

A Study of Asylum Seeker/Refugee Advocacy: Paradoxes of Helping in a Climate of Hostility

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the extent to which hostility towards asylum seekers/refugees frames advocacy talk. Using a dialogical approach, I analyse how the identities of asylum claimants are dealt with by refugee advocates, in order to counter this hostility. My analysis is based on the collection of publicity materials from four refugee organisations, and from Narrative Biographical Interviews conducted with their staff, volunteers and asylum-seeking clients. Using the notion of dialogical network, I demonstrate how hostility enters advocacy talk, how it frames contemporary advocacy representations of refugees, and how it is challenged. In particular, I use Membership Categorisation Analysis to analyse how members of these organisations, the staff, volunteers and campaigners, maintain or challenge the frames provided by the organizations in their publicity materials. I demonstrate how asylum seekers/refugees themselves deal with the hostility and to what extent they are complicit in maintaining or challenging both hostile and advocacy representations of themselves.

Hostility routinely enters the publicity materials and is countered through formulations of refugee identities along the lines of biographical contrasts that work to make the hostility irrelevant. These contrasts are socially resourced, and are organised along a set of 'sympathy themes', whereby asylum seekers are represented as having little choice, as naïve, as victims of violence and as having poor mental health. However, advocates, in their interview talk, push the boundaries of these frames of representation. They present new challenges to established practices of refugee representation, and demonstrate that the moments of antagonism called for in the literature already exist within mainstream advocacy organisations. Similarly, the narratives shared by asylum seeker/refugee informants challenge established representations of refugee-hood, in both mainstream and advocacy practices, providing rich and diverse images of themselves which go beyond representations of 'mute victims'. These cracks, these moments of ethical antagonism, suggest new ways forward for refugee advocacy. Importantly, even within mainstream services, these are live issues for their members. The challenge is to make them visible.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree of qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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1 Introduction

"Of all the tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busy-bodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience." - C.S. Lewis, 1953.

1.1 Introducing the author

This project is born out of my personal experience of immigration and asylum advocacy, which has spanned my past seven years in Manchester. It is also a development of my academic study under, through which I have explored how social hostility towards migrants functions and is reproduced through talk. These multitudes of experience have paved the way for my current thesis. This coming together of what I can loosely define as my 'political' and my 'academic' experience has influenced my chosen research question, the theoretical frameworks I have grounded my work in, and the methodological and analytic tools I have employed to answer some of the subsequent questions. Most notably, this experience in part determines how I, as 'researcher' and 'activist', 'academic' and 'volunteer' (the values I hold and the relationships I have formed with the participants) undoubtedly shaped the path of this thesis and the 'evidence' I have collected on my way. My experiences and my beliefs have inevitably shaped this thesis despite my efforts to ensure 'empirical objectivity' (I will discuss this more in Chapter Two). It is important then to make my role as researcher visible at all times and central to my analysis and conclusions. Consequently an

introduction to who I am (by way of anecdote) is critical to the order of this thesis and hopefully provides some useful background to why I decided to dedicate my research to this topic.

In the summer of 2009 I participated in a No Borders protest camp in Calais. The 'camp', an historical protest strategy of the international No Border network, was established to coincide with the controversial and high profile clearances of the Calais 'jungles'. These 'shanty towns'; tents amidst rubble or hidden in woodland, 'housed' at times 1,000 migrants from outside of the EU. The UK opted out of the Shengen agreement (see Europa, 2012), which allows free movement between EU member states, and subsequently a 'bottle neck' situation developed in Calais; people became stuck at the French/British border as they tried to complete their journey across Europe to the UK. That summer a multitude of advocates, campaigners, humanitarians, friends and allies converged to attempt to highlight (and alleviate) the suffering of the (mostly male) migrants who had found themselves unable to cross the border yet rejected by the French and other European states they had passed through (and indeed for many, by their countries of origin).

I drank tea in the 'Pashtun jungle', spoke to charity workers who were delivering food parcels, supported first aid delivery, read the local and international press and talked with other activists and locals and the same dilemma hovered like a silent question mark over every conversation and attempted intervention. Can the struggle for the humane treatment of those who choose (or are forced) to migrate to Britain be solved through reformist arguments for immigration policy amendments or neo-liberal assimilation of migrants into other EU countries? I came to recognise the mundane but overlooked reality that these 'problems' require deeper, large-scale social and political change. The British government would not (and continue not to) accept these people as they cannot risk losing face in the battle to appear 'tough on immigration' to the British electorate. And should the border be opened the impact that colonialism has had on the 'pull factors' to the UK would probably mean the over-stretching and collapse of the welfare

system. France will not accept these people and the legislation laid out by the Dublin II convention proffers that states can return people to their first recorded port of entry into the EU where they should then claim asylum (most usually Mediterranean countries such as Greece). In 2011 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees declared the Greek asylum system had “collapsed” (European Voice, 2011). Consequently people find themselves trapped in a loop between over-run detention centres in a country with a less than 1% acceptance rate on asylum claims and unable to access other western European countries (whose language and culture is familiar due to colonial links) which have no legislative requirement to allow them entry or residency. Hence migrants make their way to Britain, the colonial country that has spread its native language and notions of prosperity and which in turn erects tightly controlled borders to keep out those who wish to reap some of the benefits of their exploited labour in their home countries. They find themselves trapped; without the freedom to move, without the freedom to stay.

Despite the clearly historical and systemic factors that have led to this ‘immigration crisis’ the established discourse states that ‘migrants’ are the source of this crisis. Whilst the politicians scratch their heads and offer empty promises to be ‘tougher’ on immigration (substituting, as a scapegoat, the structural and political deadlock with the faceless but human figure of the ‘migrant’) the men and women at Calais, and at all of the other visible and invisible border points throughout Europe, wait.

