased our understanding of the social construction of 'forced migrants' in news reporting. The analysis highlighted the polarisation and inconsistency in news reporting as contradictory frames were utilised to report on the humanitarian crisis of 2015. Forced migrants were represented as either 'refugees' or 'migrants', and furthermore, both categories were regularly conflated in headlines. The distinctions between the terms 'migrant' and 'refugee', and in turn whether an event was referred to as a 'migration crisis', or a 'refugee crisis', strengthened the divisions between those that were 'wanted, 'unwanted', and the 'deserving', and 'undeserving' groups. Furthermore, the conflation of the labels 'migrant', and 'refugee', suggests that there was no difference between both terms. Fundamentally, this process contributes to and constructs our understanding of 'forced migrant' identities, demonstrating 'discursive formations' in operation.

News reporting focused on presenting the 'migrant' and 'refugee' crisis interchangeably. This is problematic as it reflects a trend of conflating immigration and forced migration in reporting. Categorising individuals as 'migrants' frames individuals in a political discourse, rather than within the framework of humanitarian rights, which the label 'refugee' causes us to identify with, ethically and legally. News reporting ignored the social, legal, and conceptual complexities of those on the move in 2015. The headlines centred on the crisis that European countries faced as a consequence of large numbers of individuals attempting to reach Europe. 'Forced migrants' were regularly dehumanised and constructed as products rather than people. Similar, to the analysis in Chapter Five the findings indicated the significance of the 'managed migration' framework in news reporting.

In addition, the analysis included the experiences of two journalists who report on forced migration to highlight the challenges that reporters faced. These findings are important, as it is surprising that media professionals' experiences have not been examined in previous studies. The analysis highlighted the social complexity surrounding the label 'asylum-seeker' as it encompassed a multitude of meanings. The term 'asylum-seeker' was not a neutral term as it had very negative connotations. Public perceptions towards 'asylum-seekers' were negative as 'asylum-seekers' were perceived as economic migrants in disguise. This chapter has demonstrated that the framing of 'forced migrants' and 'asylum-seekers' affected their reception and treatment. Journalists similar to academics and practitioners struggled with categorising individuals on the move. It is not easy classifying groups of individuals who have migrated from their home countries as they all have very different immigration statuses and can be 'in-between' categories.

The next chapter will investigate the views of practitioners on the official categories and definitions of asylum.

# Chapter Seven: Part I. Study 3: Official and Unofficial Understandings of Asylum

## Introduction

In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, the introductory section in this study chapter will be brief. The positions revealed in Chapter Six suggested that binaries served a fundamental function in news reporting on forced migration. On the one hand, forced migrants were either categorised as ‘migrants’ or ‘refugees’; on the other, the labels ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ were applied interchangeably. Significantly the juxtaposition, and conflation of different identities contributes to and constructs our understanding of those identities. This was also reflective of a wider trend of reporting on immigration and asylum-seeking interchangeably. Furthermore, this process also plays a role in providing the changing meanings attached to the terms ‘asylum-seeker’ and ‘refugee’.

This chapter examines how the official categories and definitions of asylum were understood and employed by practitioners who worked with asylum-seekers. Chapter Seven is divided into two parts. Part One responds to the sub-research question; *how do practitioners construct asylum-seekers?* I start by exploring the shared generalist and specialist perspectives of the participants. ‘Specialist’ refers to the extensive experience that many of the participants had developed over the years working in the field. ‘Generalist’ captures some of the other ideas, which the practitioners referred to from their life experiences rather than their professional roles. From this, the discussion explores the use of binaries and furthermore, highlights unofficial representations of ‘asylum-seekers’. Part One closes with the perceived economic and security risks associated with asylum-seekers. Part Two considers the relationship between the categories ‘asylum-seeker’ and ‘refugee’.

## Method

The participants were selected according to purposeful sampling. A prerequisite for all interviewees was experience of working with asylum-seekers. The sample contains twenty-one individuals who worked at charities, NGOs, local authorities and training providers. The roles

and seniority of the practitioners varied, dependent on the structure and purpose of their organisations. The majority of participants worked in roles where they had direct front-line experience of working with both asylum-seekers and refugees. In some instances, the individuals had senior roles where they had no direct contact with asylum-seekers or refugees, although they had previous direct front-line experience. Some of the participants had more recent experience of working with either refugees or asylum-seekers. Two had been asylum-seekers or refugees. Table 9 provides more information about the interviewees. Pseudonyms have been adopted for all of the participants.

Theoretical thematic analysis was employed to code the interview data using Watts's (2014), two level, 'what/how' coding framework to generate the initial and final codes (see Chapter Four, tables 3 and 5). The coding process was non-linear and involved an iterative process which led to the development of the descriptive and interpretative coding resulting, in the identification of themes following Lichtman (2017). The analysis is presented at the latent level as the themes involved interpretative work moving beyond the semantic content of the data. The interview extracts for the analysis were selected according to the first-person and third person analytic perspectives employed to code the data (Watts, 2014).

**TABLE 8. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Type of Front-Line Experience</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Been an Asylum-Seeker or Refugee</b>
Francois	Client Advisor	National charity	Direct	London	Yes
Mike	Client Advisor	National charity	Direct	London	Yes
Izzy	Senior Manager	National charity	Direct	London	No
Melanie	Client Administrator	National charity	Indirect	London	No
Gill	Client Advisor	National charity	Direct	London	No
Mary	Contact Centre Advisor	National charity	Indirect	South East	No
Daniel	Telephone Advisor	National charity	Indirect	South East	No
Bob	Senior Telephone Advisor	National charity	Direct	South East	No
Joshua	Telephone Advisor	National charity	Indirect	South East	No
Simon	Telephone Advisor	National charity	Indirect	South East	No
Matt	Senior Manager	Regional Training Service Provider	Direct	South East	No
David	Senior Manager	Local Authority	Indirect	South East	No
Jenny	Senior Manager	National charity	Indirect	South East	No
Hannah	Senior Manager	National Charity	Indirect	South East	No
Amy	Manager	Local Charity	Direct	South East	No
Rosie	Senior Manager	Local Charity	Direct	South East	No
Olivia	Refugee Re-settlement Co-ordinator	Local Authority	Direct	London	No
John	Principal Strategy Officer	Local Authority	Indirect	London	No
Stewart	Co-ordinator for the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme	Local Authority	Indirect	South East	No
Neil	Service Manager: Refugee Services & International Family Tracing	National NGO	Direct	South East	No
Lilly	Community Safety Manager for refugees and migrants	Local Authority	Indirect	South East	No

## Official Understandings of Asylum-Seeking

Asylum practitioners referred to the Home Office definition of asylum (see Chapter Five) to varying degrees in their accounts. The interview responses of Mike, Bob and John, serve as exemplars of the wider body of participants' experiences as a whole. Mike's role as a client advisor involved him assisting newly arrived asylum-seekers in initial accommodation and outreach<sup>14</sup>. Mike's description of an asylum-seeker centred on the official ideology underpinning asylum. It is worth pointing out that Mike had both personal and professional experience of the asylum system, as he had entered the UK as an asylum-seeker.

*'Asylum-seeker, I would describe as a person who is leaving his country and claiming asylum, formally claiming asylum to another country to protect his life actually. To protect his life, and seeking asylum. But his application is still with the Home Office. I would say that this is an asylum-seeker, it hasn't been concluded yet. Leaving his country and claiming asylum in another country for protection'* (Mike, Client Advisor).

Mike's comments provide an appropriate introduction to the shared views of the participants in their 'official' understandings of asylum. For practitioners, an asylum-seeker was an individual who migrated from their home country to seek refuge in another country. The cause of migration was forced rather than voluntary. An individual only became an asylum-seeker when their life became threatened in their country of nationality. As a consequence, an asylum-seeker had no choice but to seek humanitarian protection in an alternative country to their country of birth, as their human rights became endangered. Asylum-seekers were vulnerable individuals who desired the basic human right to life and security. Seeking asylum was regarded as a legal and, importantly, a formal process determined by the Home Office. An individual was characterised as an asylum-seeker during the duration of the process of seeking asylum. The label 'asylum-seeker' was understood normatively within the parameters of the legal and official application process.

Mike also highlighted some of the negative effects of the official asylum determination process.

*'That is the problem, with things that people are in a limbo position and they don't know what will happen to their lives and where they will be, and their position in the*

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<sup>14</sup> Outreach support is offered to vulnerable individuals applying for asylum

*future. How they are staying here, are they going back to their country, and they don't have the right paper to go into that institute, to go to that education. I know that they have the abilities and knowledge and experience and expertise but that simple paper stopped that and that is what I would say' (Mike, Client Advisor).*

Mike discussed the difficulties of the imposed liminality which asylum-seekers experienced as a result of the official asylum process whilst waiting for a decision. The concept of liminality refers to moments of transition and the experience of being in-between moments (Turner, 1967; Thomassen, 2014; Thomassen, 2015). An asylum-seeker is away from their home country and waiting to be accepted into their host country, resulting in the experience of liminality, as they occupy an 'in-between' transitory status. In the above extract, the imposed liminality produced uncertainty and created a lack of autonomy over everyday life and routines. Access to education was limited and even restricted for an asylum-seeker during this period. This in-between existence was very challenging for an asylum-seeker, as it not only affected the present but it also heavily influenced the future. Mike's account also revealed how the official process of seeking asylum paused time for an 'asylum-seeker'. Time was a factor whereby an asylum-seeker experienced 'permanent temporariness' or the '*limbo position*' which Mike described. Fundamentally, asylum-seekers wait to be either accepted or denied entry and the right of abode in the UK. This points to the temporal spatial nature of asylum. Waiting, suspense and uncertainty are manifestations of the temporal experience of liminality. These are some of the negative effects of the asylum system, as the waiting involved in the asylum determination process restricts the decisions and activities of an asylum-seeker affecting both their present and future.

Bob also described the lengthy and time-consuming process of seeking asylum.

*'We mostly deal with the support side, so if someone comes in regarding the asylum claim...They have their first interview, their second interview and then the decision but it can like sometimes take a year, a year and a half. And I think that could be quicker but then again depends on how they resource the Home Office as well. And in terms of the support side well again (laughs) we start the application, like we can only start filling in the application once they reach destitution within a fourteen day period, now based on that estimation you would expect the decision to come through at least by probably three weeks say, but that is not always the case and I think yeah asylum-seekers they are the ones who face the downside of it because they made the application but yet they're not getting the decision as quickly I would say' (Bob, Senior Telephone Advisor).*



Similarly, Bob's account demonstrated the negative impact of the asylum determination process. Time was a critical, yet uncertain factor in asylum decision making. The Home Office aim to have a final decision within six months of an application, however, it can take longer if the case is more complex (Home Office, 2018a). The turnaround time for individuals who were applying for asylum and in addition, asylum support because of destitution could therefore end up being delayed. Bob indicated that the asylum determination process could also prove to be very lengthy depending on how well the Home Office was resourced. Asylum-seekers suffered as a result of the official system, as they continued to experience periods of uncertainty whilst they await a decision on their application and support claims. These periods, or moments of waiting and uncertainty affected the lives of asylum-seekers as they were unable to go about their usual affairs. Both Mike and Bob's accounts suggest the importance of time, in particular, the pausing of time as a key feature of the experience of 'liminality' created by the official asylum process.

Furthermore, although John's local authority background involved no direct contact with asylum-seekers, he too referred to the temporal characteristics of an asylum-seeker.

*'I would see it as a, quite I suppose sort of relatively narrow official term and also I'm aware, there's this seeking element to it that you haven't necessarily been granted asylum, or leave to remain. You know in the media and... stories about them being you know sort of in limbo for quite a long time and the claim is a process'* (John, Principal Strategy Officer).

John indicated that the label 'asylum-seeker' was limited in its scope as an official category. He also revealed the temporal liminality which all asylum-seekers suffered as a result of the asylum determination process. His account referred to the 'in between' nature of requesting asylum, as the status of an asylum-seeker necessitated a process of waiting or 'limbo'. Asylum-seekers by definition are not fully accepted into the UK, as they are not given the right of leave to remain, neither are they denied entry or deported from the UK during the duration of the asylum claim. This creates a state of 'permanent temporariness' for asylum-seekers whilst they await a decision from the Home Office. John highlighted that waiting and uncertainty became part of everyday life for asylum applicants. Fundamentally, asylum-seekers formally request citizenship rights, the right to be able to live and work in the UK in order to be able to progress with their lives by moving from the stage of 'limbo' caused by the asylum system. The process of seeking asylum creates many difficulties and complexities. One predominate theme which was highlighted by the participants was the temporal liminality suffered by 'asylum-seekers' as a consequence of the official asylum process.

## Unofficial Understandings of Asylum-Seeking

The participants also revealed alternative understandings of asylum-seekers which contradicted official normative frameworks. Many of the participants' accounts centred on the negative use of labelling surrounding the category 'asylum-seeker'. Asylum support practitioners typically adopted the terms 'genuine', 'deserving' and 'legal' to describe those individuals who were justified entry into the UK. In contrast, the terms 'bogus', 'illegal' and 'undeserving' were descriptions reserved for individuals who did not have the right to be in UK as they did not belong. The next section explores some of the unofficial understandings and negativity associated with the category 'asylum-seeker' in practitioner work.

### The 'Legal' and 'Illegal'

The term 'illegal' was often used to depict asylum-seekers, Rosie referred to this below,

*'It's either that notion of legal, illegal or it's that notion of oh the poor things, let's see how we can save them and help them. And both of those are problematic in very different ways. And of course, there are others who just see them as people you know. They see their potential but there's a lot of disconnect, the wider narratives and discourses are either they're illegal, they shouldn't be here, their sort of using up all the resources kind of idea or, oh poor things let's try and save them you know and I find all of those problematic. It's useful but it's not the right way of going about it' (Rosie, Senior Manager).*

Rosie explained that all mainstream portrayals of 'asylum-seekers' were questionable. Asylum-seekers were differentiated according to legitimacy. They were either viewed as criminals by being grouped together as 'illegal' individuals. Or alternatively, asylum-seekers were categorised as vulnerable and needy people who desired to be rescued from their state of despair. The first representation was problematic since 'asylum-seekers' by definition could not be categorised as illegal. Furthermore, illegality implies criminality and creates the belief that asylum-seekers do not have the right to be present in the UK. The second depiction was less negative towards asylum-seekers, however was still challenging as it rested on the dependency of asylum-seekers by removing their independence and autonomy. For Rosie, asylum-seekers were human beings and should be presented as people, not criminals or needy characters that required saving. In Rosie's account the term 'asylum-seeker' was not merely a

legal or official category, but also an evaluative label which involved moral judgements about the legitimacy of each asylum applicant. Furthermore, the negativity surrounding asylum-seekers also centred on the idea that asylum-seekers were an economic drain on the government. From Rosie's account the negative perceptions towards 'asylum-seekers' focused on their legitimacy.

John also echoed Rosie's comments on the discourse surrounding the 'illegality' of asylum-seekers. When asked how the British public perceived 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers' John explained,

*'I think especially during the 90s and 2000s in some people's minds asylum-seeker, particularly asylum-seeker became almost a term of abuse and was seen as a shameful thing and like it became so often in political and media discourse associated with the bogus asylum-seekers. They were just elided into the same thing so asylum-seeking was seen as something bad and almost illegal and...we should never have any'* (John, Principal Strategy Officer).

John's account referred to the *longue durée* of the negativity surrounding asylum in the UK, originating in the 1990s. The extract signified how the term 'asylum-seeker' was not simply understood according to normative and legal frameworks. The category 'asylum-seeker' had become stigmatised amongst certain members of the British public. The label had been continually misused and employed as a term of insult, as the act of claiming asylum became associated with negativity and disgrace. This perception had been created as a result of the political and media focus on false asylum-seekers, which had presented asylum seeking and bogus asylum seeking as one and the same thing. Such a description of an 'asylum-seeker,' conflicted with the official and legal definitions of asylum. The extract suggested that asylum seeking had become a category to denote criminality. Public perceptions towards individuals claiming asylum were negative as the public did not want the UK to welcome asylum applicants. John's response mirrored the other practitioner views on the damaging discourse associated with asylum today. Significantly, John's account highlighted the shared public belief that asylum-seekers were merely evading legitimate immigration controls to enter the UK, as the majority of asylum claims were in fact false. Simon also shared this view,

*'Researcher: What do you mean that the terms are used interchangeably?*

*Participant: I think that people think illegal immigrants, illegal migrants are the same as asylum-seekers. I think there's a big difference, they're all used in the same stories and they're interchangeable and I think there should definitely be some sort of system*

*in place so that asylum-seekers are understood as essentially what they are. They are people who are trying to claim asylum and that whilst they have a valid asylum claim they should be treated as a member of society and they should be given the same freedom as a member of society, a member of the British society' (Simon, Telephone Advisor).*

Simon revealed that the merging of different categories of migrants and immigration statuses by the media had created confusion in relation to asylum. 'Asylum-seekers' had been conflated with both 'illegal migrants' and 'illegal immigrants', as these terms had been applied interchangeably to refer to the same individuals and events in news reporting. Simon's extract indicated the problem with the conflation of contrasting categories. Asylum-seekers by definition could not be 'illegal' and furthermore should not be presented as migrants, as they are not the same. For Simon, 'asylum-seekers' were individuals undergoing a legal process to receive refuge as they had been forced to migrate from their home countries. Asylum-seekers had not voluntarily chosen to migrate from their country of nationality. The two categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'illegal migrant' had to be differentiated. Asylum-seekers had become criminalised as a consequence of being conflated with individuals with a precarious and illegitimate immigration status. Asylum-seekers were differentiated from British citizens and unable to enjoy the same privileges or freedoms as British citizens whilst awaiting a decision. The conflation of the label 'asylum-seeker' with migrant categories resulted in confusion and the criminalisation of asylum-seeker identities. Furthermore, it fuels the political and media debates of who is 'deserving' and importantly who is 'undeserving' of protection and support.

## The Deserving and the Undeserving

The participants described the multiple layers of negativity associated with the term 'asylum-seeker'. Rosie's account illustrated how asylum-seekers were considered to be an 'undeserving' group.

*'Oh just some individuals who had problems or issues about us spending money on helping and supporting refugees or asylum-seekers, or when like at Christmas time when we were working with some other organisations to fundraise you know. They were selling calendars and Christmas cards you know to raise money for X, and they were like I would rather give to the homeless kids that we've got in the UK, English ones you know not anybody else' (Rosie, Senior Manager).*

Rosie's extract highlighted the challenges that charities faced when fundraising for forced migrants. Furthermore, Rosie's account indicated how the negative discourse surrounding asylum had led to the different and exclusionary treatment of asylum-seekers compared to English citizens. Asylum-seekers were perceived as unworthy, and fundamentally, as 'undeserving' of charity. English citizens in need, for example, those who were homeless were prioritised as a group over asylum-seekers and refugees, as only English citizens were considered to be deserving of aid. This exclusionary ideology was adopted in order to provide the justification for not providing support to asylum-seekers. Rosie's account suggested that discourses of nation and identity had been utilised to prioritise the needs of the English population. This indicated an 'us and them' dichotomy. Both an 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' had been constructed as outsiders and therefore, not worthy or 'deserving' of aid, as forced migrants were viewed as 'non-English'. It was only English citizens who were considered members of the nation that deserved charity. Forced migrants as a group had therefore, been excluded from public charity.