This shapeless chaotic mass of ‘migrants’ or ‘refugees’ encamped at Calais (and elsewhere) has become a weapon with which to fight the battle over immigration. Where does this leave those who advocate for the rights of migrants in Calais and elsewhere? Are we also guilty of manipulating the figure of the ‘migrant’ or the ‘refugee’ in order to win political battles? Does our well-intended end justify the means? After visiting Calais that summer, and returning on several other occasions, I began to ask myself how should we work with migrants, people seeking asylum and those with refugee status to promote autonomy and empowerment, whilst appealing for support from the media, politicians and the electorate who are often the source of

the hostility they face?

This question is not one that I have struggled with in isolation. At the 'Against Fortress Europe' gathering in Barcelona in October 2009 those present asked themselves: how do we work across lines of privilege (i.e. race, class, gender, economics, social and legal status, language) to avoid the reproduction of oppressive attitudes and behaviour towards migrants in our own activities as advocates, activists, campaigners and allies?

The dilemmas posed to charitable organisations within neo-liberalism are enduring. At a Research Institute for Health and Social Change (RIHSC) conference in 2010 the keynote speaker commented "*we do not want to present BME communities/individuals as victims*". Messer, Schroeder and Wodak (2012) in their book *Migrations Interdisciplinary Perspectives* conclude that a 'politics of fear' with regards to immigration is sweeping across Europe and that counter-discourses are few and far between. However, these counter-discourses do exist and I aim to explore them in this thesis. It is this struggle, between countering hostility on the one hand and reproducing passive and oppressive representations of 'asylum seekers and refugees' on the other, that I hope to tackle. I will ask: is there room for a more dynamic representation of people who exist within the asylum system?

From my involvement in No Borders activism, I embarked on this Ph.D. project and formed the Radical Migration Research group in order to work with other engaged and critical academics on issues relating to migration, asylum and borders. It made sense to localise the project; in 2007 Manchester was listed as one of the top three dispersal towns for asylum claimants (Boaz, 2012) and Manchester Refugee Support network lists over 200 refugee organisations in Greater Manchester. Refugee issues are abundant in Manchester and the geographical proximity allowed for better ethnomethodological grounding of my work.

Theoretically, this thesis takes its inspiration from the work published in 2008 by Ivan Leudar, Jiri Nekvapil, Jacqueline Hayes and Joanne Turner Barker in their paper *Hostility Themes in Media, Community and Refugee*

Narratives (Leudar, Nekvapil, Hayes & Barker, 2008). In this paper the authors conducted an extensive ethnographic study of a local community in Manchester. They concluded that the local (but socially resourced) talk on asylum was characterised, and made cohesive, through a set of 'hostility themes': thematically organised arguments that worked to exclude asylum seekers/refugees. These themes were made relevant as features of the setting in which asylum seekers/refugees live and put their activities 'under description' in a way that justified their exclusion. Some of these themes were contingent on local happenings others indexed more generalised arguments/activities that are generated *a priori* by categories such as 'asylum seeker' (i.e. asylum seekers are economic parasites). Other themes were as follows: asylum seekers have a lack of responsibility for their children and community; they are engaged in criminal activities; and they carry infectious diseases. Some of these are recognisable to the lay reader as generalised hostility themes that present in newspapers and in political speeches; others were generated locally to achieve context-specific rhetorical goals (for example denying a person rights to welfare or benefits).

What I would like to emphasise in this research is that these themes enter the talk of those informants who claim to be sympathetic to migrants and in the self- narratives produced by asylum seekers/refugees themselves. Leudar et al. (2008) observed that the narratives constructed by 'asylum seekers/refugees' "*were constructed in terms of biographical contrasts that made the grounds of contemporary hostile rejections false and irrelevant to themselves*" (p.187). Additionally, sympathetic informants proposed alternative narratives that oriented against these themes. This observation sets up the main theoretical framework for this thesis; that to some extent the hostility frames the talk of those who are sympathetic to asylum seekers/refugees.

Bearing in mind the practical dilemmas I had witnessed in my own work over the representation of migrants, asylum claimants and refugees in humanitarian, campaigning and advocacy work, I found it important to ask: how does hostility frame the advocacy discourse? What resources do advocates use to negotiate the identities of those who are seeking asylum in

order to reject this hostility? And, importantly, what discursive space is created within the advocacy discourse for 'asylum seekers/refugees' to narrate their lives?

The field of refugee representation is rife with statistics, 'facts' and stories, I aim to go beneath the façade of objective 'truths' to uncover the work being done, by people, to create the contemporary image of the refugee. To begin with, in this introductory chapter, I will outline the epistemological starting point(s) for this thesis. I will detail the context for the analysis presented in Chapters Three to Five and introduce the main praxiological framework that will provide the scaffolding for my research. I will also introduce myself, author and researcher, and the role I play in the identification of the research problem (to what extent this is procedurally consequential is discussed more in Chapter Two and in the analysis). I will outline how the 'self' is conceptualised in this thesis before exploring the context in which the identities of those who seek asylum are socially produced; I will focus on mass media representations of 'asylum seekers/refugees' and then I will review the literature on advocacy media. Finally I will introduce my research question and aims and how I situate the problematic in an ethnomethodological approach.

1.2 Figuring the refugee- Implications for Social Cohesion and Well Being

Leudar et al. (2008) began by negotiating how to refer to their interviewees; people who were in the UK claiming asylum or who had been granted refugee status. They made the observation that the status of refugees is 'other conferred' (Leudar et al. 2008) it is often interchangeable and is contingent on variable personal and legal perspectives, "*a person does not decide that she is a refugee- she starts as an asylum seeker and only if her application for asylum is accepted does she become a refugee- the status of refugee is in this sense 'other conferred'.*" (Leudar et al., 2008, p.187). Noting this inter-changeability they chose to refer to their informants as 'refugees/asylum seekers' (Leudar et al., 2008).