Neil also demonstrated this in his example below,

*'I did benefit from fundraising, so two Easter's ago they got NatWest bank in X, to collect Easter eggs for my young refugees project, and you know they did well, actually the lady in the bank went down the high street and got loads of donations. I went and spoke to her when it was done, and I drove with her back to our offices, and I told her that, the young refugees the asylum-seekers children's would really love this and she said what do you mean? I told her where they were going and she hadn't realised. She thought they were going into children's homes or something. So our fundraising had got it wrong. Fundraising's a funny area because they're not always completely upfront about where the money is going or how much of the money is going towards admin or anything else and the fundraising lady who has gone now she didn't tell them what it was for. Just for vulnerable children, now the young lady went white faced she wasn't happy. I mean she didn't stop the donation or anything but she wasn't happy about the fact that it was going to refugees and asylum-seekers. So not everybody's on board I know that'* (Neil, Service Manager: Refugee Services).

Similar to Rosie, Neil revealed the challenges in fundraising for forced migrants, as a result of national rhetoric. Essentially, 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' were not regarded in the same light as native citizens, as they were not viewed as equals. British citizens had a higher ranking compared to forced migrants, as British citizens were given preferential treatment in fundraising causes. There were very different attitudes towards those who were

considered to be 'deserving' of charity and aid in the UK. Forced migrants were not judged as a worthy cause for many, as they were not regarded as members of the nation. In Neil's example, the NatWest employee's definition of vulnerable children did not encompass asylum-seeking children or young refugees. Neil's account highlighted that fundraising for charities in general was difficult, as charities were not always transparent in where the fundraising money was being allocated to in an organisation. In this instance, the fundraiser had been informed that the money was being raised for helpless children and she had assumed the cause was for British children rather than refugee, or asylum-seeking children. Furthermore, after learning the truth the NatWest employee felt disappointed.

Interestingly, this account revealed the underlying discriminatory attitudes towards 'forced migrants'. Asylum-seekers and refugees were differentiated and essentially excluded from public charity. Charity involves giving to others who are less fortunate and demonstrating compassion for those in need. However, there appears to be a hierarchy of charitable worthy causes in operation. Not all individuals or causes were viewed in the same light, as some groups or causes were considered more worthy and 'deserving' of charity than others. In the above account, the young refugees and asylum-seekers' children were not offered any care or compassion. This suggests that asylum-seekers and refugees were not deemed as a worthy charitable cause, as their welfare was not prioritised. In contrast, the welfare and well-being of native citizens was selected as a worthy charitable cause. Neil's account indicates that nationalist ideology had been utilised to prioritise the needs of individuals perceived to be members of the nation. Both Rosie's local charity and Neil's national charity fundraising background highlighted how the negative attitudes towards 'asylum-seekers' operated in a way to differentiate asylum-seekers and refugees, as 'undeserving' and 'unworthy' of British charity. Forced migrants were constructed as 'outsiders' and furthermore, excluded from the privileges prioritised for members of the nation.

The term 'genuine' was adopted by practitioners to stress the authentic and real need for refuge and protection for individuals in contrast to those claims which were merely 'bogus'. This follows on from the earlier discussion on the 'illegality' of 'asylum-seekers', and the separation of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' groups.

## The Bogus and the Genuine

Neil's account demonstrated the significance of the terms 'genuine' and 'bogus' in framing and differentiating forced migrants claiming asylum.

*'So they are no longer bogus. Do you see what I mean? They're no longer bogus. There's no longer any possibility they're bogus because their risk has been ascertained and proven. So if we know... because we've granted them asylum, granted them asylum given them refugee protection. We know they are a genuine asylum-seeker and they need refuge in this country. Why do we then allow them to be persecuted and vulnerable to destitution here in the UK? They're often worse off here than they were in their country of origin. It's just that they avoided a known risk in their country. But they come over here and they've actually realised that risk is in a place they thought was going to be a place of refuge where the press and most people through ignorance are against them being here. It's very, very undignified if you're not wanted'* (Neil, Service Manager: Refugee Services).

In the extract the narrative of false, or 'bogus' asylum-seeking had become the only lens through which all asylum-seekers were recognised, as there was an underlying assumption that all 'asylum-seekers' were 'bogus'. This indicated the common disbelief surrounding asylum-seekers in the UK. Importantly, the account revealed that following a positive asylum decision, asylum-seekers continued to be excluded and marginalised. Once an asylum-seeker received a positive outcome on their asylum application, the asylum applicant effectively became a 'genuine asylum-seeker'. As the asylum-seeker had successfully gone through the official asylum process and been granted refugee status, essentially proving their right to international protection. Therefore, their legality could no longer be questioned. Nevertheless, although the successful asylum-seeker in the UK avoided an initial identified risk in their birth country, unfortunately, the 'genuine asylum-seeker' continued to be at risk, as a result of the hostile climate in the UK. The negativity surrounding asylum-seekers had created an environment where the media and public were not accepting or welcoming of asylum-seekers as the underlying public perception was that all 'asylum-seekers' were disingenuous. This created many difficulties for asylum-seekers as they continued to be at risk of persecution, discrimination and hardship in the country offering sanctuary.

Similar to Neil, David also referred to the negativity surrounding asylum.

*'When I joined, we were both team leaders at that point working on the front-line and you know back in 2000, people were coming in large numbers in X in those days and I don't think my perception. I can't speak for anyone else now. But I don't think my perceptions have changed over the time. We've seen over all of that time. I've never recognised this term bogus asylum-seeker, I've never recognised this thing about economic migrants. I've only ever seen people that have presented at our offices... These are people who have come from countries that have you know, reflect where there is global conflict' (David, Senior Manager).*

David had extensive experience in the field. He pointed to the long history of Britain providing sanctuary to asylum-seekers. He also revealed that the belief that 'asylum-seekers' were 'bogus' had been in existence for quite some time, originating in the year 2000, when large numbers of individuals claimed asylum in the UK. David explained that he had never personally or professionally accepted the view that asylum-seekers were 'bogus' or simply economic migrants in disguise. His understanding of the term 'asylum-seeker' had not changed since he entered the field. Asylum-seekers were fundamentally individuals from war-torn countries who met the legal criteria for receiving asylum. The extract demonstrated that the negativity towards asylum-seekers rested on the belief that, asylum claimants were disingenuous, and 'economic migrants' in disguise. This led to the belief that asylum-seekers were not 'genuine' and therefore not deserving of the right to asylum.

Matt demonstrated this further below,

*'Researcher: How do you think other people perceive asylum-seekers and refugees?*

*Participant: Oh mixed views. When you just listen on the train or whatever, you hear the people talk... I just think generally I know it's a harsh sweeping statement but I think people just probably think they're a bit of a nuisance really. And don't forget, I think most folks wouldn't divide a refugee from an asylum-seeker from a migrant and economic migrant they wouldn't. There's no distinction so you know... So I think I know it's a bit of a sweeping statement I know a bit of a generalisation, I know but I think most folks see refugees and asylum-seekers as a drain on resources and a bit of a pain in the neck really' (Matt, Senior Manager).*

Matt's account highlighted that attitudes towards asylum-seekers and refugees were polarised. The majority of the public viewed asylum-seekers as an inconvenience and a problem. The public were unable to differentiate between different groups of migrants. 'Asylum-seekers', 'migrants' and 'economic migrants' were all merged together and identified



as one group. This created negative attitudes towards asylum-seekers, as they were perceived as an economic burden on the state and a problem that ceased to go away. Asylum-seekers were not considered as 'genuine'. The merging of different categories and immigration statuses not only confused the identities of different groups, it also changed the meanings attached to the different categories and immigration statuses. This demonstrates the significance of labelling in constructing the 'asylum-seeker'. Similar, to the findings in Chapter Six, the analysis highlighted that the conflation of contrasting categories contributes to and constructs our understanding of those identities. In addition, this process also can undermine public support for forced migrants. Refugees and asylum-seekers are dealt with very differently in legislation compared to migrants. A lack of differentiation between the labels, 'asylum-seeker', 'refugee', 'migrant' and 'economic migrant' added to the confusion and negative attitudes towards individuals on the move. In contrast to Neil and David, Matt did not employ the terms 'bogus' or 'genuine' to refer to asylum-seekers. However, he also indicated the disingenuous perceptions of 'asylum-seekers' from his experiences. None of the participants disclosed if they personally adopted terms such as 'bogus' or 'genuine' to describe forced migrants. However, some of the participants referred to the disingenuous framing of asylum-seekers in the interviews without realising, including Mary.

*'I wouldn't say that it's a big difference. Even on the phone you learn to pick up the clues, you kind of feel how the person is. You can even feel if it's genuine. I'm not saying that its 100 percent right, if it's genuine, or not genuine what they're asking you and what their presenting to you. You have to take what they say as true and go on'*  
(Mary, Contact Centre Advisor).

Mary's role involved providing support and advice to asylum-seekers on the phone. The extract suggested that the term 'genuine' had become a frame for understanding asylum-seekers for some practitioners. The account also pointed to the struggles that practitioners faced in balancing their professional roles and their personal views. Mary's role as a practitioner was not to assess the validity of the asylum applicant's claim. However, in the account she highlighted that she was able to determine if an asylum-seeker was 'genuine'. She also contradicted herself in the same account by maintaining that her role was to listen to each asylum claimant and accept statements without question, rather than attempt to establish if an asylum-seeker was in fact 'genuine'. Mary's use and choice of the term 'genuine' illustrated that the differentiation between 'bogus' and 'genuine' underpinned how asylum-seekers were discussed and furthermore, identified in the front-line. This is interesting, as the participants' professional roles centred on supporting and advising asylum-seekers without judgement. The differentiation, between those who were 'bogus', or 'genuine' rested on judging the legitimacy

of an individual's claim to asylum. It appears that this ideology had also been adopted by some practitioners.

Unlike Mary, Joshua took this further by discussing the connection between forced migrants and economic migrants.

*'I mean... in terms of what that the individual says they're here for, or anywhere, for is always going to be different from, or it could be possibly different from the actual thing. So I'm not going to get too caught up on terminology, because I think at the end of the day it takes a great deal of investigation and case work to determine what actually, whether somebody, they're really just an economic migrant'* (Joshua, Telephone Advisor).

Joshua had a unique profile compared to the other participants as he had prior experience working at the Home Office in removals. Joshua's account highlighted the contested nature of asylum. Fundamentally, all asylum-seekers were perceived as 'economic migrants' until determined otherwise by the Home Office. This disingenuous representation of an 'asylum-seeker' was shrouded in negativity and disbelief, resting on the principle that 'asylum-seekers' were actually 'bogus' and 'economic migrants' in disguise rather, than 'genuine' asylum-seekers. Joshua revealed that an individual can claim to be an asylum-seeker, however, it is only after the Home Office have investigated each individual claim thoroughly, that they were able to determine the validity of an asylum claim. The extract also suggested the confusion surrounding the official terminology relating to asylum. The majority of participants did not share Joshua's views. Nonetheless, Joshua's experiences revealed the wider trend in speaking about immigration and 'asylum-seeking' interchangeably. Importantly, it was highlighted that the distrust surrounding asylum had also been adopted by some practitioners.

In this section, the participant's accounts revealed that the official framework of asylum was not the sole ideology underpinning asylum. The category 'asylum-seeker' had become an evaluative term focused on legitimacy. There was also a lot of negativity surrounding 'asylum-seekers'. The juxtaposition of 'bogus', 'illegal' and 'undeserving' with 'genuine', 'legal' and 'deserving' constructed the frames for understanding the social reality of asylum-seekers. There were a number of binaries created in the asylum discourse centred on the legality, genuineness and worthiness of asylum claimants. The implications of such labels and binaries to the asylum discourse were far reaching when exploring the economic and security risk associated with the label 'asylum-seeker'.

## The Threat of Asylum

Some of the participants discussed the perceived economic risks posed by ‘asylum-seekers’. Bob illustrated this in his example of the negative public reaction in Wakefield, to a proposed asylum-seeker accommodation facility. The local community feared asylum-seekers being accommodated in the area (The Yorkshire Post, 2016). ‘A number of local authorities have regularly expressed these immigration concerns to the Home Office and Immigration Ministers, but we have experienced little urgency in addressing them’ (The Yorkshire Post, 2018).

Bob explained,

*‘Sometimes the media can be like used as a tool to say our countries are over run by immigrants, and people confuse immigrants with asylum-seekers. I’m not sure whether you’re aware of what issues they’re having in Wakefield, in the G4S accommodation a few years ago. Like you know how I mean it’s completely wrong, I think and it’s all to do with the media isn’t it yeah, because people get carried away by what they read in the media.*

*Researcher: What surprised you about the reaction of people to what happened in Wakefield?*

*Participant: Well the general public? Yeah. Well the general public, don’t, I personally feel that the general public don’t really know the exact truth and they just act on the like you know jumping on the bandwagon. I would say on what they see. They speak to their friends you go down the pub, here’s this, people coming in and taking our jobs, that mentality and I think that is what sparked it really. If you try and understand then I think it’s different. Lack of education I would say, lack of education, ignorance’ (Bob, Senior Telephone Advisor).*

In the extract, Bob demonstrated the effects of anti-immigration rhetoric in relation to asylum. The view that immigration was out of control in the UK had resulted in the construction of an immigration crisis. This had influenced public perceptions towards ‘non-citizens’, and importantly affected the treatment of asylum-seekers. The public mistook ‘asylum-seekers’ for immigrants, as they were unable to differentiate between different categories and identities. This was a factor which resulted in negative attitudes towards asylum-seekers and, furthermore, fuelled a hostile anti-asylum environment in the UK. The lack of differentiation between the various categories of migrants resulted in the unfounded

fear that asylum-seekers came to the UK to seize British jobs. This was based on a misunderstanding and reiterated through news reporting which presented 'asylum-seekers' as an economic threat. In the account, Bob held the media responsible for misrepresenting asylum-seekers, by conflating asylum-seekers with immigrants and, reinforcing the perceived threat associated with immigrants. This had become such a popular narrative that it was accepted without question by the majority of the public. It was important to be able to separate the different categories of migrants, in order, to protect the rights and entitlements of those requesting humanitarian protection. Otherwise, as Bob illustrated, all of the different categories of migrants were viewed through one lens as, essentially economic migrants who were motivated to migrate to the UK in order to take jobs away from the British.

Simon's experiences also revealed similar insights,

*'I think lots of people have that perception that asylum-seekers can come here, or come to the UK, and then they work freely, lots of people fear that they have taken their jobs, which I think that's quite a common thread throughout most people and, I think that's something that people get incorrect between EU migrants because they obviously do have the right to work in the UK and they can gain the right to work very easily. Whereas asylum-seekers don't have those options' (Simon, Telephone Advisor).*

Simon's account also pointed to the common public misunderstanding surrounding 'asylum-seekers'. The majority of the public believed that asylum-seekers were able to work without restriction, once they entered the UK. However, this was based on a false assumption, as asylum-seekers were unable to enter the labour market during the asylum determination process. The fear that 'asylum-seekers' arrived into the UK to seize British jobs, was essentially unfounded. Simon also highlighted the widespread confusion surrounding migration in the UK. There was a distinction between the different types of migrants as the rights and entitlements of migrants varied significantly in the UK. European migrants, unlike asylum-seekers were permitted to work freely in the UK. The lack of distinction between forced and voluntary migrants not only created confusion, but also contributed to the negative perceptions towards asylum-seekers, adding to the fear that 'asylum-seekers' posed an economic threat. This also demonstrates the importance of the 'managed migration' framework in constructing asylum-seekers. Both Bob and Simon's experiences focused on the economic threat associated with asylum-seekers. In addition, John also revealed some of the negative attitudes towards asylum-seekers, from a slightly different perspective.

*'This is just my personal perception, but I think it became a dirty word and you know certainly, I've got relatives in kind of like outside London, who kind of think it's like that.'*

*Yeah asylum-seeking, is just there's jokes about asylum-seekers, you know how they were sort of sponging off the state and stuff like that... People just didn't really understand that that situation was created by the state you know that they made people unable to work and look after themselves... I think partly through ignorance... people don't, they just don't think we should have, or accept sort of asylum-seekers and refugees' (John, Principal Strategy Officer).*

In the account, John illustrated the multi-layered negativity towards asylum-seekers as the meaning of the term had evolved. The label 'asylum-seeker' was not only shrouded in negativity, but furthermore, was also employed as a term of ridicule and abuse. The identity attached to the category 'asylum-seeker' had become stigmatised. Here, once again the figure of the 'asylum-seeker' had been presented as an economic threat. In this instance, 'asylum-seekers' were viewed as an economic burden who scrounged off the state and exploited the immigration and welfare systems. 'Asylum-seekers' were targeted for being financially dependent on the state. However, the general public failed to realise that asylum-seekers were unable to exercise financial independence. This misperception arose due to a lack of understanding regarding the official asylum process. Asylum-seekers were unable to work during the period of the asylum claim. The official system was designed to deter asylum applicants. The negativity towards asylum-seekers fuelled a hostile anti-asylum environment. Asylum-seekers had been marginalised as they were not welcome in the UK.

Some of the participants referred to how the topic of asylum had become securitised. Security is socially and politically constructed through the 'struggles for political decisions and justification of practices of surveillance, control and punishment as well as practices of protection' (Bigo, 2008, p.123).

David's narration below highlighted how asylum had become securitised,

*'I think there are around quite often, we're talking about the dispersal programme people talk to local authorities and they are going to talk to, and taken to Cabinet and there will be a general discussion and one of the key factors will be are we safe? Is it safe to have people who have been you know making this journey? Are they terrorists? Are they you know people that? What do we know about them? On the Syrian scheme for example we know that people have been vetted they have gone through all these. What do we know about people that are spontaneously arriving? Actually, we know quite a lot. We are given quite a lot of information about that. But there are some concerns. The bigger agenda out there I think kind of rise of Islamic terrorist attacks; you know high profile attacks will play a part in the perceptions of people. Once they're*

*ingrained they're quite difficult to sort of you know to change' (David, Senior Manager).*

David had a strategic role at a local authority in the South East where he liaised very closely with the Home office. In the extract, David was very explicit about how asylum had transformed into a national security issue. He was very insightful, as he revealed the typical security challenges that local authorities faced when organising asylum dispersal programmes. The underlying fear of the threat of terrorism had been linked to the newly arrived 'asylum-seeker'. This created challenges for local authorities as the act of irregular migration had become criminalised and furthermore, the motivations for claiming asylum had also been questioned. 'Asylum-seekers' were perceived as a security threat in local authorities, and the issue continued to be discussed in government. This made it difficult to disperse asylum-seekers across the UK, as their legitimacy had been questioned due to the possible associated threat of terrorism. In the account David indicated that the security risk posed by newly arrived asylum-seekers was unsubstantiated, as the government had a lot of information about new arrivals. Even so, there was still the fear of the potential terrorist disguised as an 'asylum-seeker'. In the extract, David also compared the asylum dispersal programme with the Syrian resettlement scheme where individuals were not considered a security risk as their cases had been thoroughly assessed. I will discuss the significance of the Syrian re-settlement scheme to the wider asylum discourse in Part Two of this chapter. Interestingly, the account suggested that the global context had been influential in shaping the public's opinions towards 'forced migrants', especially in a climate where countries were on high alert as a result of terrorist attacks. David's experiences signified how the issue of asylum had become both problematized and securitised.

The analysis demonstrated that the figure of the 'asylum-seeker' has been perceived as an economic and security threat today. The economic threat rested on the principle that either asylum-seekers entered the UK to seize British jobs, or alternatively, that asylum-seekers were financial scroungers who exploited the welfare state. Both of these attitudes were contradictory, yet they played a role in representing 'asylum-seekers' as an economic threat. The security danger presented by the 'asylum-seeker', was based on the premise that an 'asylum-seeker' could be a terrorist in disguise. I have by no means explored all of the negativity surrounding asylum-seekers in this analysis. However, after examining the shared specialist and generalist perspectives of asylum practitioners it becomes evident that the manner in which categories were framed in the asylum discourse had serious consequences for the treatment and reception of asylum-seekers.

## Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has deliberately and of necessity drawn attention to both the official and unofficial representations of 'asylum-seekers'. The first part of the analysis demonstrated the significance of the official ideology of asylum in providing the normative framework, which asylum practitioners utilised in their roles. It also revealed some of the negative effects of the asylum determination process. The imposed liminality was explored from the perspectives of practitioners. The permanent temporariness or 'limbo' encountered by asylum-seekers produced uncertainty, as it was essentially an in-between existence, which not only affected the present but also influenced the future lives of asylum-seekers as a result of the official asylum process. The second and third sections of the discussion highlighted some of the alternative portrayals of 'asylum-seekers', which transcend the official and legal ideology underpinning asylum. The analysis highlighted the layers of social complexity connected to the category 'asylum-seeker'. Similar to the media findings in Chapter Six, the positions revealed that binaries served a significant role in representing asylum-seekers. The manner in which the label 'asylum-seeker' was framed in discourse had severe consequences for either including or excluding asylum-seekers, and importantly affected their treatment and reception. The positions also highlighted that the distrust and negativity surrounding asylum had also been adopted by some practitioners.

The figure of the 'asylum-seeker' continues to remain enigmatic. On the one hand, practitioners referred to normative official definitions of asylum in their accounts. Yet, simultaneously their positions revealed contrasting ideologies that also underpinned asylum today. For these reasons, we cannot claim to have here exhaustively charted all uses of the official ideology behind asylum for practitioners. We can, however, claim to have gained preliminary insights into the complexity involved in the construction of asylum and its association with the label 'refugee'. In Part Two, then, we shall continue to explore the meanings attached to the term 'asylum-seeker' by examining how 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' were differentiated in practice by practitioners in their roles.

# Chapter Seven: Part II. Study 3: The Differentiation and Grey Area of Labelling

## Introduction

Part One of Chapter Seven drew attention to both the official, and unofficial understandings of ‘asylum-seekers’ from the perspectives of practitioners. Similar to Chapters Five and Six, the positions demonstrated the significance of binaries and the managed migration paradigm in framing and constructing ‘asylum-seekers’. Importantly, the use of binaries also affected the ideology underpinning asylum and conflicted with the official definitions of asylum. In addition, the analysis also revealed the significance of the conflation of distinctive categories and immigration statuses for ‘asylum-seeker’ identities. This was also reflective of a wider trend of confusing immigration with asylum-seeking, as previously discussed in Chapters Five and Six. The extracts also pointed to the connections between the categories ‘asylum-seeker’ and ‘refugee’.

In Part Two, I respond to following sub-research question; *How do practitioners differentiate between asylum-seekers and refugees?* As highlighted in the literature review, scholars in the field have either focused on the theoretical framing of ‘refugee’ or ‘asylum-seeker’, rather than exploring the intricate relationship of these categories together. This section provides new insights into the relationship of both of these terms. Firstly, I start by providing an overview of how the participants defined a ‘refugee’. The discussion then moves on to examining how ‘asylum-seekers’ and ‘refugees’ were differentiated in the field legally, and in practice, and the implications to the wider asylum discourse. The final section explores the grey area of labelling, including the fluid nature of the labels ‘asylum-seeker’ and ‘refugee’.

## Refugee Definitions

Practitioners typically referred to the legal ideology underpinning the term ‘refugee’. Neil’s account highlighted the significance of official frameworks in relation to the label refugee.

*‘Well in this country, a refugee is somebody who has proved to the authorities; in our case the Home Office, they’ve proved that they are an asylum-seeker, and that they*



*have genuinely flown persecution from their country of origin. That then, means because they've proved it they will therefore, be offered protection by this country and that protection comes in the form of right to public funding, a right to work and a right to stay in the UK with refugee status for up to five years, with leave to remain that's what a refugee is' (Neil, Service Manager: Refugee Services).*

For Neil, the term 'refugee' described the successful completion of the official asylum determination process. It was the legal acknowledgement, and demonstration that an asylum-seeker deserved the right to humanitarian protection. It was a condition which removed any doubts surrounding the credibility, or validity of an asylum claim, as the applicant had established their right to sanctuary. Refugee status entailed freedoms and privileges. Refugees were allowed to work, entitled to receive welfare support, and importantly, humanitarian protection which granted them permission to remain in the UK. However, refugee status was not permanent, considering it was granted for five years, allowing individuals who would not usually have the right of abode in the UK entry and protection. The label 'refugee' was a recognised international legal status and importantly, a privilege granted to those individuals who were deemed 'worthy' of humanitarian protection. Similar to the participants accounts of an 'asylum-seeker' in Part One, the analysis demonstrated that the category refugee was defined with reference to normative legal frameworks.

Although Stewart's local authority experience was unlike Neil's national charity background, he too discussed the importance of the legal status for refugees.

*'Well a refugee is someone who's been recognised as the United Nations 1951 Article 3, so you've been recognised internationally as a refugee. You've applied for asylum possibly. You've been recognised by that host country, that you're now in danger in your own country and that's a refugee, that's someone who's been recognised as a refugee' (Stewart, Co-ordinator for the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme).*

In the extract, Stewart defined a 'refugee' according to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which marked the birth of the international refugee regime. Granting an individual refugee status was both a privilege, and a globally recognised status. It was the highest ranking of humanitarian protection that an individual could receive. Central to the ideology underpinning the term 'refugee' was the life threatening nature of persecution which forced an individual to seek humanitarian protection in an alternative country. It was only after an individual had proven their right to refuge that they were formally accepted as a refugee. The extract highlighted that not all refugees started off as asylum-seekers. The 1951 Refugee Convention

reserves protection only for those who have left their country of origin. An individual was identified as a refugee by the host country providing humanitarian protection. Stewart's extract demonstrated that the forced nature of the migratory movement was at the heart of refugee protection enshrined in the Refugee Convention.

The participants also pointed to the historical ideology that is the backbone of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

*'I would say anyone who seeks refuge in another country is a refugee, and I feel that when you attach it to our ancestors, that have made a decision after the Second World War that this would not be accepted, a lot of things had been committed in, in ways that people need to be able to exercise freedoms, to be treated as human beings. So I think for me a refugee is a term that I prefer to use'* (Izzy, Senior Manager).

Izzy's words indicated the significance of the historical origins of the 1951 Refugee Convention to understanding 'refugees' today. The political environment and aftermath of the Second World War were fundamental in creating the legal and political ideology that underpins a refugee today. The 1951 Refugee Convention was coined during a period of massive migrations in Europe as a result of war, violence and persecution. The Refugee Convention was a commitment to the protection of the most basic human rights of individuals persecuted in their home countries. After the Second World War the international community agreed that all human beings should be able to live their lives freely, and human rights violations would not be tolerated. The 1951 Refugee Convention was the instrument which both symbolised and outlined this ethos. The Convention acknowledged that certain categories of 'forced migrants' had a special right to protection and entry into a state other than their birth country. Refugee rights would be similar to the freedoms experienced by citizens of a state. The extract defined a refugee by referring to the historical origins of the 1951 Refugee Convention, traced back to the Second World War. In addition, Izzy's account suggested that refugee ideology was created according to the context. David's account illustrated this further.

*'So therefore every refugee was at one point a Kosovan, and then every refugee was an Iraqi... there tends to be a lag. Now there is a perception that every refugee is a Syrian. But they're not by any stretch of the imagination as we know, I mean Syrians don't even figure in the top five of you know, it's quite interesting that you have those conversations about asylum dispersal, and you know there will be a perception of that's what we're looking at, not Pakistani, or not Iraqi'* (David, Senior Manager).

In the account, David pointed to the complex relationship between 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' identities according to the context. During distinct time periods, different nationalities have been recognised as refugees and this continually shifts. There was a period when all refugees in the UK were identified as Kosovans, followed by Iraqis. David highlighted that there was usually a delay in which nationality was acknowledged, and perceived to be a refugee producing nation. Today the assumption, was that every Syrian was a refugee. Syria has been a constant feature in British foreign policy since the start of the Arab Spring protests in 2011 (Scott, 2016). The UK has continued to publicly support the humanitarian needs of Syrian nationals affected by military aggression (Foreign Commonwealth Office, 2018). However, interestingly, Syrians did not even feature in the top five nationalities of successful asylum claimants in the UK. Pakistanis and Iraqis were the main nationalities dispersed on the asylum dispersal programme, rather than Syrians. This surprised local authority workers, who were responsible for asylum dispersal. Perceptions of 'refugees' did not always correspond to the reality of asylum claimants on the ground. David also highlighted how this could be problematic below,

*'So I'll give you an example of this, so you might have a local authority that says yeah, yeah we're going to do this Syrian vulnerable person's re-location scheme, and so then the scheme gets disbanded. And you've got the vulnerable children's re-location scheme, people coming from North Africa with the same sort of circumstances, but a political decision has been taken that we are supporting Syrian refugees and what about people from Lebanon?... The political decision was sometimes, that's been quite you know, because you know it's different you've to go back and consult with cabinet democracy' (David, Senior Manager).*

David illustrated the significance of political decisions taken by the state to the wider refugee narrative. Following Foucault (1980), the state is not a unitary actor. It is not a state but the state, with various processes and practices, organisations and institutions operating together to create 'the state'. The perception that all Syrians were refugees, effected the treatment and reception of non-Syrian nationalities requesting humanitarian protection. This led to non-Syrians being identified as non-refugees. David's account demonstrated that although individuals from North Africa had suffered persecution and experienced similar life-threatening situations as Syrian nationals, local authorities in the UK did not see them in the same light. As the perceptions of the public and local authorities towards non-government endorsed nationalities was of caution. State level responses to forced migrants varied dependent on the context and external global factors, this affected which groups of individuals were considered worthy of refugee status. David's account suggested that the application of

the Refugee Convention in the UK occurred at the national level according to national priorities which evolved over time. Government sponsored initiatives including the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), received lots of support from local authorities. However, the same type of support was not offered to non-Syrian nationalities, who also experienced the same set of circumstances as Syrian refugees. Significantly, this revealed the contrasting treatment and perceptions of refugees according to nationality.

The participants also indicated that refugees similar to asylum-seekers, experienced temporal liminality (discussed in Part One), as a result of the legal determination process.

## Temporal Spatial Liminality of Refugees

Liminality describes the experience of finding yourself at a boundary, or a moment, or position of being 'in-between', spatially, or temporally, involving a change in status (Martínez, 2015; Thomassen, 2015). Liminality is characterized by uncertainties and ambiguities that arise from situations of transition (Thomassen, 2014). The temporal dimension of liminality can be categorised as '1.) Movements (sudden events), 2.) Periods (weeks, months, years), 3.) Epochs (decades, generations)' (Thomassen, 2015, p.3). This section explores the views of Rosie, Daniel, and Mary on the 'permanent temporariness', or prolonged liminality, experienced by refugees in their host countries.

*'A refugee is someone who has got the status to be in the UK, technically, they're not, that doesn't mean that all their problems are solved (laughs). You know, it's a battle enough just to get the refugee status because, they have to prove that they're entitled to have that, but even then they've still got to try, and live and work in this country, and even then it's not settled. They'll get the status for maybe five years, and then sometimes it can be withdrawn, after that time. If the Home Office thinks that their country of origin is ok now, or safe to return to, so it's not a guarantee you know that they're going to be here' (Rosie, Senior Manager).*

Rosie's background as a senior manager, at a local charity involved her working with both asylum-seekers and refugees. For Rosie, a 'refugee' was an individual who had been granted the right to remain in the UK after a difficult determination process. The extract also pointed out that once an individual had been granted refugee status it was not the end of the refugee journey. Rather, the refugee faced a new set of challenges, including adapting to a new life in the UK. Furthermore, a refugee also encountered difficulties that arose as a

consequence of being positioned in a state of 'permanent temporariness'. In most cases, refugee status was granted for a period of five years. However, the Home Office could decide to remove a refugee of their immigration status, if they discovered that a refugee's country of origin was now safe to return too. Refugees experienced liminal spaces created by the official system. A refugee continued to experience uncertainty even after being granted the right to remain in the UK, as refugee status was entirely dependent on the conditions of the refugee's home country. Refugees were entitled to humanitarian protection on the condition that they were unable to receive protection in their country of origin. If the circumstances in the home country improved, then their claim to humanitarian protection was questioned, and ran the risk of being removed. Fundamentally, the refugee condition was not equivalent to permanent citizenship in the UK, as it was a temporary status. Rosie's account indicated the complexity of refugee liminality, which developed in pro-longed liminal situations.

Daniel worked at a national charity and also shared similar insights,

*'It is difficult you see even the term refugee, you know it's like, it's not a permanent status it's not indefinite leave to remain, it's like now you get granted your five years, and then you fight for indefinite leave'* (Daniel, Telephone Advisor).

Daniel's experiences also demonstrated the temporal nature of refugee status. A refugee by definition is not granted permanent citizenship, or the unrestricted right to live, and remain in the UK. Refugee status admitted refugees the right of abode in the UK for a period of five years. Therefore, refugee status was fundamentally time-limited, and a temporary condition. Once the five years came to an end, refugees struggled to remain in the UK, and encountered another determination process in order to receive indefinite leave. In Daniel's account, a refugee continually encountered challenges because of the 'permanent temporariness', or prolonged liminality, created by the official immigration system in the UK. Whilst the concept of liminality is defined as a temporary state, the notion of 'permanent temporariness' leads to a paradox. In both Rosie and Daniel's accounts the prolonged liminality of refugee status was highlighted, indicating the possibility of both the temporary and permanent nature of liminality.

Mary's role focused on providing telephone assistance to asylum-seekers, however she highlighted some of the negative consequences of prolonged liminality for refugees.

*'A refugee, we don't deal much with refugees but my personal feeling, I feel always a relief when somebody says to me, oh I've got refugee status, oh you've got more freedom now to access public benefits, to move around more. Although it's not an easy*

*path. The most refugee people we speak to again, feel a bit lost, and don't know how to find their place straight away. So refugee is a person who has been granted leave to remain for certain periods of time, and has the freedom to work and access to public, government support' (Mary, Contact Centre Advisor).*

Mary revealed her happiness when discovering that an individual had been granted humanitarian protection. Refugee status brought many privileges, and removed the restrictions that had been put in place during the official determination process. A refugee was allowed to receive governmental support, financial assistance if needed, and furthermore, was also able to exercise independence. Yet, simultaneously, Mary indicated that refugees struggled to remain autonomous because of the time-limited nature of refugee status. The experience of liminality created uncertainty which was typically expressed through feelings of un-belonging, and placelessness. Even though a refugee enjoyed the right to be able to live, work and seek financial support in the UK, refugees felt displaced. Refugee entitlements were time-limited rather than guaranteed. This caused difficulties, as refugees were unable to be fully autonomous, as uncertainty about the future was a constant feature of refugee status. Mary, David and Rosie had very different practitioner experiences, and levels of seniority in their roles. Yet their shared experiences of the temporal spatial characteristics of the label 'refugee' highlighted the negative effects of the prolonged time-limited nature of refugee status. Although refugees enjoyed a wider range of freedoms, and entitlements compared to asylum-seekers, as they were able to work, and awarded the right of abode in the UK, these entitlements were temporary rather than permanently guaranteed. Similar to asylum-seekers, refugees were individuals who experienced temporal liminality as neither categories guaranteed permanent citizenship and resulted in long-term uncertainty and precarity.

In this section the extracts indicated that practitioners defined a 'refugee' with some reference, or comparison to an 'asylum-seeker'. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that refugees, similar to asylum-seekers (discussed in Part One), experienced temporal liminality as a result of the official determination process. I will now turn my attention to how the participants differentiated between the two categories.

## Legal Differentiation

The participants had contrasting views on the distinctions between the labels 'asylum-seeker', and 'refugee' based on the type of organisations, and work they undertook as practitioners. Daniel's interview response serves as an exemplar of the wider body of participant's experiences as a whole.

*'The governments need to be able to process people who are coming into the country, so they need to be able to look at their cases, and make decisions on those. I guess in a legal sense there does need to be that legal distinction between an asylum-seeker and a refugee' (Daniel, Telephone Advisor).*

Daniel's practitioner role involved working closely with the Home Office. His account suggested that it was important to be able to differentiate between asylum-seekers and refugees legally. For administrative purposes the government were required to determine the immigration statuses of those newly arrived into the UK. Authorities were expected to manage and assess individual asylum cases, distinctive legal categories enabled the official process to function. The official decision making process centred on the legal distinctions between different types of migrants. For bureaucratic and legal purposes, it was important to be able to separate different groups of forced migrants. Jenny elaborated on this further in her account.

*'Yes because, as in terminology they are different things. You could argue that anyone who has to leave their country, because there is a war going on is a refugee really. And they are, but if you are looking, you know working in the sector, then you have to differentiate between the terms, because they mean different things' (Jenny, Senior Manager).*

Jenny's role involved working collaboratively with the Home Office. In the extract, Jenny explained that the categories 'asylum-seeker', and 'refugee' had very clear legal definitions for practitioners. However, her account also revealed that the term 'refugee' was also understood non-legally. In theory, any person who migrated from their home country as a result of conflict could be considered a 'genuine refugee'. Nonetheless, in legal terms and also in practice, for practitioners it was essential to be able to separate 'asylum-seekers' from 'refugees', as the categories referred to different statuses and entitlements. Jenny and Daniel did not work at local authorities, however both of their national charity roles involved working closely with the Home Office to assist forced migrants. In their day to day roles the terms 'asylum-seeker', and 'refugee' were fundamental, as the categories referred to different immigration statuses and levels of support. Similarly, for the participants who worked at local authorities, it was also important to have clear distinctions between the labels 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. However, local authority workers also pointed out that there was a close relationship between both terms.

In contrast to Daniel and Jenny's accounts, Lilly's extract pointed to the connections between the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'.

*'Yeah, I think you've got to have those two terms but there is, there's a lot of misconceptions about those terms. People really get really mixed up with what they mean, and they don't understand, that it's the same individual person goes through a process of being, or being those things. They think that those are two completely separate groups of people, as I'm sure you're investigating. There's one group of people called asylum-seekers, and they might have a certain set of characteristics, and then there's another group of people called refugees, and they have a separate set of characteristics, and people don't tend to understand that they are very often the same people' (Lilly, Community Safety Manager for refugees and migrants).*

Lilly highlighted the public confusion involved with the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker'. There was a lot of misunderstanding surrounding which groups of individuals the categories represented. Lilly's account revealed that people failed to realise that the same person goes through an official journey which involved progressing through different categories and stages of a determination process. An individual may start off as an asylum-seeker, yet will not remain an asylum-seeker indefinitely, as the individual, if successful, will be awarded refugee status, and thereafter, be identified as a refugee. Although the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' have their own distinctive features on paper, and provide different levels of humanitarian protection, the descriptions do not always refer to dissimilar groups of individuals as the categories refer to different statuses. Both labels describe a determination process that 'forced migrants' experienced. Lilly's extract highlighted that there was a very intimate relationship between the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee', as these terms could refer to the same individual at different stages of their migration journey.