This problem of how to name people who find themselves at various stages of the asylum process is a complex and contested matter taken up, not only by academics, but by practitioners and campaigners. Due to the inadequacies of the legal process, a person can be a 'refugee' according to Geneva Convention whilst being a 'failed asylum seeker' under UK law.

Similarly, a person may be an 'asylum seeker' if they have not yet had their claim accepted, but may refer to themselves, or be referred to by advocates, as a 'refugee' as a means of asserting the credibility of their claim. Academics such as Leudar (Leudar et al., 2008) support this position; arguing that the term 'asylum seeker' is used to strip people of their genuine victim-hood and so claiming the term 'refugee' as a positive affirmation of one's legitimacy (see also Speer 2007). Hostile media reports frequently inter-change 'bogus asylum seeker' with 'bogus refugee' and 'asylum seeker', indeed even when 'asylum seeker' is used by the hostile press it is usually loaded with negative connotations. 'Asylum seeker', in these contexts, *a priori* generates notions of illegality and criminality (Lynn and Lea, 2003).

Further still in radical left groups such as *No One Is Illegal* and the *No Borders Network* members challenge the categories 'asylum seeker', 'refugee' and 'migrant' and the hierarchy of worthiness and rights that these distinct categorisations imply. Those who campaign for open borders demand the right for freedom of movement for all, regardless of any persecution one may have experienced. But this is not to say this persecution is ignored, rather that the historical plundering of majority world countries for the advancement of western economies makes it impossible to draw a line between those we are indebted to and those we aren't (No One Is Illegal, 2012). The very act of crossing borders is understood as an antagonistic moment in the struggle against national protectionism and social control (Frassanito Network, 2012).

I will review a recent study looking at the categorisation of 'asylum seekers' in the media to demonstrate the complexity of this issue. Goodman and Speer (2007) reviewed a number of published studies concerned with the

term ‘bogus asylum seeker’ in order to elucidate the detrimental and rhetorical manipulations of such category use in the immigration debate; specifically the intentional misuse and interchanging of the categories ‘bogus/genuine’ and ‘asylum seeker/migrant’. They argue that the conflating of such categories furthers anti-asylum seeker sentiment and encourages the harsh treatment and exclusion of genuine asylum seekers. The argument is as follows: the introduction of ‘bogus’ asylum seeker as a category undermines the humanitarian necessity of our response to those seeking asylum; orientation to the idea of illegitimacy shifts the focus toward the notion that people are seeking asylum fraudulently and away from concerns for well-being and moral responsibility (Goodman & Speer, 2007). As Goodman argues with reference to Polly Neate editor of pro-asylum magazine *Community Care*:

One function of the category distinction Neate deploys is that it presents asylum seekers as persons who might in fact be illegal immigrants, but are using the asylum system as a legal means of entry- thus casting doubt on all asylum seekers. (Goodman & Speer, 2007, p.176).

In this research project Goodman and Speer criticised the introduction of the category ‘bogus asylum seeker’ and also the interchangeable use of the terms ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘migrant’. They argued that asylum seekers occupy (and should be granted) a special status over other migrants and that intentional interchanging of the terms distracts from the unique position (and requirements) of asylum claimants (see also Steiner, 2000).

What is arguably missing here, then, is a critical investigation of what a truly emancipatory discourse on immigration would be like. For example, Goodman and Speer concluded that the category use in the television debates they reviewed were detrimental to the plight of asylum seekers due to the misuse of the terms ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘migrant’. The authors are (arguably) guilty, here, of re-affirming category distinctions that work in favour of one group of people (and one political aim) against another (in this case ‘migrants’ or ‘economic migrants’). They argue that:

the speakers present groups of people who should be treated as morally, politically, and legally distinct as one and the same, and as deserving of the same harsh treatment. (p.177). Concluding that: A system of classification based around legitimacy has the effect of constructing all asylum seekers as immigration 'cheats' and as... dishonest people whom we are right to treat with doubt and contempt. (Goodman & Speer, 2007, p.179).

Within a liberal framework the distinction between asylum seekers and economic migrants is rational: we are morally obliged to provide protection to those who are vulnerable; and equally an objective 'means tested' system is more suitable for those who are merely wishing to work and live in the UK (the current 'Points Based Immigration System in the UK is evidence of this). However rather than the category migrant playing a detrimental role in the asylum discourse, it could be argued that the category 'asylum seeker' and the privileging of this category, is detrimental to the pro-immigration debate (No Borders, 2009). Examples of this are abundant, with the full political spectrum from right to left using the need to protect 'genuine asylum seekers' in order to justify harsher immigration policies for 'economic migrants'.

The category use outlined and debated by Goodman and Speer has important implications for critical interventions into contemporary immigration debates. Categories and language cannot be viewed in isolation to policy and systemic changes, they are mutually constitutive. The outcome of the argument is that asylum seekers (premised by a tightly defined notion of suffering and persecution) should be considered entry whilst those without an asylum claim have no right to be in the UK (and are even detrimental to 'genuine' asylum seekers through their attempts to enter the UK). Without dismissing or underplaying the specific circumstances of people fleeing persecution, a discourse that employs categories that are inextricably tied to the nation-state and its legal structures does little to transcend or subvert systemic and institutionalised hostility toward 'others' or to understand the indirect forms of exploitation that affect all lives under capitalism (such as wage slavery and private property/land ownership). Therefore, for those who seek to challenge exploitation and exclusion in all

its forms, focus on category use should not only be ‘central’ but viewed through a critical lens.