Mike also illustrated this in his account below,

*'I have worked with a lot of asylum-seekers, and I will also say refugees because then they will change their status. Some of the client's status will change while they are staying in IA,<sup>15</sup> because in very rare cases they will be granted asylum, where their status will be changed to refugee actually' (Mike, Client Advisor).*

In contrast to Lilly, Mike worked at a national charity, where he supported asylum-seekers in initial accommodation, whilst they waited for a decision on their asylum claim. However, similar to Lilly, Mike also revealed that an asylum-seeker's immigration status would eventually change. The asylum system is predicated on the necessity of being granted refugee status. The account illustrated that 'asylum-seekers' became 'refugees', after receiving a

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<sup>15</sup> IA refers to Initial Accommodation Centres where asylum-seekers are temporarily housed



successful outcome on their asylum application. Both Lilly and Mike's experiences indicated that the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' involved individuals who progressed through a legal determination process. The legal system necessitated the differentiation of forced migrant categories resulting in contrasting statuses. However, there was also a close connection between the terms 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' as both categories described different stages of an official determination process. In many instances, depicting the same individual.

Some of the participants, in particular those who worked in the charity sector did not see the need for a distinction between the terms 'asylum-seeker', and 'refugee'. Amy highlighted this below,

*'Well I mean I don't, for the way I interact with the people, I hope I just treat them as young people that need, and are enjoying, and getting a good education, but obviously the Home Office seems to think that there needs to be a distinction. It's a process. It's very long winded (Amy, Manager).*

According to Amy, there was no need to distinguish between individuals who were 'asylum-seekers' or 'refugees', in her role as a teacher. Amy's role centred on teaching students, rather than separating the individuals according to their immigration statuses in her daily interactions. Amy's account acknowledged that in contrast, for the Home Office and the purposes of the asylum system it was imperative to be able to differentiate between individuals who were 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers'. The extract also pointed to the connection between both labels, as individuals in both of these categories were moving through a lengthy official determination process. For some charity workers in the sector, the categories bore no significance in their day to day roles. Mary, another charity worker echoed this in her response below,

*'From my personal experience, it's the same person really, and it sounds the same. Like I said for me, mostly the asylum bit they are lost still if they haven't established themselves already before in the UK, so as a human being there's no difference. As I said, a refugee is somebody who has now more freedom, who can make more choices' (Mary, Contact Centre Advisor).*

Mary indicated that there was a close connection between the terms 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. On paper, both categories appeared to be very distinct and separate from one another, resulting in different levels of humanitarian protection. However, both labels centred on a person, and in a lot of cases the same individual at different stages of a process. The

conditions of both terms were very different, for Mary, an 'asylum-seeker' experienced a precarious position when newly arrived into the country, as a result of a lack of autonomy and independence, whereas refugees enjoyed more privileges' and autonomy. Nonetheless, despite these differences, Mary explained that there was more to an individual than simply their immigration status. From the participants accounts the relationship between the labels 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' were complex. Both categories shared a number of features. Yet although, they could refer to the same person at different stages of the process. Both categories necessitated different rights and entitlements within practitioner work. For most of the participants, the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' served very distinctive purposes and were significant in their daily roles.

The next section compares the relationship between the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement scheme (which resettles Syrian refugees), with asylum-seekers to demonstrate the differentiation between 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in practice.

## Policy Differentiation

The majority of participants described the positive community responses to the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), and Vulnerable Children's' Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). Only those practitioners, who developed experience of working with both 'asylum-seekers', and 'refugees' indicated some of the problems that the Syrian VPRS, and VCRS programmes had created in relation to asylum. Stewart's account highlighted this,

*'They will come with every good intention, but they just see Syrians. Syrians are on the news, and then this kind of creates, and it's what makes me slightly uncomfortable, it kind of creates a hierarchy of need. Syrians are in no more need than Eritreans, or Afghans, or people from Pakistan, or people from China. It's not great, there's no hierarchy of needs but there appears to be, I think the Syrian resettlement programme tends to give that impression that Syrians are in more need than anybody else'*  
(Stewart, Co-ordinator for the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme).

Stewart had extensive experience helping both asylum-seekers and refugees in the field. He emphasised how the media, government, and public had prioritised support for Syrian refugees, as a result of the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme. This had painted the picture that only Syrians were 'genuine refugees'. The focus on Syrians as a group had constructed an unequal hierarchy of needs, where Syrians were automatically positioned at the top of the pecking order for humanitarian aid. In the account, Stewart maintained that as a

group Syrians were no more deserving, or in need of humanitarian protection, than any other nationality claiming refuge. However, despite this, the public perception was that non-Syrians requesting humanitarian protection were not worthy of refugee status. As a practitioner, Stewart explained that there should be no hierarchy of needs according to nationality however, from his experience there appeared to be one in operation. Furthermore, Stewart also demonstrated how Syrian refugees were treated more favourably, than asylum-seekers in practice.

*'But when they come to the UK, they're right at the very top, there isn't actually a wealth of funding in this programme, and I've never worked on a programme like this. Usually, I'm used to going to the Home Office, and begging for an extra £5 for a pregnant lady, on section four support. This programme I go to the Home Office, I ask for something big, and they say yes, go on absolutely bilateral, go and buy a mobility scooter, it's very very different. It's very different it's just really unusual (Stewart, Co-ordinator for the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme).*

Stewart's extract revealed how unique the VPRS programme was, compared to the treatment and funding available to asylum-seekers in the UK, from his previous front-line roles. In the example Stewart regularly pleaded for extra funds to support asylum-seekers, including individuals who were considered particularly vulnerable such as a pregnant woman. In contrast, for the VPRS when the participant requested items which were expensive, such as a 'mobility scooter', the Home Office provided the funds without question. Syrians on the VPRS programme were prioritised over any other group of forced migrants as soon as they entered the UK. The level of funding available to individuals on the VPRS was, nowhere near the amount of funding available to support asylum-seekers. The extract demonstrated that Syrian refugees had been treated very differently, in comparison to asylum-seekers. Additionally, the account also suggested that asylum-seekers had been treated unfairly, as a result of the hierarchy of humanitarian needs which had been created through the implementation of the VPRS programme focused exclusively on Syrian refugees. This was also mirrored in the account of Lilly,

*'I think in some other parts of the UK, there's been a bit of a blind spot about Syrians, and about people who aren't Syrians, so not being able to see that sometimes refugees are not Syrians (laughs)' (Lilly, Community Safety Manager for refugees and migrants).*

For Lilly, the attention centred on Syrians, had resulted in the idea that only Syrians were refugees, as the public had not been able to identify non-Syrian nationalities as refugees. In Lilly's account the 'refugee' had been constructed as a person of Syrian nationality.

Therefore, anyone requesting humanitarian protection who was non-Syrian, was simply perceived as a non-refugee and not worthy of humanitarian aid. Syrians had been juxtaposed against non-Syrians. This was incredibly problematic for individuals of non-Syrian nationality who applied for asylum to receive refugee status. Hannah worked with asylum-seekers, and also re-settled refugees on the VPRS, and explained some of the problems with the VPRS programme below,

*'I think the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement scheme. Whilst it is a two tier system has again made people see the positives of re-settling people. Do I think it's fair to the asylum-seekers, the two tier system? No. One's wrapped in cotton wool, and one is not. But I think again its opening up people's views a little bit more'* (Hannah, Senior Manager).

In Hannah's account, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme had been over protected and prioritized, in comparison to other resettlement programs and the official determination process which asylum-seekers experienced in the UK. Whilst it had positively influenced people in seeing the benefits of resettlement schemes, the VPRS programme had also created an unfair and unequal hierarchical system of needs. The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme was funded by Central government, using the overseas aid budget. The Government also provided an additional £10million in ESOL funding, and there was also a further £129 million funding, available to assist any other costs incurred over the five years to support those refugees under the VPRS (Home Office, 2017c). This was very different to the level of support provided for individuals who received a successful asylum claim. Once an individual was granted refugee status, they acquired rights and privileges, as they were able to work in the UK and could additionally apply for welfare benefits. Evidently, a two-tier system had been created where those of Syrian nationality benefitted from more resources, and support than individuals of non-Syrian nationality who progressed through the asylum process to receive refugee status. There appeared to be an unequal hierarchy of humanitarian needs in operation, where Syrian refugees sat at the top of the pecking order for humanitarian aid. This was problematic for the non-Syrian nationalities applying for asylum, as they had been treated very differently, by the state even though they had similar needs and claim to humanitarian protection.

The majority of participants interviewed did not work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, or refugee children. However, Olivia's local authority role in London involved her working on the VCRS, VPRS programmes, and with asylum-seeking children.

*'We have a large number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in this borough, and children, often people refer to them as the refugee children in terms of, sort of cross-council work, we look at the VPRS, VCRS programmes, plus the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, plus the children that have come in under Dublin for family reunification. We kind of do look at them in some ways as a cohesive unit, as the needs are often the same and the services they need to access are very similar'* (Olivia, Refugee re-settlement co-ordinator).

Olivia explained that in her London borough there were a high number of asylum-seeking children, refugee children, and other groups of children including those arrived under family reunification. Interestingly, in this context the official categories were collapsed as all of the diverse groups of children were referred to as *'the refugee children'*. The contrasting categories did not divide the children in the type of support they received. Olivia revealed that her local authority treated all of the children as one homogenous group as they required similar types of support and provisions. In this example the official categories were not employed to separate the different groups of children. The children on the VCRS scheme were not prioritised over other groups of children receiving humanitarian support. As discussed earlier, adult asylum-seekers have not been treated in the same manner as Syrian refugees on the VPRS. In contrast, Olivia's local authority in London treated the diverse categories of children, as one group who required the same type of support and aid. This could be an area of further research, as perhaps more insights could be drawn by comparing different types of asylum-seekers including adults and children.

This section has explored the distinctive treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees in practice as a result of policy, and some of the implications of this to the asylum discourse. The final section of this chapter explores instances where 'forced migrants' did not fit into any official labels.

## **The Grey Area of Labelling**

Some of the participants revealed areas where individuals did not correspond to the labels of 'asylum-seeker', and 'refugee'. This grey area of labelling has not been explored in the field and requires further attention, as individuals who do not fit into the categories of 'asylum-seeker', or 'refugee', created numerous challenges for practitioners. Olivia was a refugee re-settlement co-ordinator and explained some of the difficulties in her account below.

*'The humanitarian protection thing, it was difficult for me, so something I was really keen to stress when we did any publicity, or when people were talking about the programme, was we have households, and then we have beneficiaries for individual people on the scheme. So obviously, there is a common parlance, where people use the word refugee. But I was trying not to use that word within sort of council documentation, because technically speaking our households weren't refugees. Because, they didn't have legal refugee status, and there are some implications for not having it, and just to try and keep it clear and concise, and try and minimise the grey areas, but obviously it was difficult because, when your speaking to people they'd say so are these not refugees? And it's kind of like well from your understanding of the term refugee possibly, in terms of someone fleeing persecution, or war yes they are refugees but they don't have the legal status of refugees'* (Olivia, Refugee re-settlement co-ordinator).

Olivia's extract demonstrated the significance of official categorization for practitioners. In the account, Olivia explained that she had to take great care to appropriately describe the individuals that she re-settled on the Syrian Vulnerable Person's resettlement scheme (VPRS). This proved to be challenging, as legally speaking her *'households'*, and *'beneficiaries'* were not refugees as they had not officially received refugee status. The Syrian VPRS initiative was launched as a humanitarian protection programme, therefore the individuals entitled to the support provided by the scheme, by definition had to include *'refugees'*. However, the category *'refugee'* could not be employed to categorize the individuals and families on the VPRS, as they were not formal refugees. The legitimacy of the individuals on the VPRS came into question as a result, as the public assumption was that individuals on the VPRS were legitimate refugees separated from non-refugees. What further complicated the situation was that in discourse the same individuals on the VPRS were informally referred to as *'refugees'* because, they had fled both war and persecution. Evidently, the grey area of labelling was created, as there were no official labels that were appropriate, to correctly define the families and individuals on the VPRS. They could not be labelled as *'refugees'* and neither were they *'non-refugees'*. The category *'refugee'* signifies a legal status. Nonetheless, the term *'refugee'* was also applied in discourse to represent a person who was in need of humanitarian protection.

Practitioners work in the grey area of labelling in their roles, as they deal with individuals who are in the process of receiving a decision on their legal status, and right to humanitarian protection, as they are situated *'in-between'* categories. John, another local authority worker also highlighted the challenges in adopting the correct terminology for

individuals on the VRPS, who did not fit into any of the official categories, or usual binaries employed by the political and media discourse to refer to 'forced migrants'.

*'I think in our tractions with other agencies, and with the community and voluntary organisations, we have to be quite clear about the term and... we had to say were participating only, we can only welcome people to the borough who under the Home Office scheme, and their quite, you know they have some particular status, and they need to meet the criteria, and so we had to be quite careful of what terminology we were using when talking to other agencies and what not.*

*Researcher: How would you refer to them? As you mentioned you couldn't say refugee?*

*Participant: I think we used, because it was a resettlement scheme. I think we talked about resettling, resettled families. We normally talked about Syrian families' (John, Principal Strategy Officer).*

Similar to Olivia, John had a local authority background and revealed that he had to be cautious of the language he employed when discussing the VPRS with external organisations. There were no official terms that were appropriate to correctly define the individuals on the VPRS. Furthermore, John was not able to classify the individuals as 'refugees'. This grey area of labelling proved to be challenging. In the extract, the individuals were described as '*resettled families*', or '*Syrian families*'. The participant's strategy was to emphasise the legitimacy, and position of the individuals on the VPRS by asserting that only those individuals who had received approval from the Home Office had been accepted on the VPRS in the area. The legality and status of the category refugee is undeniable, however when the individuals under question are placed in the grey area of labelling, their status, and fundamentally their 'legality' came under question. Olivia and John highlighted instances where the categories, 'asylum-seeker', 'refugee' and binaries such as 'illegal' or 'legal' did not apply to individuals, who had been granted humanitarian protection by the Home Office through the VPRS. The grey area of labelling was created either when an individual did not correspond to an 'official category', or when the individual was positioned between two categories. Furthermore, Lilly described 'asylum-seekers', as situated 'in between' the categories of an 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'.

*'So the way that I usually would define it is, that it's actually a stage. I mean we both know what an asylum-seeker is (laughs). But the way that I usually try to describe it, when I'm delivering training on this, is I try and follow someone through from the moment when they cross an international border, and become a refugee, and then I follow them through until they reach the UK border, at which point they're still a*

*refugee, but there also an asylum-seeker, so they're going through a legal process, that is about getting the government to recognise that there a refugee. So an asylum-seeker is someone who's in the legal process of waiting for the government to decide whether they are a recognised refugee or not'* (Lilly, Community Safety Manager for refugees & migrants).

Interestingly, for Lilly, an 'asylum-seeker', was also simultaneously a 'refugee'. The extract demonstrated that the terms 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' both referred to distinctive and connected phases of a legal process. Once a person migrated from their country of origin, as a result of persecution they automatically became a 'refugee'. In the account, refugee status existed regardless of whether it had been formally recognised. Individuals did not 'become' refugees at the point when their claims to humanitarian protection were supported. An individual became a refugee from the moment they fled their country of origin as a result of persecution. The 'refugee', also became an 'asylum-seeker' when they reached the UK border. An 'asylum-seeker' underwent a process to be acknowledged as a formal refugee. Fundamentally, Lilly's account highlighted the significance of the immigration process in shaping identities. Legally speaking an 'asylum-seeker' was not identified as a 'refugee', until they had undergone an official process to determine their eligibility for 'refugee' status. However, during the duration of the determination process the individual was 'in-between', two categories as they were both a 'refugee' and an 'asylum-seeker'. Typically, 'asylum-seekers', and 'refugees' are considered to be static categories and identities. Nonetheless, Lilly's account revealed that both of these categories could also be fluid. The individuals positioned within the categories are not fixed as they are progressing through a determination process. Bauman's conceptualisation of contemporary society as 'liquid modernity' (discussed in Chapter Three) provides a helpful lens in conceptualising the fluidity of categories. For Bauman, in the present day all identities are fluid as the processes of modernity have changed the solid social structures. The analysis demonstrated that the categories 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' were closely related as they were both distinctive and interrelated stages of the same process centred on an individual moving through a legal determination process.

## Conclusion

The positions in this chapter signified the legal ideology which underpinned the category 'refugee'. In addition, the analysis drew attention to both the distinctions and connections between the terms 'asylum-seeker,' and 'refugee'. Both labels served an important role for many of the participants dependent on the type of work they were involved



in. The categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' were part of a larger immigration process and closely tied to one another. Most refugees were asylum-seekers at one point. Practitioners differentiated between 'asylum-seekers', and 'refugees' legally, and as a result of policy. Comparing the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), with the asylum system revealed that an unfair hierarchy of humanitarian needs was in operation, as Syrian refugees have been treated more favourably by policy-makers, the media, and the public. This also had a negative effect on non-Syrian nationalities applying for asylum. Furthermore, the grey area of labelling revealed the fluid nature of the labels 'asylum-seeker', and 'refugee' as they centre on individuals progressing through an immigration process. Similar to the media findings in Chapter Six (Study Two), where it was highlighted that reporters found it challenging to categorize individuals on the move, who were 'in-between' categories, the analysis suggested that practitioners also faced the same difficulties when defining individuals on the VPRS.

The following chapter will discuss these issues in more depth and draw together the findings across the three studies (Chapters Five, Six and Seven), in the context of previous research and theory.

# Chapter Eight: Discussion

## Introduction

Employing an eclectic theoretical approach which focused on; social construction, the relationship between categorization and power and liquid modernity, the current thesis comprised a series of three studies which aimed to advance the discursive research on asylum-seekers and refugees. Every society, for Foucault (1991), produces its 'regimes of truth', which are its 'general politics of truth'. This refers to the types of discourse which a society accepts and operates as true. These 'are the result of scientific discourse & institutions & are jointly reinforced (& redefined) constantly through the education system, the media & the flux of political and economic ideologies'(Foucault, 1991, p.63). This chapter connects the main findings from the three actors; the Home Office, media and practitioners that shape the 'regimes of truth' on asylum and contribute in the social construction of asylum in the UK.

Although scholars in the field of refugee and forced migration studies have produced a number of research outputs there remains much ambiguity involving the relationship between categorization and the social construction of asylum. There is a very close relationship between the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. However, studies either focused on the theoretical framing of 'asylum-seeker' (Goodman and Speer, 2007; Darling, 2008; Squire, 2009; Goodman, Sirriyeh, and McMahon, 2017) or 'refugee' (Zetter, 1988; Zetter, 1991; Marfleet, 2005; Zetter, 2007; Haddad, 2008), rather than examining these concepts together. The current thesis aimed to address these gaps in literature by developing a close analysis of asylum policy documents, media representations of forced migrants and interviews with professionals who support asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. New insights can be drawn by exploring the relationship between the labels 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' concurrently. This chapter will bring together the main results from the three studies, highlight both theoretical and practical implications, limitations of the thesis and suggestions will be presented for future research.