To acknowledge the contested nature of asylum seeker and refugee identities, I will use the term 'asylum seekers/refugees'. However where possible I would also like to foreground the agency and activity contingent nature of these categories by using verb-noun clauses such as 'people seeking asylum' or 'people with refugee status'. As the latter suggests, when we refer to 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' we refer to an activity these people have engaged in; not an essentialised or determined identity. Through this lens, the action-orientation of language and category use is put under analysis. Michael Billig made this point at a Critical Discourse Analysis seminar I attended at Lancaster University in March 2011 arguing that “*we should be talking about what people do with language, not what language does*” (Billig, 2011).

The issue of refugee social representation is clearly a complex matter. Whilst this may initially appear as an abstract problematic, it does have real-world consequences for social cohesion and policy. As Sales argues: “*the terms of the mainstream political debate have been predicated on the notion that the majority of asylum seekers are 'bogus' and therefore undeserving of entry to Britain and of social support*” (Sales, 2002, p.456). She observed that arguments around increased flows of asylum seekers were rhetorically tied to concerns about welfare provision: “*asylum seekers have been cast as the 'undeserving', while denied the means (employment) by which to join the deserving*” (p.459). It is not surprising that at the same time that the figure of the 'bogus asylum seeker' began to dominate media and political discourses the 1996 Asylum Act ruled out access to welfare provisions for those whose asylum claims were under review (Sales, 2002, Bloch & Schuster, 2002).

Similarly, European states treat those who are claiming asylum with suspicion and as ‘undocumented illegal immigrants’ or ‘false refugees’ if they are ‘economic migrants’ claiming asylum (Valluy, 2004). These recognitions directly influence state policy toward migrants. Commenting

on the situation in Calais, one of the most visible manifestations of UK asylum and immigration policy, Fassin (2005) noted the frequent use of the term 'refugee' to apply to the inhabitants of Sangatte (a Red Cross warehouse that housed up to 1500 migrants and became known controversially as Sans-gate refugee camp until it was closed in 2002). He argued: *"this term indexed their residential situation and their universal condition rather than a legal status that the state authorities were not eager to grant them"* (Fassin, 2005:363). The (mostly) men who were resident in this camp were not refugees legally nor were they ever likely to be recognised as such, but French media and politicians continued to name them so. Fassin claims that this categorisation was part of a political strategy of compassionate repression (Fassin 2005) whereby the French state could proffer some form of humanitarian concern whilst systematically refusing to acknowledge the humanity of those involved and using the 'threat' of refugees to tighten border controls. As Tyler argues (2006): *"The figure of the asylum seeker increasingly secures the imaginary borders of Britain today"* (p.186).

The figure of the refugee in public discourses has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War era. Pupavac summarises this in her 2008 paper on the changing face of refugees in advocacy (which I will return to later):

Cold War refugees from East Europe were presented as public intellectuals, moral thinkers, samizdat writers, artists standing up for freedom of artistic expression against political oppression (p.273). She continues that: we were invited to admire the courage, heroism and personal sacrifice of these political heroes who had sought refuge in our society. Concurrently we were encouraged to identify their struggles with a defence of our way of life (p. 273).

This is a stark contrast to how the refugee currently figures in the media and politics (I will come to this in sections 1.4 and 1.5). Importantly Pupavac points out how this re-figuring of the refugee has coincided with a new discourse characterised by welfare demands rather than political demands for refugees.

What is critical here is how these representations or constructions of refugees are used practically, what is their action-orientation? It is through this lens that the links between category use and social and political context begin to emerge. For example Ian Hacking points us to the fact that it is not women refugees who are 'constructed' by the media etc. but *idea* of women refugees (Hacking, 1999). The everyday existence of women refugees is of course not disputed, hostility is indeed rife, discrimination a fact of life and the structural forces that are set up to create women refugees (e.g. border controls) have a harsh reality. As Hacking argues: “*no-one doubts that contracts and institutions are the result of historical events and social processes. Hence no-one urges that they are socially constructed*” (Hacking, 1991, p.12). Women refugees are the product of social and historical events: the enclosure of common land, private ownership, the nation-state, capitalism, war, the immigration and asylum system (for example). But the idea of women refugees: that they are victims, maybe bogus, a burden on the economy (to reference a few immediately recognisable themes), are all ideas that have been constructed socially in response to the real, actual existence of women seeking refuge. That isn't to naturalise the existence of women refugees, rather to show them as a product of historical processes (of exploitation and domination) and the discourse surrounding them as inherently dominated by complex social, political and power relationships. The question then is what do their popular representations, the categories and resources draw on to create these images, make possible and how are they used practically?

I will return to the issue of media and advocacy representation in sections 1.4 and 1.5. In summary, the identities of those who are seeking asylum is a highly contested and politically loaded issue for politicians, campaigners, advocates and those who are trying to cross borders and stake a claim in the UK. I am interested in how the contested figure of the asylum seeker is appropriated in mainstream and advocacy discourses. Before I continue to discuss how the figure of the 'asylum seeker/refugee' is negotiated in contemporary media and advocacy discourses and introduce the aims of the current thesis, I will first provide an overview of how this dynamic theory of

self-hood, that can be contested, and is contestable, is theoretically conceptualised in this thesis.

1.3 Sourcing the Self

It is worth here introducing the theoretical lens through which I approach issues of self-hood. I begin with the standpoint outlined by Billig (1991) that “*identity is neither singular nor permanent: we may have 'several contradictory selves'*” (as cited in Lynn and Lea, 2003, p. 427). Notions of self-hood have then been contested in philosophy and psychology. Moving on from Aristotle’s embodied self (see Battaglia, 1995) and notions of the connectedness of the self and consciousness and their eternal essence, philosophers such as Kant (see also Battaglia, 1995) and Sartre (in his later work, see *Being and Nothingness*, 1943), in the spirit of the Enlightenment and human freedom, moved toward the more Nietzschean view point that the self is an ongoing project that is out there in the world and is bound to it in a way that negates definition, “*only that which has no history can be defined*” (in Diethe and Ansell-Pearson, 1994:19). Camus and early Sartre moved toward a view of the self as “*a function of the interplay of history, social conditioning, and the chosen behaviour of the individual person*” (May, ’92, p.14, in Hacking, ’99). Cooley (1902) coined the phrase ‘the looking glass self’ (in reference to Mead’s earlier work on the generalised other, that is, the self pertinent to the society as a whole) in order to highlight the way that the self is mediated through orientation to others; in this sense self and society are intrinsically intertwined.