## Summary of Main Results

The first study (Chapter Five), emphasised the contradictions characteristic of the representations of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in policy discourse and the complexity involved in categorisation. Normative frameworks underpinned policy depictions of asylum-seekers and refugees. However, simultaneously there were also additional evolving understandings of refugees and asylum-seekers portrayed in policy documents which also contradicted the official normative constructions. The analysis demonstrated the number of different outcomes for asylum applicants and the connections between different categories of migrants. Individuals who migrate encompass contrasting immigration statuses and can in some cases, be situated between two categories.

Chapter Five illustrated that the social construction of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in official discourse occurs through a complex set of factors which contribute to how asylum is defined, understood and fundamentally managed. Policy documents reiterated that the British government continued to uphold its commitments to protect the human rights of individuals 'genuinely' fleeing persecution. However, policies simultaneously prioritised the need to introduce tougher restrictive measures such as the 2016 Immigration Act, to prevent and deter asylum-seekers from accessing their protection. More specifically, political discourse constructed increased asylum applications and false asylum applications as an immigration problem. This pointed to a culture of disbelief surrounding asylum-seekers in policy discourse. There was an underlying assumption that asylum applicants were attempting to abuse the asylum and welfare systems. The notion of 'Britain as a soft touch' was employed to justify the criminalisation of failed asylum-seekers and irregular migrants. Asylum policy focused on deterring asylum-seekers from accessing protection as it was subsumed under the broader political immigration agenda of controlling and ultimately reducing migration to the UK.

Chapter Five demonstrated how the 'managed migration' strategy functioned to create asylum seekers' and refugees' identities in specific ways, either as being 'genuine' refugees who legitimately could seek refuge, or as 'disingenuous' individuals who should not be provided protection. The 'bogus' 'genuine' dichotomy framed the accounts of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in the analysis. These results support scholars who argue that there has been a shift in the politics governing mobility, referred to as the 'migration management' paradigm (Squire, 2011; Scheel and Squire, 2014). This argument drew on the implicit assumption that a nation's resources should be prioritised for its legitimate citizens. Furthermore, policies tackled the issue of managed migration by justifying stricter measures to

end financial assistance for failed asylum-seekers and forcibly remove individuals who had no right to be in the UK. There was a criminalisation of irregular migration and failed asylum-seekers were constructed as criminals.

The protectionist and humanitarian representations of 'asylum-seekers' were at odds with the legal and official asylum determination process in the UK. Assessing 'credibility' was an important feature in determining refugee status. The asylum process is designed to be difficult in order to filter out the 'genuine' and 'credible' claimants from the 'illegitimate' applicants. However, the practice of seeking asylum has become increasingly difficult as a result of policies targeting the problem of the abuse of the asylum system for the nation (Nyers, 1999). Immigration offences committed by failed asylum-seekers were constructed as a problem which thereby necessitated tougher security controls at the border. However, this policy response also serves as a barrier to prevent individuals with a valid asylum claim from entering the UK. The analysis also demonstrated that the labels 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' were presented as both normative and evolving categories. Asylum policy indicated that the Refugee Convention was not fixed, and allowed for interpretation. Furthermore, Chapter Five, highlighted that there was more than one type of refugee described in policy discourse, the traditional refugee (according to the Refugee Convention), *Sur place* refugee, who on leaving their country of origin was not a refugee but becomes one after leaving their country of birth and thirdly, a refugee who did not meet the Convention criteria but whose claim to refugee status was based on the interpretation of the Refugee Convention (e.g. gender related persecution).

The second study (Chapter Six), focused on examining the social construction of the asylum-seeker category in connection to the terms 'forced migrant' and 'refugee' in media reporting. The analysis highlighted the social complexity surrounding the label 'asylum-seeker' and demonstrated that the manner in which 'forced migrants' were framed in reporting affected their reception and treatment. Interestingly, Chapter Six highlighted the polarisation and inconsistency in news reporting on the coverage of the 2015 humanitarian crisis. 'Forced migrants' were represented as either 'refugees' or 'migrants', and additionally both categories were regularly conflated. News reporting ignored the social, legal and conceptual complexities of those on the move in 2015. Fundamentally, news coverage employed contradictory narratives to represent 'forced migrants'. The distinctions between 'migrants' and 'refugees', and in turn whether an event was referred to as a 'migration crisis', or a 'refugee crisis', strengthened the divisions between those that were 'wanted, 'unwanted', and the 'deserving' and 'undeserving groups'. Categorising individuals as 'migrants' framed them in a political discourse, rather than within the framework of humanitarian rights which the label 'refugee'

causes us to identify with ethically and legally. The conflation of both 'migrant' and 'refugee' identities contributes to and constructs our understanding of those identities and in addition, can undermine public support for refugees and the asylum system. News reporting focused on presenting the 'migrant' and 'refugee' crisis interchangeably. This is problematic as it reflects a trend of conflating immigration with forced migration. Chapter Six highlighted that the process of categorisation played a role in contributing to understandings of forced migration.

Chapter Six also explored the experiences of two journalists who reported on forced migration. These findings are particularly important as the views of media professionals have not been considered in the field. The analysis highlighted that the term 'asylum-seeker' was not a neutral term as it had evolved. Public perceptions towards asylum-seekers were negative as they were perceived as economic migrants in disguise. Journalists similar to academics (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014) and practitioners struggled with correctly categorising forced migrants. It was not easy classifying groups of individuals who were on the move as they all encompassed very different immigration statuses and in other instances could be 'in-between' categories.

The third study (Chapter Seven), centred on examining how the category 'asylum-seeker' was understood and implemented in practice by practitioners. It demonstrated the layers of social complexity connected to the category 'asylum-seeker' and the significance of categorisation in constructing an 'asylum-seeker'. Part One, drew attention to both the official and unofficial representations of 'asylum-seekers'. The results revealed some of the negative effects of the asylum determination process for asylum-seekers. The imposed liminality encountered by asylum-seekers was considered from the perspectives of practitioners. Throughout the duration of the asylum determination process, an asylum-seeker is away from their home country and waiting to be accepted into their host country, resulting in the experience of liminality, as they occupy an 'in-between' transitory status. The 'permanent temporariness' or 'limbo' encountered by asylum-seekers produced uncertainty as it was essentially an 'in-between' existence, which not only affected the present but also influenced their future.

The findings also revealed that binaries served a significant role in constructing 'asylum-seekers'. The terms 'genuine', 'deserving' and 'legal' described those individuals who were justified entry into the UK. In contrast, the labels 'bogus', 'illegal' and 'undeserving' were reserved for those who did not have the right to be in UK as they did not belong. The manner in which the label 'asylum-seeker' was framed in discourse had severe consequences for either including or excluding asylum-seekers affecting their reception and treatment. Furthermore,

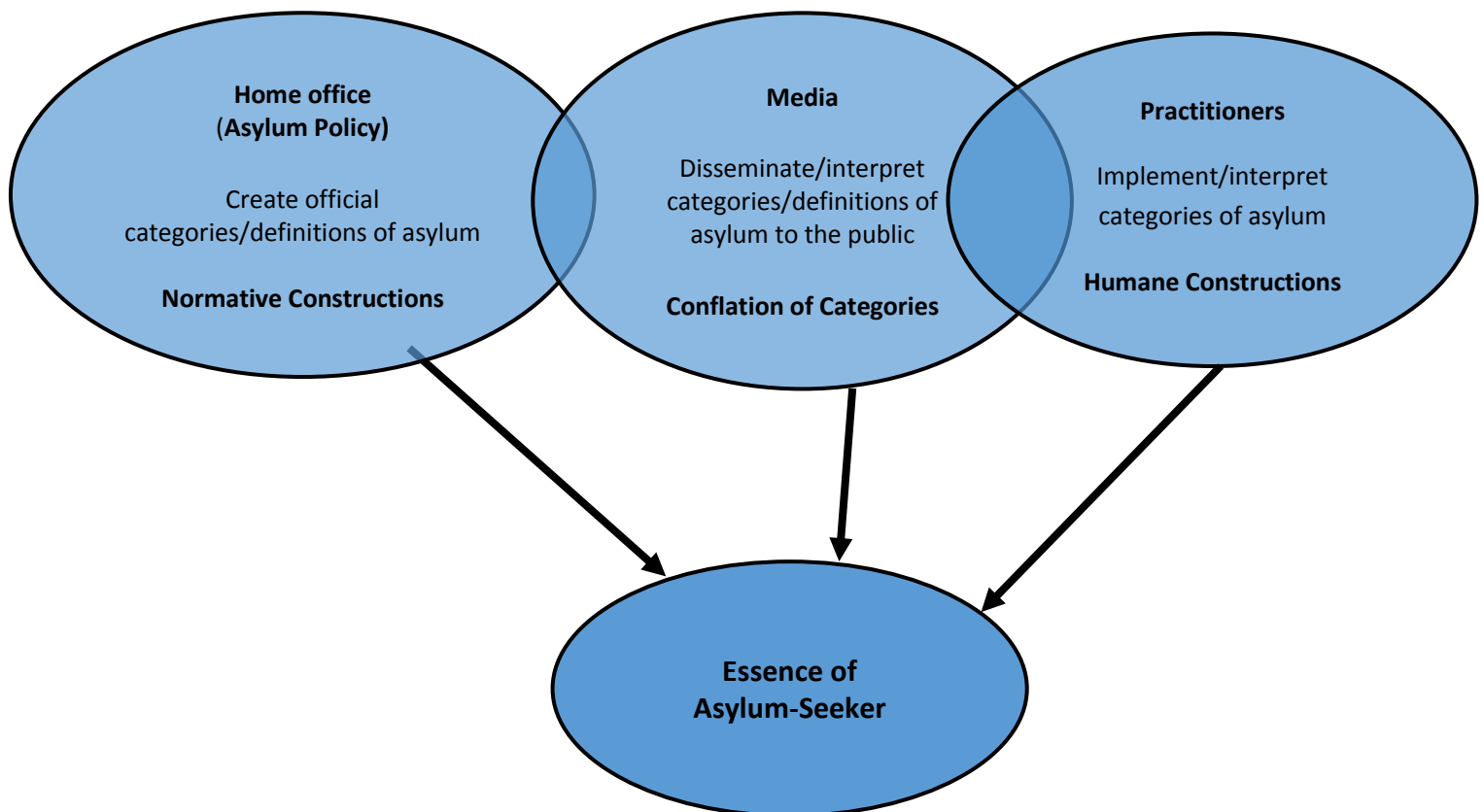
the findings suggested that the distrust and negativity surrounding asylum had also been adopted by some practitioners. The analysis demonstrated that an 'asylum-seeker' had been constructed as an economic threat. This premise rested on the belief that either asylum-seekers entered the UK to steal British jobs or that asylum-seekers were financial scroungers who were completely dependent on the state. There was also a security risk associated with 'asylum-seekers', as there had been direct connections made between asylum-seeking and terrorism.

Finally, Part Two of Chapter Seven centred on exploring the relationship between the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. Both terms were part of a larger immigration process and intimately connected to one another. The majority of refugees started their journey as asylum-seekers. Practitioners differentiated between asylum-seekers and refugees legally and as a result of policy. Interestingly, by comparing the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), with the asylum system revealed that an unfair hierarchy of humanitarian needs was in operation as Syrian refugees had been treated more favourably by policy-makers, the media and the public. This also had a negative effect on non-Syrian nationalities applying for asylum. Furthermore, the findings revealed the grey area of labelling and the fluid nature of the labels 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' as they centred on individuals progressing through an immigration process which was constantly shifting. The fluid feature of 'liquid modernity' can be observed here, as the identities of individuals positioned within normative frameworks were dynamic, rather than fixed. Both categories described a transitory 'in-between' status. The grey area of labelling has not been explored in the field and requires further attention as individuals who do not fit into the categories of 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' created numerous challenges for practitioners.

The findings across the three studies demonstrate the role of categorisation in the social construction of the asylum-seeker category (see Figure 8). The combination of category constructions across the three actors lead to the official, social and political construction of 'asylum-seeker' identities. Social construction, the circulation of power and elements of 'liquid modernity' are a useful lens in explaining the findings of the thesis. Social construction has been the anchor in the thesis connecting all of the three studies. The findings of the thesis indicate that the manner in which asylum-seekers have been represented has been socially constructed. Asylum policy provides the official framework of asylum through normative constructions of 'asylum-seekers'. The media both circulate and interpret official and unofficial constructions of asylum to the public. The media are also responsible for the conflation of different migrant categories in news reporting which have a significant impact on the treatment and reception of asylum-seekers. Practitioners both implement and furthermore,

also interpret the official constructions of asylum through humane representations of asylum-seekers and refugees. The label 'asylum-seeker' is not only a legal and official category employed to determine the immigration status of an individual. The term has also been constructed socially and politically. Foucault's theories on the circulation of power are helpful in explaining the contemporary nature of both official and social practices affecting the 'asylum-seeker', where power is not solely concentrated in the state. The findings of the thesis suggest that category constructions across the three actors (Home Office, media and practitioners) simultaneously, create the social construction of the asylum-seeker category. It is the circulation of power attached to different actors incorporated into practices which provide the meanings attached to the 'asylum-seeker' category.

**FIGURE 8.** THE ROLE OF CATEGORISATION IN THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ASYLUM



I will now move on to discussing the theoretical and practical implications of the findings of the thesis, starting with the importance of labelling.

## Labelling

Although each study chapter focused on a specific topic there are important links across the findings. For instance, all of the three studies demonstrated the layers of social and conceptual complexity associated with the label 'asylum-seeker'. The term was not merely an official or legal category, but had evolved and become an evaluative term which involved moral judgements about the legitimacy of each asylum applicant. The collective findings support the view that official labels are not simply descriptive. Official categories are prescriptive and embedded in the discursive construction of collective identities (Foucault, 1980). As discussed in the literature review, categorisation in forced migration is incredibly significant (Zetter, 1988; Zetter, 1991; Zetter, 2007), as labels indicate the protections afforded to newcomers under international law. The international community, as a result of the Refugee Convention, has accepted that some forced migrants have a special right to cross borders in search of international protection and asylum. However, each nation-state ultimately decides which individuals are permitted to claim asylum. The manner in which the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' are framed in policy discourse, reported by the media and furthermore, implemented by practitioners have serious consequences for either including or excluding forced migrants demonstrating the processes of social construction of the 'asylum-seeker' category.

When I began this research, I intended to interview employees at the Home Office who worked in the area of asylum, to examine the 'official constructions' of asylum from an official perspective. Unfortunately, when I approached the Home Office I was directed to their website<sup>16</sup>, and was informed that the Home Office was unable to participate in my study (see Appendix 1). Although this study is lacking a qualitative 'official perspective', it has examined the Home Office understanding of asylum through documentary policy analysis. I reviewed asylum policies to which the Home Office directed me in Chapter Five. The analysis revealed that the relationship between labelling and policy is complex in relation to the role they both play in forming bureaucratic identities (Zetter, 1991). The social construction of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in policy discourse occurs through a complex set of factors which contribute to how asylum is defined, understood and fundamentally managed.

Chapter Six highlighted that the manner in which 'migrants' and 'refugees' are described and reported on does not simply reflect the events that are occurring. The process of categorization itself also actively contributes to and constructs our understanding of what

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<sup>16</sup> [www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/asylum](http://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/asylum)



particular events mean (Hall, 1997a). Asylum-seekers are viewed with suspicion and a factor which contributes to this is the widespread confusion between the terms 'refugees', 'asylum-seekers' and 'migrants' (Crawley, 2009). This is a consequence of media coverage regularly confusing 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' with other categories of 'migrant' through inaccurate labelling (Goodman and Speer, 2007; Crawley, 2009). The conflation of the labels 'migrant' and 'refugee' suggests that there is no difference between these identities. This process contributes to and constructs our understanding of forced migrant identities, demonstrating 'discursive formations' in operation. The terms employed to categorize groups have great significance in framing our understandings by providing the meanings we attach to particular individuals. Classifying individuals as 'migrants' frames them in a political discourse. In contrast, the label 'refugee' groups individuals within the framework of humanitarian rights. As demonstrated in Chapter Six, whether an event is referred to as a 'migration' or a 'refugee' crisis is incredibly significant as these frames strengthen the divisions between those that are 'wanted', 'unwanted' and fundamentally the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' groups (Sales, 2002).

The collective findings of the thesis support the views of scholars who argue that the 'migration management paradigm' (Squire, 2011; Scheel and Squire, 2014) is the new politics governing mobility. Geiger and Pécoud (2010) argue that the concept of 'migration management' refers to three particular trends. Firstly, it is used by actors to conceptualise and justify increasing interventions in the migration field. This was established in Chapter Five, through the introduction of tougher security controls at the border and tighter welfare laws with the passing of the 2016 Immigration Act, to target the immigration crimes committed by failed asylum-seekers and their dependents. Secondly, it refers to a range of practices that are part of migration policies and performed by the institutions that promote the notion. The Conservative party agenda since 2015 has been to control and reduce net migration (The Conservative Party, 2015). Thirdly, it is a set of discourses and new narratives regarding what migration is and how it should be addressed. This was demonstrated in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, as asylum-seeking and immigration are referred to interchangeably in policy discourse, media reporting and public discourse. Migration and asylum have been problematized. Today the refugee is criminalised and securitised through the act of attempting to seek asylum (Hammerstad, 2014). The findings support the work of scholars who argue that an 'asylum-seeker' has been constructed as a problem (Nyers, 1999; Dummett, 2001; Borjas and Crisp, 2005). Furthermore, the findings point to how 'power is everywhere diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge & regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1991, p.1). The three actors examined collectively in this thesis contribute to how asylum is defined, understood and managed.

Historically, asylum-seekers have been perceived as a threat. The juxtaposition of the terms 'bogus', 'illegal' and 'undeserving' with 'genuine', 'legal' and 'deserving' construct the frames for understanding the social reality of asylum-seekers. 'Binary oppositions' are intimately involved in the production and reproduction of power relations with one pole signifying the dominant one against which the other pole is defined' (Hall, 1997b, p.258). The use of binaries influence how ideas are put into practice and adopted to regulate the conduct of others. The findings of the thesis support this. The routine framing of asylum as a 'problem' leads to the creation of asylum as simply a political discourse which requires management. The analysis revealed that there is a new politics of unease over asylum (Huysmans, 2006). The 'problem of asylum' cannot be removed from the wider government agenda of tackling and reducing increased levels of migration to the UK. This is linked to public anxiety about the numbers of 'bogus asylum-seekers' (Anderson, 2017b). More studies need to connect the construction of the 'problem of asylum' within the wider framing of migration as these are not separate issues but very closely related and intersect as discussed in the thesis. Presently, asylum is constructed as a problem, which requires correct management to ensure only 'genuine' asylum-seekers receive refugee status. The political and media discourse has repeated incessantly that there are lots of disingenuous asylum-seekers trying to abuse the asylum system. The thesis adds to research which argues that labelling is not always occurring in the interest of 'asylum-seekers' (McFadyen, 2014; Crawley and Skleparis, 2018).