William James in the *Principles of Psychology* (1890) outlined a theory of the self which saw it grounded in various sources that could conflict with each other; the material self, the social self, the spiritual self. These, he said, are foregrounded with different levels of priority at different times. The notion of the ‘dialogical self’, that is the self of various dialogues in dialogue with other selves, as pioneered by Bakhtin and drawn upon widely in psychology stems from James’ multiple selves. Bakhtin explored the work of Dostoevsky, analysing his polyphonic novel as an analogy for the ‘polyphony of voices’ that make up the self at any one time (Bakhtin, 1929).

What is important about these theories is that they stress that the self is not contained but fluid and accomplished socially. The self is developmentally and synchronically contingent; thus it is temporal and tied to current activities and actions.

At a MMIDA network (Migration, Multiculturalism, Identity, Dialogical Approaches) conference I attended in summer 2012, where the focus was on refugee identities and the dialogical self, keynote speaker Ivana Markova, highlighting the importance of this framework for understanding identities of the displaced, argued that , “*the self is made up of the recognitions that others provide to you*”. This dialogism is grounded in the work of George Herbert Mead and what Cooley termed the 'looking glass self' and is what makes the identities of 'asylum seekers/refugees', who find themselves in exile in often hostile contexts, pertinent to studies of self. Goffman's notion of 'facework' (Goffman, 1955) can be applied here to understand the work that 'asylum seekers/refugees' have to do in order to make up for their supposed failings in the eyes of others. I will employ these social notions of self-hood in order to explore how 'advocates' and 'asylum seekers/refugees' exercise power over their self presentations in an environment that is hostile and arguably (as we will see) paternalistic.

What is important for this thesis is that self presentations are *socially situated* activities and they are *action-oriented*. This framework allows us to explore how identities are managed socially and how social categories and other social resources are drawn on as people go about negotiating the identities of self and others. It also poses a challenge to the positivist and evolutionary notions of self-hood and social identity that have dominated psychology in the 20th century. As Frisina (2002) points out: “*we should not be surprised or dismayed to learn that natural science fails to discern anything like the qualitative distinctions that animate human life. After all, science is a form of inquiry whose objective has been to describe things from a perspective freed of anthropocentric conceptions*” (Knowledge and the Self, p.15). These philosophical and dialogical perspectives allow a more nuanced understanding of how notions of self and identity are played

out interactionally in our inherently social world.

Importantly these perspectives zoom in on the context in which versions of 'self' are produced. This is important to the current thesis as it provides a lens through which I can analyse and make visible the mutually accomplished and socially resourced versions of 'asylum seeker/refugee' identities that feature in advocacy discourses. Identities then, are indexical to their settings. Here I will look at the links between what it is already established that the media says about asylum seekers/refugees, and what counter narratives say about them, and indeed what they say about themselves.

This framework allows me to map the reproduction of particular representations of 'asylum seekers/refugees' between various distributed discourses and negates the essentialised notions of self that characterise racist and xenophobic discourses. It also takes in to account the complex power relations that thread through our self-presentations and presentations of others. In the psychological sciences the self is conceptualised in a variety of ways. However, despite the philosophical foundations laid by the writers noted above, cognitive and essentialist concepts of self have dominated this field. From the 'rouge tests' of experimental social psychology (see Gallup, 1986) through to humanist and psycho-dynamic approaches, such as Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' (Maslow, 1943), these approaches viewed the self as 'internal', cognitively pre-determined and stable (see also Eysenck, 1952; Goldberg, 1977). This is the case most notoriously in evolutionary psychology where notions of identity and self-hood are reduced to biological rather than social processes (Kurzban, 2002). This genetic and biological determinism has been refuted vigorously on both political and scientific grounds (Rose & Rose, 2000). Rose derides evolutionary psychology in *Alas Poor Darwin* (2001) claiming that evolutionary psychologists attribute social phenomenon to "*universal features of human nature that found their final evolutionary form during the infancy of our species some 100-600,000 years ago*" (p.1), dismissing context and the fundamental scientific notion that organisms behave

contingently on their environments. The criticism is not only scientific but philosophical and in some cases ethical. Social phenomenon, including ideas of 'otherness', 'belonging', 'identity' are formulated as genetic, pre-determined and prejudice is rendered inevitable. Rose argues: "*the very thinking of biological approaches is discriminatory and have been used in this way in the past*". In other words evolutionary psychologists claim that people don't change rather society changes. Ideas such as this, and those proposed by race essentialists such as Rushton (1995), bear a stark contrast to the approaches outlined above which find their roots in Hegelian and Marxist dialectics and situate notions of self-hood as historically and socially dynamic.

Issues regarding refugee representations have, of course, been taken up by critical theorists, feminist authors and, as we saw earlier, practitioners in the field. Feminist authors have challenged biologically determined notions of identity, social roles and hierarchies, instead formulating ideas of self-hood as socially managed and historically situated (Cixous 1976; Foucault 1976, 1977 Butler, 1990 and Reynolds and Wetherell 2003). The problem of identity and representation in marginalised groups in particular has led to debates around the role of affirmative counter-hegemonic identities as a tool for resistance (see Epstein, 1992) against stereotyped or silenced groups. Hannah Arendt famously argued against the affirmation of counter identities and argued rather for solidarity *beyond* identity (the notion of 'identity' being viewed as inherently exclusive, see Allen, 1999). These debates strike a cord with the current concern over refugee representation which I detailed at the start of this chapter; some authors argue for the assertion of the 'asylum seeker' category as a means of paying homage to the persecution people have faced, whilst others argue that such categories give unhelpful boundaries and permanence to experience and culture that are easily co-opted by bureaucratic and hostile discourses.

I also draw on Foucault's concept of genealogy (situating the subject historically) and his critical works on madness, identity, power and sexuality (Foucault, 1972; 1976; 1977; 1980) to locate the 'self' as a product

of society dominated by inequality and imbalances of power. Negotiations of identity are indexical to their settings, features of which (positioning, power and politics) are foregrounded, played out and made relevant by the speakers. Foucault spoke about an 'internalisation of power' (Foucault, 1977) and I use this framework to understand how features of the setting and of discourses are explicitly or tacitly acknowledged by speakers *in situ*. I do not conceptualise discourses as abstract or presupposed schemas of which people are passive recipients but as social resources that people use and create in locally situated activities. Through these resources meanings are shared and reproduced, but they are also challenged, contested and transformed. In the work carried out by Leudar et al. (2008), arguments for and against 'refugees/asylum seekers' were socially resourced through orientation to hostility themes. As such hostility, prejudice and exclusion were justified (accounted for) but also challenged.

Social identity and the prejudices that accompany them are not conceptualised here as a cognitive phenomenon, or as the product of abstract discourses. An important observation made by Leudar and Nekvapil (2000) in their study of politician's and media talk about Roma in Europe was that expressions of hostility are indexical to their settings. People would deny Roma qualities that were imbued in the activity at hand. For example, a priest would deny their faith or spirituality. They argue: "*the concept of stereotype current in cognitive social psychology needed revising since it had no way of accounting for the fact that outsiders are stigmatized in way that are contingent on settings*" (Leudar et al., 2008, p.189). They go on to point out the shortcomings of the notion of discourse popular in psychology arguing that "*discourses are better thought of as occasioned collections of occasioned matters, rather than something that is objective and independent of the setting*" (Leudar et al., 2008, p.189). So, the identities of 'asylum seekers/refugees' are indexical to their settings, and discourses of asylum seeking are occasioned matters made relevant by members.

One of the major interests of this thesis is to document how representations of 'asylum seekers/refugees' are socially shared and resourced. Leudar et al. (2008) noted that hostility towards refugees comes in a variety of forms but

they draw on a shared language of the community and it is the analysts work to make this notable. This is what I hope to establish; how advocacy media, advocates and 'asylum seekers/refugees' draw on these shared discourses. I will also apply my analysis to category change, to how these expression of hostility and the defences posed to them are situated locally and with what outcome for 'asylum seeker/refugee identities'.

In summary, in any setting there are a number of ways in which the self can be managed and a plethora of social resources through which identity and the identities of others can be negotiated. This thesis discusses how the identities of 'asylum seekers/refugees' are 'put under description' (Anscombe, 1957) by advocates in relation to the social hostility that characterises mainstream political and media discourses on asylum seeking (and what the implications are for empowerment of refugees and entitlement to political rights). As Lynn and Lea argue:

Making sense of the attitudes that currently prevail requires an awareness and understanding of the wider discursive context within which refugees and those regarded as asylum-seekers find themselves situated: for a social constructionist perspective also acknowledges that understanding is both historically and culturally specific. (Lynn & Lea, 2003:426).

Before looking more at the critical literature on identity and social representation, I will first provide an overview of how 'asylum seekers/refugees' are commonly figured in media and advocacy discourses, reviewing some of the issues that have been raised here and then use the critical literature to contextualise the focus of this thesis.

1.4 Representing Refugees- The Media and Hostility

Unfortunately, people who are seeking asylum and those with refugee status rarely have a public platform to assert their identities (Leudar et al., 2008). However, those with positions of power; the media, politicians or citizens who have some stake in public discourses, have a huge influence on how asylum seekers/refugees are represented and thus received (as we saw

earlier through the work of Sales and others). In this section, I will discuss how asylum seekers/refugees are commonly represented in the media, demonstrating the overtly hostile environment in which people seek asylum in the UK. At the beginning of each analysis chapter (Chapters Three to Five) I will dedicate part of the analysis to establishing how this hostility is made relevant to the publicity materials/talk of advocates or 'asylum seekers/refugees'. The implications of this hostile framing for how 'asylum seekers/refugees' are represented in the materials is discussed in Chapter Six.

The ongoing and seemingly unsolvable turbulence in the economy and the increasingly undisputed threat of mass unemployment, fuel shortages and peak oil has contributed to the escalation of immigration and asylum-seeking as topic in the public consciousness. As competition for employment and natural resources is intensified, migrants are often scapegoated as the source of this scarcity (see Schwartzman, 2007). The immigration/asylum-seeking discourses (I conflate the two as they are commonly conflated by the media/politicians, see Speer, 2007, Lynn and Lea, 2003) have always been fraught with ambiguous statistics, sensationalist reporting and discriminative attitudes (Lynn & Lea, 2003, Goodman, 2007) and the current upheaval in economic and environmental stability has fuelled the debate further. In the UK since the introduction of the first immigration controls in 1905 (Hayter, 2004), the question 'who is the 'immigrant' and how do they relate to states and citizens is continually re-explored and has contributed to a far reaching debate and vast amounts of academic and public interest. Recent public opinion polls conducted by research companies such as Ipsos Mori show that one third of people surveyed (33%) "*place race relations/immigration among the most important issues facing the county*" (Ipsos Mori, 2009). Again in 2011 Ipsos Mori reported a huge overestimation by the British public of the number of asylum seekers and refugees in Britain, with 48% responding that immigration damages British culture and again placing immigration as their second highest concern after the economy (Ipsos Mori, 2011; for a review of the reported attitudes behind these statistics see *Thinking behind the numbers*, Ipsos Mori, 2011).