The findings in Chapters' Six and Seven highlighted instances where individuals did not fit into any labels or binaries. This occurs when individuals are 'in-between' categories and indicates the fluid nature of immigration statuses, which ultimately centre on individuals who are moving through a determination process. Typically, 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' are viewed as static categories and identities. Perhaps one of the unintended consequences of asylum policy, and in turn news reporting, is to create a fixed construction of an 'asylum-seeker'. Bauman's theorization of contemporary society as 'fluid modernity' (Bauman, 2000), discussed in Chapter Three, is helpful here, however does also have its limitations in explaining the collective findings of the thesis. For Bauman, contemporary society is described as 'liquid modernity' as the solid structures and accepted way of life has become completely fluid. Liquid modernity does not remain fixed as nothing remains the same, identities may appear to be fixed and 'solid', however this is 'only when seen, in a flash, from outside. Whatever solidity they might have when contemplated, from the inside of one's own biographical experience appears fragile'(Bauman, 2000, p.83). The findings of the thesis do not demonstrate Bauman's account of 'liquid modernity'. The categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' describe normative immigration statuses and have elements of 'solidity'. However, simultaneously, the identities

of the individuals involved in the asylum determination process are not fixed, but instead are dynamic. Therefore, elements of 'liquid modernity' can be observed in present official structures, however it is not accurate to categorise these processes as 'liquid modernity'.

Importantly, the analysis also revealed the complexity involved in categorization. Similar to academics (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014), reporters also struggle to categorize individuals who are on the move. Labelling individuals who have migrated is no easy task, as individuals who are on the move encompass very different immigration statuses and can be 'in-between' categories. This creates numerous challenges for reporters on how best to label individuals. This adds to research which argues that it is near enough impossible to separate categories of 'migrant' from the label 'refugee' (Crisp, 2003b; Haddad, 2008; King, 2010; Scheel and Squire, 2014). The multiplicity and variety of the types of migration and movement observable today (Sassen, 1999; King, 2010), not only confuse the binary distinctions of 'forced/voluntary' migration but all also distort the distinctions between all migratory movements. An 'asylum-seeker' is constructed in a variety of ways through a number of complicated processes. I have by no means explored all of the layers of this complexity in the thesis. However, I have identified a gap in existing studies as the experiences of reporters in the field can shed further light on some of this complexity.

The findings also have practical implications for media professionals and practitioners in the field. Forced migration is a complex phenomenon and there is no denying that categorization serves a fundamental function for policy-makers, reporters and practitioners. However, rather than perpetuating the simplistic 'forced/voluntary', 'legal/illegal', binaries in relation to forced migrants, it would be helpful for media professionals and researchers to highlight the difficulties involved in categorization. The relationship between the multiple drivers of migration, including political, social and economic factors vary for individuals. This tends to get overlooked in reporting and policy creating challenges for practitioners, as highlighted in Chapter Seven. The categories 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' apply to individuals at different times, based on varying circumstances. The fixed nature of these terms does not take into account how these categories evolve over time and how they interact and intersect with one another. As demonstrated in the thesis, the labels 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' have a very intimate relationship to one another as they are a part of a national immigration process, centred on an individual progressing through various official stages to enjoy the privilege of precarious citizenship.

## Precarious Citizenship

As demonstrated in Chapters Five and Seven, the terms ‘asylum-seeker’ and ‘refugee’ have a very close relationship to one another and also to state sovereignty, as both terms share the status of precarious citizenship. The analysis led me to the concept of ‘precarious citizenship’, as theoretically this was pertinent to the thesis. Precarious citizenship, is an emerging concept that Noora Lori (2017), applies to individuals who occupy temporary legal statuses for protracted periods who are unable to secure access to permanent citizenship rights. Lori (2017), argues that uncertain and temporary legal statuses have increased across the world as they represent a strategic government response to avoid resolving the difficulties in the conditions created by temporary statuses. ‘Precarious citizenship is primarily experienced by two groups: (1) migrants and (2) internal ‘others’ who are not recognized by the states in which they reside’ (Lori, 2017, p.744). Precarious citizenship is produced as a consequence of boundary enforcement processes (Anderson et al., 2011; Paret and Gleeson, 2016; Lori, 2017).

Modern constructs of citizenship have been organised around a fixed relationship between the state, the territory and citizen. Rights to citizenship are linked to belonging to a specific nation-state (Babacan and Singh, 2010). The nation is, following Anderson, the imagined community of individuals who share a common sense of identity, who place loyalty to each other above their loyalty to strangers (Anderson, 1983). As previously examined in the literature review, the figure of the ‘refugee’ and ‘asylum-seeker’ simultaneously both challenge and reify the nation-state and citizenship frameworks. The ideological principle of a refugee crossing a border tests the sovereignty of the nation-state. Yet, in tandem, the act of claiming asylum reifies state authority by the same refugee. The analysis revealed that one of the consequences of the official asylum system and international humanitarian framework is the condition of precarious citizenship. These findings make a novel and important contribution to the literature.

Precarious legal statuses affect all aspects of an individual’s life (Lori, 2017). An asylum-seeker is in a unique position of not being a total insider, neither are they a complete outsider, but rather placed in both categories and provided with temporary citizenship. The imposed liminality created by the official asylum determination process produces uncertainty and creates a lack of autonomy over everyday life and routines. The state of ‘permanent temporariness’ also brings a sense of placelessness and un-belonging. Seeking asylum is a

waiting game, where an individual is in a permanent yet temporary state of limbo. The turnaround time for an asylum application varies considerably in the UK, ranging from several months (Home Office, 2018a), to twenty years (Lyons, 2018). The notion of precarity is helpful in conceptualising the 'imposed liminality' produced by the asylum system. An asylum-seeker does not know if, or when they will gain legal recognition, whether their claim to asylum will be rejected resulting in deportation or removal. Furthermore, asylum-seekers are unable to work whilst their asylum claim is being processed.

Fundamentally, asylum-seekers are differentiated and treated differently from British citizens. The foreigner is constructed as an outsider and is of critical significance for the power he possesses to define who belongs (Amin, 2012). Interestingly, 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' are not constructed as foreigners and neither are they accepted as permanent citizens. Both categories are essentially 'in-between' statuses. Waiting, suspense and uncertainty are manifestations of the temporal experience of liminality. Scholars in the field have discussed the temporal spatial dimension of asylum (Brekke, 2004; O'Reilly, 2018); refused asylum-seekers (Griffiths, 2014); and the liminality of refugees (Mortland, 1987). However, 'liminality' produced by the official determination process has not been considered from the perspectives of practitioners. The waiting which asylum-seekers undergo is an important aspect which requires further attention. The imposed liminality created by the asylum system, intentionally prevents an individual from progressing through their expected life course. The status of asylum can be summarised as being in a constant state of 'limbo' as the asylum process both creates and maintains this status. Temporal liminality creates lots of uncertainty affecting the present and future, which is a negative consequence of the asylum process as it results in a state of 'precarious citizenship'.

Refugees also experience the same temporal liminality, yet they enjoy many more freedoms and privileges compared to asylum-seekers. A refugee by definition is not granted permanent citizenship or the unrestricted right to live and remain in the UK. Refugee status allows refugees the right of abode in the UK for a period of five years (Home Office, 2017b). Therefore, refugee status is fundamentally time-limited and a temporary condition. Once the five years comes to an end the refugee moves through an alternative process to receive indefinite leave. The findings supports Bauman's theory on the psychological limbo that refugees experience (discussed in Chapter Three). Bauman claimed that the refugee journey has no end point as its final destination always remains unclear. 'From their present dumping site there is no return and no road forward, unless it is a road towards even more places' (quoted in in Barmaki, 2009, pp.261–262). Refugees do not enjoy permanent settlement as any type of settlement for refugees is always temporary. The official category

'asylum-seeker' is intimately tied to power and does not operate in a void. The lived experience of precarious citizenship impacts all aspects of an asylum-seeker and refugee's lives. Citizenship status is critical because 'precarious legal status ... goes hand-in-hand with precarious employment and livelihood' (Paret and Gleeson, 2016, p.281). This demonstrates the power of labelling and how a bureaucratic identity can negatively affect individuals' lives with long-term consequences.

Both 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' inhabit a space 'in-between' the official legal statuses of citizens and legal foreign residents after migrating to their host states. Theories of citizenship separate citizens from non-citizens; either an individual has citizenship or they do not. However, not all individuals are fully included or excluded by nation-states; certain forced migrants have pending legal statuses, as they are granted temporary and conditional permission to reside in a state for protracted periods. Nation-states generate temporary statuses to create groups including 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers' who are simultaneously both included and excluded from the nation as a consequence of their 'temporary' and liminal status.

Although 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' share many characteristics, when juxtaposed against one another they construct a hierarchy of humanitarian needs, or there appears to be one in operation.

## Hierarchies of Humanitarian Need

The official asylum system in the UK is designed to assess the needs of asylum claimants. Only those candidates who demonstrate that they are 'worthy' of humanitarian protection are granted refugee status. The official asylum determination process creates hierarchies of humanitarian need. There are four possible outcomes of an initial decision (Home Office, 2018a). Firstly, the applicant is considered to have met the criteria for refugee status as outlined in the 1951 Convention and is granted five years limited leave to remain. The second outcome is where the individual does not meet the requirements for refugee status but is granted Humanitarian Protection, usually for five years limited leave. The third result is being granted permission to stay for other reasons (that do not fit the legal definitions of humanitarian protection or refugee status). The final outcome is that that the applicant is refused. The analysis in Chapter Five highlighted the significance of 'credibility' in all aspects of the asylum determination process. The Home Office grant refugee status exclusively to those applicants who demonstrate that they are 'credible' candidates, worthy of humanitarian protection according to the hierarchy of humanitarian needs as outlined by the Home Office

(see Chapter Five). In the current political environment policy-makers have constructed increased immigration as a problem, only offering asylum to those individuals who have been forced to migrate (Dummett, 2001; Gibney, 2004). Evidently, the juxtaposition between forced and voluntary migration is one of the key principles of the hierarchy of humanitarian needs.

Political discourse has constructed increased asylum applications and high levels of immigration as a problem. This has necessitated stricter policies to address the problem of fraudulent asylum applications. The Immigration Act of 2016 included measures which increased the powers of immigration officers and expanded immigration enforcement within mainstream services (Burnett, 2016). Landlords and employers face legal penalties for housing or paying undocumented individuals. The responsibility of border control has been extended to British citizens. Borders have entered 'into domestic spaces, as citizens are increasingly required to check the visa status of those they live with, work with, and serve' (Jones et al., 2017, p.6). The changes brought about by the 2016 Immigration Act necessitated increased surveillance and the policing of the most basic daily transactions (Jones et al., 2017). The 2016 Act effectively extended the powers of border enforcement to civil society and solidified the borders between citizens and non-citizens. Interestingly, this once again demonstrates how power is exercised across different agents and incorporated across practices. Importantly, the Act of 2016 was passed just before the EU referendum vote.

For Outhwaite (2018), migration was central to the Leave campaign, as was opposition to European law and European human rights law, both granting rights to 'foreigners' which were considered to be unacceptable by many Conservatives. In April 2016, the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, announced that Britain should withdraw from the ECHR (European convention on human rights) regardless of the referendum result. This was based on the premise that both the Convention and the court had resulted in the extradition of Abu Hamza to the United States for terrorism offences (Outhwaite, 2018).

'Despite what people sometimes think, it wasn't the European Union that delayed for years the extradition of Abu Hamza, almost stopped the deportation of Abu Qatada, and tried to tell Parliament that - however we voted - we could not deprive prisoners of the vote. It was the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The ECHR can bind the hands of Parliament, adds nothing to our prosperity, makes us less secure by preventing the deportation of dangerous foreign nationals' (Home Office, 2016a, p.107).

May faced much opposition and withdrew this suggestion just after the referendum vote (Outhwaite, 2018).

The EU referendum result on 23 June 2016 shocked academics, politicians and the Remain voting section of the British public alike, 51.9% of the British public voted to 'Leave the EU' (Lamond and Reid, 2016, p.6). The decision for Britain to leave the European Union after over forty five years was in part a response to the increased fears about immigration (Somerville, 2016; Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017; Jones et al., 2017; Dennison and Geddes, 2018; Outhwaite, 2018). The Essex Continuous Monitoring Surveys (ECMS), indicated that public concerns over immigration had resulted in people voting to leave the EU (Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017). Outhwaite (2018) argues that it was free movement within the EU which became the key issue in Brexit. Central to the Leave campaign was that Brexit would allow more control over the flow of immigrants to the UK from Europe. The public were concerned that increased levels of immigration were a threat to their jobs and wages (Wadsworth et al., 2016).

Immigration affected Brexit both in terms of policy and public opinion (Dennison and Geddes, 2018). Importantly, there was no differentiation between the different types and motivations for migration in the campaigns. The humanitarian crisis of 2015 presented the image that the European Union had been unable to manage the situation. Stivas (2018), maintains that the humanitarian crisis of 2015 provoked Brexit. The slogan for the Leave Campaign was 'let's take back control'. The Leave Campaign blurred the distinctions between different types of migrants, making no exception for refugees (Bhambra, 2017). The 'migrant' was constructed as both an economic and security threat. Furthermore, the 'refugee' was also depicted as a threat in the campaigns. Nigel Farage famously campaigned that if British people voted to leave Europe, they would successfully keep refugees from entering the UK (Virdee and McGeever, 2017). This demonstrates how migration can intersect with asylum and refugee issues. Hierarchies of humanitarian need operate to differentiate between those outsiders who are permitted entry and those who are refused. Brexit also questioned the rights of European citizens who had previously been accepted and protected in the UK.

Furthermore, the analysis in Chapter Seven (Part Two), revealed how hierarchies of humanitarian need are constructed in forced migration as a result of policy initiatives. In the UK the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme has created an unequal hierarchy of humanitarian needs when compared with the asylum system. Syrian refugees resettled on the VPRS have been treated favourably compared to asylum-seekers. The perception that all Syrians are 'refugees' results in all non-Syrian nationalities applying for asylum being grouped together as 'non-refugees'. Following Foucault (1980), 'the state', encompassing numerous processes and practices, organisations and institutions operating collectively to create 'the state', make the key decisions on which individuals are considered worthy of refugee status.



This changes, dependent on the context and external global factors, thereby creating a hierarchy of humanitarian needs according to nationality. The Home Office took responsibility for the co-ordination of the Kosovo programme after the Kosovan war started from 1998 to 1999. A political decision resulted in the creation and implementation of the Kosovan resettlement programme. Kosovan refugees started to arrive in the UK as spontaneous asylum-seekers in 1997 (Bloch, 1999). The Iraq war was initiated in 2003 and again a political decision was taken by the British government to join America in the war to overthrow Saddam Hussein. The British government initiated the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) in January 2014 and in 2015; the scheme was expanded to resettle 20,000 Syrians. The UK has continued to publicly support the humanitarian needs of Syrians who have been threatened by the Assad regime and Russia (Foreign Commonwealth Office, 2018).

Governmental immigration policies have a huge impact on those individuals who belong and importantly those who do not. Policies can alter the boundaries of belonging and create a hierarchy of humanitarian needs. The immigration status of individuals is not fixed, but constantly evolving as it is part of a wider process. This can be demonstrated through the events of the Windrush generation. Windrush refers to the number of people who were born in the Caribbean and came to the UK as young children during the 1950s and 60s on the MV Empire Windrush (Lowe, 2018), and found themselves not belonging to the UK as the majority of them never formally naturalised or applied for a British passport. It is important to highlight that the Windrush generation were invited to the UK by the British government and all arrived in the UK legally. At this time, Commonwealth immigrants already settled in the UK were given indefinite leave to remain. 'The Windrush generation who were settled in the UK on 1 January 1973, were granted indefinite leave to remain (ILR) by virtue of the Immigration Act 1971. This meant that they were lawfully entitled to live in the UK, but were not given a document confirming their right to enter or remain'(Home Office, 2018b, p.8). However, as a result of new stricter immigration rules the majority faced deportation as many of the Windrush generation struggled to provide the documentation required to prove their right to live in the UK as a consequence of the changes brought about by the 'hostile environment'<sup>17</sup>(Craggs, 2018). Boundaries of citizenship and 'belonging' are constantly shifting as immigration policies are not fixed and involve a process which is not static. The Windrush generation were categorized as 'illegal' individuals as a consequence of a lack of documentation (due to the changes brought about by the 2014 and 2016 Acts). Policy categorization has real life

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<sup>17</sup> The hostile environment has now been replaced by the 'compliant environment'

consequences for individuals shifting the boundaries of citizenship and creating new hierarchies.

Immigration policies fundamentally differentiate 'economic migrants' from 'forced migrants, those that are 'legal' and 'illegal'. These distinctions provide the basis for those 'stranger's or 'foreigners' who are allowed access and entry to a state and those who are denied entry. These boundaries are not fixed, rather they are constantly shifting. In the case of Syrians, after the death of Aylan Kurdi there was a change in the national and political ideology, which necessitated new processes of inclusion so Syrian refugees could be resettled in the UK (Armbruster, 2018). By comparing the treatment of Syrian refugees on the VPRS with asylum-seekers it becomes evident that Syrian refugees have been treated more favourably by policy-makers, the media and the public in the UK. The level of assistance and funding available for Syrian refugees completely outweighs the support provided to asylum-seekers even though the needs of both groups may be similar. This creates an unequal hierarchy of humanitarian needs. In addition, this has resulted in the differentiation of forced migrants into additional 'desirable' and 'undesirable categories'. This has a huge impact on the social construction of asylum and how potential 'asylum-seekers' are perceived in the UK. New insights can be drawn by reviewing refugee and asylum issues together, to explore the relationship between official categorization and the social construction of asylum.

The findings of the thesis not only have theoretical and practical implications to the topics of forced migration and asylum but are also applicable to understanding recent events including Windrush and Brexit. As highlighted in the discussion, boundaries of belonging and citizenship are constantly shifting. Policy implications have real life consequences, not just for 'forced migrants' but also individuals who were previously considered fellow citizens. Labels are not fixed, they affect identities and are constantly evolving. Individuals with 'precarious citizenship' are on the rise, including not just 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' but extending to the Windrush generation and also to European citizens who are required to apply for settled status after Brexit in order to legally remain in the UK. The 'state' appears to be operating a system of not only hierarchies of need but also hierarchies of belonging affecting individual rights to citizenship.

## Limitations of Research

A number of limitations have been discussed throughout this chapter and will be summarized in this section.

The originality of the research is grounded in the empirical data that has been examined to contribute to wider theoretical debates. As a result of the in-depth nature of the research the empirical data is limited by the boundaries of semi-structured interviews, number of organisations and focus of the research. The thesis has centred on the relationship between the 'official categorisation' of asylum and the social construction of the asylum-seeker. I intended to interview employees at the Home Office who worked in the area of asylum to examine the official construction of asylum from an official perspective. However, unfortunately the Home Office directed me to their website ([www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/asylum](http://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/asylum)) and stated that they were unable to participate. Future research that included an 'official' perspective though qualitative methods would be valuable to the field.

I am aware that the topic of asylum is highly racialized (Schuster, 2003a; Schuster and Solomos, 2004; Garner, 2013; Hirsch, 2017) and gendered (Greatbatch, 1989; Crawley, 2001; Pittaway and Bartolomei, 2001; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014). However, the scope and nature of the thesis did not allow me to explore these issues in-depth.

When I started this research I was keen to provide a space for asylum-seekers within my study. I wanted to resist making the error of speaking about 'asylum-seekers', rather than to asylum-seekers. I have not interviewed asylum-seekers directly as a group in the thesis, as the research, primarily focused on exploring the social construction of the asylum-seeker category. However, two of the participants revealed in the interviews that they had been 'asylum-seekers' or 'refugees' themselves in the past, therefore I hope the thesis is able to speak to asylum-seekers in some ways.