The research for this thesis took place shortly after the UK economy went into crisis in 2008, following a long period of financial deregulation. It followed the eventual collapse and bailing out of Northern Rock in the UK and the enormous bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in the US. The statistics above are striking; they suggest that immigration rose as a major concern for people at a time when finance capitalism and failing government regulations (not to mention the MPs expenses scandals) were front page news. The Ipsos Mori figure, taken one year on from the 2007/2008 onset of the crisis suggests a link in the public consciousness between immigration and asylum (as we have seen the two issues are almost always conflated) and social and financial insecurity; migrants are easily blamed for job shortages and welfare shortages (contradictorily) and ostracised for seemingly heightened competition for jobs and resources. The Frankfurt School lead the way in pointing out the links between free market capitalism and ethnocentrism and racism (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1950). The onset of the crisis, and the continued deregulation of financial markets under the new Conservative-led coalition government clearly have to be taken into account when analysing the materials collected for this thesis. Indeed, as we will see, members routinely problematise financial shortages, funding cuts and the entering of neo-liberal ideology into charity sector work through competition for government and private sector funding (Katz, in Laurie and Bondi, 2011) in their narratives. It is important to note here that theories such as those put forward in the Authoritarian Personality (Adorno et al., 1950) locate prejudice at the intersection of personality traits and social factors. I will take a non-deterministic stance, viewing these hostile expressions as situated activities reflecting the action-orientation of locally produced talk, rather than as the result of individually held (and cognitively pre-determined) social prejudices. I will therefore take into account the context of the crisis for how 'asylum seeker/refugee' narratives are produced on a local level.

The media plays a huge role in setting the boundaries of the context in which asylum seeker/refugee identities are produced. Of course these

boundaries and the social categories made available by the media are malleable and contestable (as I will discuss in the next section of this chapter), yet the media acts as “*the thread that binds the issues- the discourses- surrounding refugees and seekers of asylum together*” (Lynn and Lea, 2003, p. 428). This is what Leudar's (1998) notion of 'dialogical network' allows us to capture; the way in which the mass media brings together spatio-temporally distinct arguments and events to “*transform individual events into a systemic crisis*” (Hier and Green berg 2002, p.493). The discourses of asylum seeking that the mass media thread together are of course not static; they are socially contingent and mutually constitutive of their context. However several research projects and institutes over the past 20 years have dedicated themselves to mapping some of the salient features of the mainstream discourse on immigration (which is often channelled and explored on the level of mass media).

As Leudar et al. proposed in their 2008 paper (based on observations from Leudar's other work, primarily with Nekvapil, see Leudar and Nekvapil, 2000) hostility is discursively variable. At times it is locally contingent, drawing on the position and the situated goals of the speaker, at other times they are general and pervasive. As Leudar et al. affirmed:

The question is why does the hostility come in a variety of discursive forms? Saying that the media use discourses that marginalize refugees has the advantage of drawing attention to the fact that expressions of prejudice and hostility are not simply individual matters, but are socially shared and resourced by representations provided in the language of a community. Yet making this commonality notable is a situated accomplishment and so a concern for an analyst. The language of hostility between groups is, moreover, not fixed – it comes about and changes and some expressions of hostility are creative. (Leudar et al., 2008, p.189).

I will use the notion of dialogical network to “*elucidate the genesis of discourses and how they are used in situ*” (Leudar et al. 2008, p.188). The contingency of these expressions of media hostility, and the challenges made to them will thus be a focal point of the analysis.

The Information Centre About Asylum and Refugees in the UK (ICAR) project provides an extensive review of the media coverage on asylum seekers/refugees, highlighting the prevalence of negative representations in the mass media and political discourses (see ICAR, 2004). They reported hostile media representations of asylum seekers/refugees that led to fear and anxiety among audiences (with a focus on criminality) and an absence of voices of refugees or organisations that work on their behalf. Indeed in 2009, Media Wise set up the *Refugees, Asylum Seekers and the Media Project* (see Media4Diversity, 2012) in response to an overwhelming number of complaints about the abuse of asylum seekers/refugees by the media. Similarly in 2012 ICAR's briefing sheet *Asylum Seeker and Media Briefing* criticises what they term as the new 'infotainment' nature of media coverage and how this focus on entertainment often results in oversimplified reporting where the distinction between 'migrants', 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' is not established. In brief, these reports are attempts at holding the media to account for the hostile nature in which it routinely represents refugees and the impact this has on community cohesion.

Similarly, in the academic literature investigations into the nuances of refugee representation by the media have drawn similar conclusions. Lynn and Lea concluded that the media constructs 'asylum seekers/refugees' as a 'phantom menace' creating a 'new apartheid' whereby “*the bogus asylum-seeker may be differentiated from the genuine one; the latter is understood as being such a rarity as to be almost irrelevant. A biologically deterministic explanation hints at a latent tendency among asylum-seekers, bogus or other-wise, to succumb to a greedy, duplicitous and inherently criminal nature*” (Lynn and Lea, 2003, p.447). Van Dijk (2000) had previously drawn similar conclusions noting that asylum seekers are cast in passive roles except for when they are formulated as a threat. Others have documented the rhetorical use of metaphors of natural disasters (McLaughlin, 1999, Beattie 1999) and animal and disease metaphors (Santa Ana 1999, Goodman & Speer, 2007). Here “*asylum seekers, cast into the role of 'folk devils', find themselves surrounded by a disaster mentality*” (Lynn and Lea, 2003, p.447).