Care has been taken not to treat the categories 'refugee', 'migrant' and 'asylum-seeker' 'as if they merely exist, 'as empty vessels into which people can be placed in some neutral ordering process' (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018, p.49). The thesis has assessed the role of categories, the process by which they are constructed and reviewed the purpose which they serve. I hope I have been able to maintain a critical approach to categorization throughout the thesis and not fallen victim to 'categorical fetishism' (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018).

## Future Directions

Ideas for further research which have been referred to in this chapter will be discussed here.

A future area of study could be research which compared how different groups of asylum-seekers are constructed. The label 'asylum-seeker' encompasses a diversity of

individuals including adults and children. The findings in Chapter Seven (Part Two) suggested that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were treated differently by practitioners to adult asylum-seekers. This could be an area of further study, as new insights could be drawn by comparing different groups of asylum-seekers according to age, nationality and gender etc. It would be useful to compare how the concept of 'credibility' which is central to the official asylum determination process in the UK for adults applies to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. How are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children constructed in policy and media reporting? How do practitioners construct unaccompanied asylum-seeking children? These questions identify further gaps in the field which future research could address.

More studies which include the perspectives of media professionals would be beneficial to the field to provide new insights. Only two journalists participated in my research. Future research which critically explored the challenges that media professionals encountered in forced migration reporting would be valuable.

The thesis has revealed some of the problems with categorization. There are instances when individuals on the move are essentially 'in-between' categories as immigration statuses are fluid rather than fixed. The grey area of labelling in forced migration requires further study. The liminality experienced by asylum-seekers and refugees as a result of the determination process also requires additional research. The findings revealed the complex nature of prolonged liminality which both asylum-seekers and refugees encountered from the perspective of practitioners. Future research which compared the short-term and long-term experiences of liminality from both asylum-seeker and refugee perspectives would be incredibly helpful to understanding the impact of the official categorisation process in relation to forced migrant identities. How do forced migrants negotiate and manoeuvre through this imposed liminality? What different types of liminality do asylum-seekers and refugees encounter?

## Contribution to the Field

Overall the thesis makes four contributions to knowledge. Firstly, the thesis addressed the current gaps in literature by exploring the relationship between the terms 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. As identified in the literature review, scholars in the field have either focused on the theoretical framing of 'refugee' (Zetter, 1988; Marfleet, 2005; Haddad, 2008) or 'asylum-seeker' (Goodman and Speer, 2007; Darling, 2008; Squire, 2009; Goodman, Sirriyeh, and

McMahon, 2017), rather than exploring the intricate relationship of these categories together. The thesis has demonstrated that a nuanced approach which compares the connection between both terms is required to understand the complex evolving policies and constructions of 'asylum-seekers' in the UK that shape the social construction of asylum. Whilst, the norm in the field has been to conduct specialist research on refugee and asylum issues separately. The thesis has highlighted the benefits of exploring the intersectionality between asylum and refugee issues. Both categories create and maintain a status of precarious citizenship resulting in temporal liminality. The terms are intimately connected and part of a larger immigration process. Whilst, the figure of the refugee challenges the sovereignty of the nation state framework, the act of claiming asylum reifies state sovereignty by the same refugee.

The thesis has demonstrated a number of areas of intersectionality and the complex and close relationship between categories including 'refugee', 'migrant', 'asylum-seeker' and 'forced migrant'. Research in the field has failed to include the connections between migration policies and the topic of asylum. The asylum administration process is part of the migration regime. The implementation of the 'managed migration' framework affects asylum-seekers as it prevents them from accessing protection as there are no legal routes for them to claim sanctuary. Categorisation in forced migration has always been significant (Zetter, 1988; Zetter, 1991; Zetter, 2007; Crawley and Skleparis, 2018). However, the categories 'asylum-seeker', 'refugee', 'migrant' and 'forced migrant' do not operate in a void and are intimately connected. The terms are not merely descriptive labels but also evaluative categories which involve moral judgements about the legitimacy of the movement of the individuals in question. The findings of the thesis confirm existing research which suggests that the labels employed to define forced migrants are central to how migration is governed (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014).

To study the topic of asylum, it is important to assess how the combination of discourse and power has produced particular conceptions of asylum and the 'asylum-seeker'. This research supports scholars who argue that a 'new asylum paradigm' is emerging (Squire, 2009). The topic of asylum has been problematized in policy, political and media discourse. This has negatively impacted the social construction of the asylum-seeker category affecting the treatment and reception of asylum-seekers in the UK. The thesis has demonstrated the importance of examining the social construction of the 'asylum-seeker' category by reviewing inter-related categories such as 'refugee', 'migrant' and 'forced migrant'.

Secondly, the research contributes to understanding the significance of the role of practitioners in asylum debates. Practitioners 'specialist' and 'generalist' perspectives have

been examined to provide new insights, of asylum-seekers placed within the asylum determination process. This research has highlighted the conceptual and social complexity of the label 'asylum-seeker'. Practitioners play a significant role in both interpreting and implementing the 'official categories' of asylum and it is surprising that they have been underrepresented in the field. This study is the first time that the temporal liminality experienced by asylum-seekers has been examined from the perspectives of practitioners. Practitioner insights revealed how hierarchies of humanitarian need are produced and maintained as a result of policy affecting both refugees and asylum-seekers.

Thirdly, the thesis has engaged with media professionals who report on forced migration to provide new insights. The thesis confirms the findings of numerous studies which have concluded that media reporting on asylum has been both negative and inaccurate (Kaye, 1998; Lynn and Lea, 2003; Goodman and Spear, 2007; Khan, 2013; Crawley and Skleparis, 2018). However, the thesis also highlighted that media professionals' experiences have been neglected in the field. Journalist insights revealed the 'in-between' nature of categories and the grey area of labelling. Reporters, similar to practitioners and academics in the field, struggle to classify individuals who are on the move who may be 'in-between' categories as immigration statuses are fluid not static. One of the unintended consequences of asylum policy and in turn, news reporting is to create normative constructions of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees'. However, this is both an inaccurate and simplistic representation which not only creates confusion but also importantly, plays a role in shaping the social construction of the 'asylum-seeker'. It would be helpful for future research to explore the challenges of categorisation within forced migration. The categories 'refugee', 'migrant' 'asylum-seeker' and 'forced migrant' apply to individuals at different times, based on varying circumstances. Normative understandings tend to overlook how categories evolve over time and how they can at times intersect with one another.

Fourthly, by employing more than one research method generated new knowledge through a synthesis of the findings from different perspectives. Adopting a social constructionist approach enabled me to bring together critical strands from all dimensions of the study. The strength of this research lies in the integration of distinctive perspectives that are rarely examined together. Current research on the social construction of the asylum-seeker has primarily been examined at the discourse and narrative level (Lynn and Lea, 2003; Lacroix, 2004; Goodman and Spear, 2007). However, little attention has been paid to the different social construction practices in the asylum determination process, asylum and refugee policy, the media constructions of forced migrants and the practices of administrative procedures relating to the asylum determination process. The thesis has addressed this gap

and demonstrated that the combination of category constructions across the three actors play a role in the construction of asylum. The different components of the research design contributed to an in-depth exploration of how the topic of asylum is problematized and the layers of social complexity surrounding the category 'asylum-seeker' and its intimate relationship with the label 'refugee' and related terms. The combination of research methods helped to identify the 'regimes of truth', or the interconnections of social construction which lead to the social and political construction of the asylum-seeker.

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, the most pertinent findings from the thesis have been presented and discussed. Adopting an eclectic theoretical approach which centred on; social construction, the relationship between categorization and power and liquid modernity. I argued that to study the topic of asylum it is important to examine how the combination of discourse and power has produced certain ideas of asylum and importantly the 'asylum-seeker'. The three actors that have been explored in this study all play a combined role in the social construction of asylum. Asylum policy, media reporting and practitioners collectively contribute to how asylum is defined, understood and managed. The official categorization of asylum is consumed, produced and reproduced in society through a range of processes all which shape and provide the meanings attached to the label 'asylum-seeker'. The findings support Foucault's theory that power is not simply concentrated in the state but is distributed across society in various practices and institutions (Foucault, 1980).

These findings make a novel and important contribution to the literature. The discussion has demonstrated that the manner in which identities are constructed and shaped is complex. Taken in their totality, these findings provide new empirical support to conceptualise immigration statuses including the position of refugees and asylum-seekers as dynamic rather than fixed. The official and legal definitions of asylum are based on normative frameworks. There is no denying that categorization serves an important role for policy-makers, reporters and practitioners. However, forced migration is a complex phenomenon, individuals who are on the move challenge both fixed categorisations and the binaries typically associated within forced migration. There are numerous layers of social complexity surrounding the category 'asylum-seeker'. The label is not merely a legal or official category but also an evaluative term. As demonstrated in this chapter the term has evolved over the

years. Today the 'asylum-seeker' represents an economic and security threat to its host nation and citizens. This research supports scholars who argue that a 'new asylum paradigm' is emerging (Squire, 2009). Further research on this topic, in particular the examination of the 'in-between' nature of categories and the grey area of labelling should help build on these findings.



# Chapter Nine: Conclusion

## Introduction

The completion of the thesis has been a journey on many levels. The preceding chapters have explored the complex relationship between the official categorization and the social construction of asylum. The focus has been on the processes of social construction which affect asylum-seekers who are placed within asylum systems and processes of determination. Throughout the chapters, I assessed the role of categories, the process by which they are constructed, and reviewed the purpose they serve. The thesis demonstrates that the combination of category constructions collectively lead to the social and political construction of 'asylum-seeker' identities. Asylum policy, media reporting and practitioners collectively contribute to how asylum is defined, understood and managed. Beyond this, the thesis has also involved my personal journey as a researcher and the journey of research questions, data and methods used. This concluding chapter will follow the work of other researchers who have employed the notion of journeys as a metaphor for the research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 1999; Dowling, 2006; Lichtman, 2017; Palaganas et al., 2017). Journeys are far more complex than starting from point A and moving to point B. Journeys can have several starting points, unknown routes and destinations.

'Like any journey, doing qualitative research is an adventure, with all the accompanying excitement and stimulation, as well as the challenges to confront. Even with an itinerary and a rough plan for how you expect things will unfold, there are always surprises, twists and turns in the road, and unforeseen obstacles that must be negotiated. In spite of all the preparation you might do in the form of reviewing literature, studying maps of the terrain, talking to others who have travelled the roads before you, the one thing that you can count on for certain is that you will not end up where you thought you might' (Minichiello and Kottler 2012, p.11).

The metaphor of a journey is an appropriate way for me to reflect on the thesis in this final chapter.

The start of a journey can be multifaceted, making the starting point difficult to define. As I have reflected on the journey of this thesis, I have come to realise that the beginning of my research journey can be considered in the same way, being separated into different

starting points that each relate to certain aspects of the research. In many ways, the study started after I secured the PhD scholarship at Canterbury Christ Church University. However, I feel that my research journey started much later (discussed in detail in Chapter Four) and began when I conducted the pilot interviews and approach the field for the first time.

As I come to the end of the journey of the thesis and reflect on the process of conducting this research, I find it interesting that in many ways the end of this journey can be summarised in a similar way to the beginning, made up of different parts. There is the conclusion of the thesis as an academic thesis, requiring the criteria of doctoral work. However, on another level, there is the question of what the future implications are of the findings and main arguments of this research as discussed in Chapter Eight. In addition, there is the ending of the thesis in my own life and how I might take this experience into the future. This chapter focuses on my reflections and concluding remarks to close the thesis.

## Reflections

The thesis opened (Chapter One), with a brief overview of the context surrounding the study. Forced migration was a topical issue when I undertook this research journey. In 2015, there were more refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced people seeking safety across the world than at any time since the Second World War (UNHCR, 2015c). During the period of working on the thesis, the migration of refugees and asylum-seekers has dominated the political agenda. The evolving environment of forced migration has provided the thesis with both relevance and timeliness. I realised early on that asylum would be a challenging topic to study as it was an incredibly divided and deeply political issue. I also felt a sense of uncertainty as a consequence of the increased level of attention that was provided to individuals on the move who arrived into Europe in 2015. I was moved by the countless news reports of individuals who had travelled from their home countries to reach Europe. I struggled with the question of how this research would address not only gaps in literature but also attempt to make a difference to forced migrants on the ground who risked their lives to reach the shores of Europe.

The humanitarian crisis of 2015 highlighted the significance of categorization in forced migration to me. The different categories that were employed to describe individuals on the move were important as they contributed to and constructed 'forced migrant' identities. I realised that bureaucratic categories had life changing consequences for individuals identified as 'asylum-seekers', 'refugees' and 'migrants' and furthermore, had the power to include as well as exclude individuals. Official categorization was a topic which deserved attention and

became central to the thesis and research questions. It also became very clear to me that the granting of asylum was not merely a human rights issue and intersected with a number of areas. The majority of European countries responded to the humanitarian crisis of 2015 by imposing barriers to prevent individuals entering their territories. Hungary, Bulgaria and Spain built new fences along their borders (Berry et al., 2015). In the UK, the (then), prime minister David Cameron referred to the individuals who reached Europe as a 'swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean, seeking a better life, wanting to come to Britain' (The Daily Mail, 2015). The use of inflammatory language dehumanized the men, women and children who had travelled to reach Europe. With the exception of Germany, most European countries responded to the humanitarian crisis of 2015 by securing their borders and preventing the entry of those individuals on the move. The research of the thesis is rooted in the wider context of global displacement. Chapter One set the tone, significance and purpose of the study.

The journey of this research has been a very long and complex process involving change and development. When I began the study, I envisaged that I would interview employees at the Home Office who worked in the area of asylum. I was keen to explore the 'official categorization' of asylum through a qualitative lens. However, the research process began with a significant amount of uncertainty over whether I would be able to gain access to Home Office officials. Unfortunately, when I approached the Home Office I was informed that Home Office employees would be unable to participate in the study (see Appendix 1) and was directed to the Home Office website. I was forced to significantly change my planned research approach and employed documentary thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009) to explore the social construction of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in policy discourse. Policy documents became a central component of the study as they provided the official framework of asylum for the thesis.

The literature review (Chapter Two), highlighted the conceptual, legal and social complexities involved in the construction of 'asylum-seeker' identities. As I move towards the end of the thesis and research journey, I admit that I have by no means addressed all of the layers of complexity (that was beyond the scope of the thesis), as asylum is a challenging area of study. Asylum intersects with a number of areas including; citizenship (Crisp, 2003a; Gibney and Hansen, 2003; Stewart and Mulvey, 2014), rights (Arendt, 1968; Dummett and Nicol, 1990; Sales, 2002), belonging (Squire, 2009; O'Neill, 2010; Amin, 2012), nation-state ideology (Keely, 1996; Joppke, 1997), geo-political structure (King, 2010; Allen et al., 2018) borders (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010; Gill-Bazo, 2018) and migration. However, the role of official categorization is central to understanding the multifarious nature of the category 'asylum-seeker'. The concept

of labelling 'provides a powerful tool to explore the political in the seemingly apolitical arena of bureaucratic practices' (Zetter, 2007, p.184). Scholars in the field have conducted research on the theoretical framing of 'asylum-seeker' (Goodman and Speer, 2007; Darling, 2008; Squire, 2009; Goodman, Sirriyeh and McMahon, 2017), or 'refugee' (Zetter, 1988; Zetter, 1991; Marfleet, 2005; Zetter, 2007; Haddad, 2008), rather than examining these concepts together. The research in the thesis has attempted to address this gap in literature and highlighted the benefits of exploring the relationship and areas of intersectionality between both categories.

Throughout the thesis, I have worked with a diverse range of theories and concepts during the research process, intertwining these through the analysis and employing them to underpin my engagement with the findings. As outlined in Chapter Three, the conceptual framework was developed across different disciplines and focused on three areas; social construction, the relationship between categorization and power and liquid modernity. I want to draw again on some of these concepts here as part of my wider reflections of the thesis as a whole. Social construction has been the main orienting concept of the study. This research has proposed that categories are socially constructed as they are given meaning by society. I do not claim that there is no sense of a real issue in relation to asylum or asylum-seekers. I argue that the particular ways in which 'asylum-seekers' have been represented is not inevitable or a policy response to their existence. A complex range of actors have combined to produce the changing meanings provided to an 'asylum-seeker' today. This process of construction is incredibly intricate and involves a range of competing actors and organisations over a long period of time. Throughout the chapters, I have demonstrated how the social construction of 'asylum-seekers' occurs in policy discourse, media reporting and the role of practitioners.

Employing an eclectic conceptual framework enabled me to critically study the topic of asylum. Categorization is not a neutral, routine activity (Foucault, 1984; Rose, 1989; Hacking, 1995); categorization is inherently linked to power. Essentially, systems of categorization do not operate in a void. The thesis has maintained that to study the topic of asylum it is important to review how the combination of discourse and power has produced particular representations of an 'asylum-seeker'. Chapters Five, Six and Seven were varied in their focus, however, they were brought together by their shared focus in the manner in which categorization operates to construct social identities whilst also highlighting the evolving and grey area of labelling. Bauman's theorization of contemporary society as 'liquid or fluid modernity' (Bauman, 2000) was helpful in the analysis, but also had its limitations. The findings highlighted that there were elements of liquidity that could be observed but it was not the 'liquid modernity' which Bauman described. The categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' had elements of 'solidity' as they fundamentally described normative statuses. The thesis has

demonstrated the relevance of social construction, and the ways in which categorization operates to affect the lives of both 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' resulting in liminality and a precarious condition (discussed in Chapter Eight).

The eclectic conceptual framework enabled the thesis to draw attention to the multiple and contrasting ways in which the social construction of asylum takes place across different actors. It also revealed the grey area of labelling. The theoretical approach has highlighted the importance of a social constructivist epistemology to refugee, forced migration and asylum studies. Categories define the conditions of entry for forced migrants. Categories are central to policies which can both prevent or facilitate movement between categories. Official labels are intimately tied to power. This research has demonstrated that employing more than one theoretical concept can be useful in the analysis. For the thesis, the conceptual approach provided me with the tools to identify the main themes of; labelling, precarious citizenship and hierarchies of humanitarian need, contained within policy discourse, media reporting and the participant's accounts. Therefore, the thesis has highlighted the utility of adopting a more diverse theoretical approach as a means to understand complex phenomenon.

Similarly, a qualitative multi-method approach was incredibly useful in this research, as it enabled me to combine different perspectives which are rarely examined together. Employing more than one research method allowed me to develop greater levels of critical thinking as I was able to observe the connections and differences across the different data sets. The policy analysis conducted in Chapter Five unravelled some of the tensions and contradictions inherent in the representations of 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' in asylum and immigration policy. Policy discourse conflated asylum with immigration. Interestingly, Chapter Six revealed the contradictory frames that were utilized to report on the humanitarian crisis of 2015 by the British media. News reporting centred on presenting the migrant and refugee crisis interchangeably. This once again reflected a trend of conflating immigration with forced migration. Furthermore, Chapter Seven also highlighted the conflicting representations of 'asylum-seekers' from the experience of practitioners. The conflation of different migrant categories and immigration statuses also reflected a trend of confusing immigration with asylum-seeking. All of the three studies had a specific focus however, I was able to observe the relationships between category constructions across the different actors.

The thesis gained insights beyond the reach of a typical single method analysis. The strength of multiple methods helped me to gain a nuanced understanding of how the official categorization of asylum is produced, reproduced and consumed in society. However, I did

encounter challenges in implementing a multi-method approach as it was both labour and time intensive. The analysis and coding of all the data sets involved a lengthy iterative process. To ensure consistency, I employed the same approach to coding for the policy analysis, media interviews and practitioner interviews utilising Watts's (2014) what/how coding framework. This allowed the data to be categorised and analysed in a structured manner.

When I entered the field I realised that no amount of planning could have prepared me for the research process. Some of the research process was unpredictable, more complex than expected and chaotic at times. This research has required a relatively long process of reflecting, as a consequence of employing more than one method. The different elements of the research design contributed to an in-depth understanding of the layers of social complexity surrounding the category asylum-seeker and its intricate relationship with the category refugee and related categories.

I have also found that the context is central to understanding the evolving nature and meanings provided to official categories and identities. 'Refugees have become the epitome of that extraterritoriality in which is rooted today's precariousness of the human condition' (Bauman, 2004, p.192). The findings of this research have significance beyond the fields of refugee, forced migration and asylum studies. As discussed in Chapter Eight, boundaries of belonging and citizenship are constantly shifting. Policy changes have implications which affect individuals in the immigration process, as well as those who were previously considered equal citizens. Categories are both normative and evolving. Today, the number of individuals with precarious citizenship are increasing. Events including Windrush<sup>18</sup> and Brexit<sup>19</sup> have highlighted this most effectively. The state appears to be creating a system of hierarchies of belonging affecting individual rights to citizenship. As Brexit negotiations continue, the UK nears its parting from Europe, it is likely that immigration policy in the UK will experience further changes as border controls become tighter and freedom of movement is managed. Currently, it is unclear as to how these changes may affect refugees and asylum-seekers.

## Concluding Remarks

The evolving context of forced migration has provided the thesis with a particular relevance and timeliness. I started the journey of the thesis in 2015, when figures of global

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<sup>18</sup> The Windrush generation were categorized as 'illegal' as a consequence of a lack of documentation due to the changes brought about by the 2014 and 2016 Acts

<sup>19</sup> European citizens in the UK are required to apply for settled status after Brexit in order to legally remain in the UK.

displacement were unprecedented, 'one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum'(UNHCR, 2015c). Throughout the duration of the journey of the thesis and research process, forced migration and asylum have dominated policy-making, politics and discourse. Forced migration has increased dramatically and the global community has struggled to respond to the mass movement of individuals seeking safety to claim asylum. Asylum is not an automatic right, rather the status of asylum is granted to a person after they have demonstrated that they are worthy of refugee status. As has been demonstrated in the thesis, the categories 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' are intimately connected. Both terms are not merely descriptive, bureaucratic labels but also evaluative categories which involve moral judgements about the legitimacy of the movement of the individuals in question. Categorization will always be important in the field. Categories have real life consequences for the unprecedented numbers of individuals on the move and furthermore, have the power to include or exclude. Processes of differentiation are necessitated through categorization. How individuals on the move are categorised and placed into categories is significant and will be an area that will continue to generate interest within the field.

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# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1. CORRESPONDENCE FROM HOME OFFICE

Direct Communications Unit  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Tel: 020 7035 4848  
Fax: 020 7035 4745  
[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

Reference: T4326/17

26 May 2017

Dear Roohi,

Thank you for your email of 11 May about arranging a meeting in relation to your PhD research on asylum in the UK.

Due to the large number of requests for information and meetings that we receive we are unfortunately unable to meet with you. I have instead provided some information below about the asylum process and included links to the official UK Government website [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK), which I hope you find helpful for your research.

As a signatory to the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) the UK is legally obliged to consider all asylum claims made here so that we do not remove anyone who faces persecution or inhuman or degrading treatment on return to their country of origin. Detailed Home Office policy guidance provides the framework for considering such claims and all decision makers receive extensive training before making decisions. The guidance can be found here: [www.gov.uk/topic/immigration-operational-guidance/asylum-policy](http://www.gov.uk/topic/immigration-operational-guidance/asylum-policy).

Every asylum claim is carefully considered on its individual merits by assessing all the evidence provided by the claimant against a background of published country information from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and a wide range of recognised and publicly disclosable sources, including the media and non-governmental sources, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Country policy information published by the Home Office can be found here: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-policy-and-information-notes](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-policy-and-information-notes).

Asylum is granted when someone demonstrates a well-founded fear of persecution under the Refugee Convention for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion or their particular circumstances engage our obligations under ECHR Article 3. They must show that they cannot seek protection from the authorities in their country and cannot reasonably move to another part of their country to avoid persecution. Those who are found not to need protection are refused but have a right of appeal to the independent courts. Once their appeals rights are exhausted they are required to leave the UK. Detailed information about the asylum process for those applying in the UK is available here [www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/asylum](http://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/asylum).

I hope this information is helpful for your research.

Yours sincerely,



Dave Hollings-Tennant

Asylum Policy,  
Immigration and Border Policy Directorate  
Email: [Public.Enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Public.Enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

29 April 2016

Ref: 16/SAS/275C

Ms Roohi Hussain

Dear Roohi

**Confirmation of ethics compliance for your study “*The social construction of asylum in the UK.*”**

I have received your Ethics Review Checklist and appropriate supporting documentation for proportionate review of the above project. Your application complies fully with the requirements for proportionate ethical review as set out in this University’s Research Ethics and Governance Procedures.

In confirming compliance for your study, I must remind you that it is your responsibility to follow, as appropriate, the policies and procedures set out in the *Research Governance Handbook* ( <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/centres/red/ethics-governance/governance-and-ethics.asp> ) and any relevant academic or professional guidelines. This includes providing, if appropriate, information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. Any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over its course should be notified to the **Research Office**, and may require a new application for ethics approval. It is a condition of compliance that you **must** inform me once your research has been completed. Wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely



Roger Bone  
Research Governance Manager  
Tel: +44 (0)1227 782940 ext 3272 (enter at prompt)  
Email: [roger.bone@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:roger.bone@canterbury.ac.uk)

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Professor Rama Thirunamachandran, Vice Chancellor and Principal

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APPENDIX 3. INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

**Title of Project:**            **The Social Construction of Asylum in the UK**

**Name of Researcher:**    Roohi Hussain

**Contact details:**         r.hussain492@canterbury.ac.uk

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researcher will be kept strictly confidential.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

5. I am happy for the interview to be recorded

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Copies:        1 for participant  
                  1 for researcher



## The Social Construction of Asylum in the UK

### **Participant Information Sheet**

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Roohi Hussain.

### **Background**

My project will examine how the ‘official construction’ of asylum impacts the social construction of asylum in the UK. I will be investigating the role of official categories (& definitions) of asylum in relation to the social construction of asylum. This research is significant for its value across refugee and forced migration studies as well as to policymakers and practitioners in the field of asylum. This project has practical implications as the research intends to reveal insights into the social construction of asylum in the UK.

### **What will you be required to do?**

I would like to speak with you to learn about your experiences and understandings of asylum-seekers and to get your thoughts on the official categories and definitions of asylum.

### **Confidentiality**

All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University’s own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by Roohi Hussain listed in the initial paragraph of this sheet. After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed)

### **Dissemination of results**

The results of the study will be used in my PhD.

### **Deciding whether to participate**

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

### **Any questions**

Please contact Roohi Hussain at [r.hussain492@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:r.hussain492@canterbury.ac.uk).

Thank you for your participation.

Roohi Hussain

## APPENDIX 5. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1.) Can you tell me about your current role and what you do?
- 2.) How do you get your information on asylum-seekers?
- 3.) How would you define an asylum-seeker?
- 4.) How would you describe a refugee?
- 5.) Has your perception of asylum-seekers and refugees changed over the time you have worked in the field/media?
- 6.) How do you think other people perceive asylum-seekers and refugees?
- 7.) From your experience what are some of the challenges faced by media professionals when reporting on asylum and refugee issues? From your experience what are some of the challenges faced by people working directly with asylum-seekers? *(selected question based on front-line/media group of participants)*
- 8.) Is there anything you would like to add?
- 9.) Is there anyone that you would recommend that I should speak to for my research?

**APPENDIX 6: CODING SCHEME**

<b>First Level and Second Level Codes (Nodes &amp; Clusters)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>Definition of asylum-seeker</i></b>	Statements/discourse which refers to definitions and understandings of asylum-seekers
Official/Legal	References to the legal definition of 'asylum-seeker'
Credibility	References to the reliability of proving an asylum-seeker's claim
Humanitarian	Statements concerning the human welfare of asylum-seekers
Problem to be Managed	Descriptions concerning the abuse of the asylum-system
Un-official	References in contrast to the legal definitions of 'asylum-seeker'
Criminality	Descriptions concerning the illegal activity of asylum-seekers
Negative	Statements regarding the negative portrayal of asylum-seekers
Temporal Liminality	References regarding the temporary, in-between nature of asylum status
Economic Migrant	Statements concerning the economic motivations and voluntary nature of migration
Status	References to the entitlements of the asylum-seeker category
Evolving	Descriptions concerning the changing nature of the category 'asylum-seeker'
<b><i>Definition of Refugee</i></b>	Statements/discourse which refers to definitions and understandings of refugees
Official/Legal	References to the legal definition of 'refugee' (1951 Convention)
Credibility	References to the reliability of proving a refugee's claim
Humanitarian	Statements concerning the human welfare of refugees
Political	Descriptions concerning political decisions taken by nation states in defining refugees
Evolving	References to the changing nature of the term refugee
Status	References to the privileges and entitlements of the refugee label
Temporal liminality	Statements regarding the temporary, in-between nature of refugee status
Criminality	Descriptions concerning the illegal activity of refugees
Syrian Nationality	Descriptions which defined refugees as individuals of Syrian nationality

Survivors	Statements regarding the survivalist nature of refugees
Migrant	Statements concerning the voluntary nature of moving from one country to another and its connection to the term refugee
<b>Definition of Migrant</b>	Statements/discourse which refers to definitions and understandings of migrants
Illegality/Illegal	Descriptions concerning the criminal activity of individuals who migrate from one country to another
Problem	References concerning the need to address the issue of individuals who migrate to the UK and are not welcome in the UK
Conflated with other terms	Descriptions regarding the merging of different labels with the term migrant
Stateless person	Statements/discourse which apply to individuals who are not recognised as a citizen of any country and are unable to live permanently in any other country
Refuse asylum; grant Humanitarian Protection (HP)	Statements/discourse which refer to migrants who are denied asylum but granted humanitarian protection for a period of 5 years
Refuse asylum and HP, grant Restricted Leave	Statements/discourse which refer to migrants who are denied asylum and HP but granted restricted leave as they cannot be immediately removed from the UK (due to Article 3 of the ECHR)
Refuse asylum and HP; grant under the Article 8 Family/Private Life Rules	Statements/discourse which refer to migrants who are denied asylum and HP but granted the right to remain in the UK under Article 8 Family/Private Life Rules
Refuse asylum, HP, and Article 8, grant Discretionary Leave Outside the Rules	Statements/discourse which refer to migrants who are denied asylum, HP and Article 8 but granted restricted leave in exceptional circumstances outside of the rules
Refuse asylum, HP, leave under Family Rules and DL:	Statements/discourse which refer to migrants who are denied asylum, HP, leave under Family Rules and DL
<b>Distinction between Refugees and Asylum-Seekers</b>	Statements/discourse which refers to the differentiation between refugees and asylum-seekers
Distinction not important	References which did not see the need to differentiate between refugees and asylum-seekers
Distinction is important	Statements/discourse which described the importance of differentiating between refugees and asylum-seekers
Terms related	Descriptions which refer to the connections and close relationship between the terms refugee and asylum-seeker

<b><i>Information on asylum-seekers and refugees</i></b>	Statements/discourse which refers to the manner in which the participants obtained information on both asylum-seekers and refugees
Charities	Statements which refer to using charities as a source of information on asylum-seekers and refugees
Home Office (including referrals)	Descriptions which refer to the Home Office (including referrals from the Home Office) as a source of information on asylum-seekers and refugees
IGO's (Inter-Governmental Organisations)	Statements/discourse which refer to IGO's as a source of information on asylum-seekers and refugees
Individuals	References describing individuals (refugees/asylum-seekers) as a source of information directly
Local Authorities	Statements/discourse which refer to local authorities as a source of information on asylum-seekers and refugees
Media	References describing the media as a source of information on asylum-seekers and refugees
NGO's (Non-Governmental organisations)	Statements/discourse which refer to NGO's as a source of information on asylum-seekers and refugees
Service Providers	References describing service providers as a source of information on asylum-seekers and refugees
Strategic Migration Partnership	Statements/discourse which refers to the Strategic Migration Partnership as a source of information on asylum-seekers and refugees
UNHCR	References describing the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as a source of information on asylum-seekers and refugees
Other Sources	Statements/discourse which refers to additional sources (not listed above) as a source of information on asylum-seekers and refugees
<b><i>Role of the Media</i></b>	Statements/discourse which refers to the views of the participants of the role of the media in representing asylum-seekers and refugees
Influence public perceptions on asylum-seekers and refugees	References describing the role of the media in influencing public perceptions of asylum-seekers and refugees
Negative	Statements/discourse concerning the negative portrayal of asylum-seekers and refugees by the media

Positive	Statements/discourse concerning the positive portrayal of asylum-seekers and refugees by the media
<b>Perceptions of Asylum-seekers and Refugees</b>	Statements/discourse which refers to the participants and public perceptions of asylum-seekers and refugees
Misinformed	Participant descriptions of the inaccurate perceptions of the public towards asylum-seekers and refugees
Negative	Statements/discourse which refers to the negative perceptions of asylum-seekers and refugees
Neutral	Statements/discourse which refers to the neutral perceptions of asylum-seekers and refugees
Othered	Statements/discourse which refers to the perceptions of asylum-seekers and refugees as intrinsically different and alien from oneself
Polarised	Statements/discourse which refers to the perceptions of asylum-seekers and refugees as being polarized
Positive	Statements/discourse which refers to the positive perceptions of asylum-seekers and refugees
Related to Brexit	References concerning the relationship between perceptions of asylum-seekers and refugees and Brexit
Humanitarian	Statements/discourse concerning the humanitarian perceptions of asylum-seekers and refugees
Unclear on Terms	Statements/discourse which refers to the public perceptions of asylum-seekers and refugees as being confused
<b>Border Security</b>	Statements/discourse which refers to the measures taken by the UK to monitor its borders to regulate the movement of people
Problem to be Managed	References concerning the increased illegal migratory movements and crossings into the UK
<b>Community/Public Response to VPRS</b>	Statements/discourse which refers to the Community/public responses to the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme
Negative	References to the negative community/public responses to VPRS
Positive	Statements/discourse which refers to the positive community/public responses to VPRS
Polarised	Statements/discourse which refers to the divided and polarised community/public responses to VPRS

<b><i>Hierarchy of Needs</i></b>	Statements/discourse which refers to a hierarchy of humanitarian needs
Asylum-seeking children	References to asylum-seeking children placed in a hierarchy of humanitarian needs
Migrants	Descriptions of individuals who migrate positioned within a hierarchy of humanitarian needs
Syrians	Statements/discourse which refers to individuals of Syrian nationalist placed within a hierarchy of humanitarian needs
<b><i>Media Insights</i></b>	Statements/discourse from the media interviews which share journalist insights on reporting on the topic of forced migration
Challenges in reporting	References from the media participants on the difficulties in reporting on asylum and refugee issues
Framing of crisis	Statements/discourse from the media interviews which refer to the manner in which the humanitarian crisis was categorised
Newspaper terminology	Statements/discourse from the media interviews which refer to the terminology and categories employed by the media in reporting
<b><i>Governmentality</i></b>	Statements/discourse which refer to Governmental policies and their impact on refugees and asylum-seekers
Home Office policies on Forced Migration	Statements/discourse which refer to Home Office policies on asylum-seekers, migration and forced migration
Political Discourse	Statements/discourse which refer to the political agenda and its impact on asylum-seekers and refugees
<b><i>Challenges working with asylum-seekers and refugees</i></b>	Statements/discourse from the practitioner interviews on the difficulties working in the front-line with asylum-seekers and refugees
Asylum emotive topic	Descriptions which refer to the sensitive and topical nature of asylum
Benefit Cap/poor quality of life	References to the limited funding available within the benefits system which has an impact on the quality of life for asylum-seekers and refugees
Challenges providing support	References to the difficulty in providing support to asylum-seekers and refugees
Challenging attitudes	Statements/discourse which refer to the need to challenge public attitudes to asylum-seekers and refugees
Charity sector run like a business model	Descriptions to the change in structures in the charity sector which affect support services to asylum-seekers and refugees

Cultural differences	References to cultural differences
Deprived education	References to limited education
Helping vulnerable groups	Descriptions concerning the challenges in supporting vulnerable individuals
Housing costs	Statements/discourse concerning the rising cost of accommodation
Managing expectations	Descriptions of managing expectations of newly arrived asylum-seekers and refugees
Need a collaborative approach	Statements/discourse which refer to the need of a more collaborative approach to support asylum-seekers and refugees
Negative system created by Home Office	References to the hostile immigration system created by the Home Office
Negativity local communities	Descriptions of the negative community responses to asylum-seekers and refugees



**APPENDIX 7. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Interview</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
Francois	Client Advisor	National charity	Frontline	London	In person	August 2017
Mike	Client Advisor	National charity	Frontline	London	In person	August 2017
Izzy	Senior Manager	National charity	Frontline	London	In person	August 2017
Melanie	Client Administrator	National charity	Frontline	London	In person	August 2017
Gill	Client Advisor	National charity	Frontline	London	In person	August 2017
Mary	Contact Centre Advisor	National charity	Frontline	South East	In person	September 2017
Daniel	Telephone Advisor	National charity	Frontline	South East	In person	September 2017
Bob	Senior Telephone Advisor	National charity	Frontline	South East	In person	September 2017
Joshua	Telephone Advisor	National charity	Frontline	South East	In person	September 2017
Simon	Telephone Advisor	National charity	Frontline	South East	In person	September 2017
Matt	Senior Manager	Regional Training Service Provider	Frontline	South East	In person	January 2018
David	Senior Manager	Local Authority	Frontline	South East	In person	February 2018
Jenny	Senior Manager	National charity	Frontline	South East	In person	February 2018
Hannah	Senior Manager	National Charity	Frontline	South East	In person	February 2018
Amy	Manager	Local Charity	Frontline	South East	In person	February 2018
Rosie	Senior Manager	Local Charity	Frontline	South East	In person	February 2018
Olivia	Refugee Re-settlement Co-ordinator	Local Authority	Frontline	London	In person	February 2018
John	Principal Strategy Officer	Local Authority	Frontline	London	In person	February 2018
Stewart	Co-ordinator for the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme	Local Authority	Frontline	South East	Phone	February 2018
Neil	Service Manager: Refugee Services & International Family Tracing	National NGO	Frontline	South East	Phone Interview	February 2018
Lilly	Community Safety Manager for refugees and migrants	Local Authority	Frontline	South East	Phone Interview	March 2018
Frances	North of England reporter	The Guardian	Media	North West	Phone Interview	January 2018
Kate	Commissioning Editor	The Guardian	Media	London	In person	January 2018