I refer to the work by Leudar et al. (2008) again to demonstrate the real life consequences of these 'hostility themes'. They work to exclude people by becoming "*aspects of social settings and bringing social activities 'under descriptions' that make the activities of refugees/asylum seekers morally and legally questionable*" (p.215). Additionally this tarnishing and exclusion of 'asylum seeker/refugee' voices leads to further marginalisation. As Lynn and Lea (2003) conclude, people who are seeking asylum "*lack significant 'speaking rights' or 'voice', are more easily oppressed, discredited, and stigmatized*" (p.447). This continued and reinforced hostility naturalises the negativity aimed at 'asylum seekers/refugees' and dictates a separation between the figure of the asylum seeker and the reader/listener (Tyler, 2006). Van Dijk concluded that this appears to be the same across Western European countries: "*the main topics, argumentation strategies and especially the standard arguments (topoi) against immigration are very much comparable*" (cited in Ter Wal & Verkuyten, 2000, p.91).

Some have argued that these forms of mass media have almost exclusive "*control over mass public discourses and re/creation of hegemonic narratives*" (Van dijk 2005, p479). However, as I have already outlined in the previous section of this introduction, language, and category work in particular, in everyday settings can provide a powerful platform on which to challenge hostility and conversely to reproduce it. In *Language and Symbolic Power*, Bourdieu (1991) contests that power lies with those who can create, trade or use categories; in other words, with all speakers in any given time and location. Thus, hostile discourses are not only reproduced on an institutional level, but on the level of everyday talk. Importantly, speakers are not passive absorbers and users of the categories and discourses webbed together by the media. Hartman and Husbands (1974) argue that institutional discourses offer "*frames of reference or perspective within which people become able to make sense of events and of their own experience*" (p.16). However this ignores the level of dialogic dynamism that actually takes place. People are not passive in their reception of these rhetorical structures; social linguistic theories put forward by the likes of

Fowler (1990), Bourdieu (1991) and Billig (1991) negate this Whorfian linguistic determinism, proposing that the structure of language dictates how we conceptualise the world (see Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity, Kay and Kempton, 1984) and as such locate ideology at the level of every-day common-sense thinking (Billig, 1991). Leudar et al. (2008) concluded from their work on media and community hostility themes that “*readers do not simply reproduce media representations but use them flexibly in locally situated activities and sometimes irrespectively of the authors original intent*” (p. 204). There is a degree of flexibility in how these media representations are received by members of the public and other organisations in the public sphere; the next section of this chapter will explore this in more depth, looking specifically at how advocates work with the dominant discourses on asylum seeking.

Before finishing this section on media representations it is important to again emphasise how these discourses interact with policy towards 'asylum seekers/refugees' and the consequences it may have for social cohesion and well-being. Turton (2003) summarises this nicely:

Let me sum up. I said first that the process of conceptualisation is not just one of describing and defining, nor even one of taking up a particular position or adopting a particular perspective: it is a process by which we make the world meaningful and therefore knowable. So the way we talk about forced migration and the way we act towards it are intimately linked: language and practice form a discourse which constructs forced migration for us. (Turton 2003, p.15)

As the nation state transformed into the welfare state during the 20th century, divisions between those who were deemed to be members of the community, or not, were strengthened; whilst this transformation improved welfare services for many it also put into question who was eligible for welfare provisions and who wasn't (see Bommers and Geddes, 2000). We can return again to the work of Sales to look at how the (largely) accepted media position on asylum-seeking coincided with the restriction of welfare

provisions for asylum claimants (see Sales 2002). She documented the changing discourse on asylum seeking in the media as one of suspicion, foregrounding the figure of the ominous 'bogus asylum seeker' at the same time as welfare provisions were officially withdrawn for in country claimants in The Asylum Act, 1996. Bloch and Schuster (2002, p.394) argue in the *Asylum and Welfare* special issue of the journal *Critical Social Policy* that across Europe there has emerged a shared “*conceptualisation of asylum seekers as recipients of, rather than contributors, to welfare*” alongside a move toward the privatisation of welfare facilities. Significantly that the shared presupposition that migrants are attracted by welfare provisions has led to the reduction of welfare entitlements for asylum seekers and has “*reinforced differences between categories of migrants*” (Bloch and Schuster, 2002, p.396).

This move shifted the responsibility to NGOs and community groups to provide housing and food parcels to failed claimants and those whose claims were in process. This 'culture of disbelief' that is perpetuated by the media has a direct impact on practitioners' work. Sales (2004) points out that service providers “*have been drawn into scrutinising immigration status, a scrutiny that often goes beyond legal requirement*” (p.461). The ICAR reports that I mentioned earlier can also be referred to in order to contextualise the coalition government's increasingly draconian approach to immigration and asylum policy. Van Dijk concludes in his book *New(s) Racism: A Discourse Analytical Approach* (2000): “*It needs no further argument that the consequences of these forms of discursive racism in the lives of members of minority groups are hardly discursive: they may not be let into the country, the city or the neighbourhood, or will not get a house or a job*” (p. 34). The discourses are situated and are organised around themes that are in part contingent on local happenings (such as housing shortages etc.) and they are performative; providing justifications for present or future exclusions of refugees; exemplifying the mutually constitutive nature of discourses and their settings.

An important observation made by Sales is that these hostile discourses

permeate the lives of those who are seeking asylum and those who might be (falsely) recognised by society as asylum claimants, refugees, bogus asylum seekers. These categories and identities are other-conferred and as such the hostility is omni-relevant for those who might be recognised as belonging to these groups. As Sales argues *“The social exclusion and stigmatization to which they are exposed in this period damage their chances of settling, while racist discourses against asylum seekers impacts on everyone from these communities, whatever their legal status”* (p. 474, Sales, 2004).

The hostile discourses perpetuated by the media have consequences for practice and policy and also for the psychological (and physical) well-being of those concerned. Accepting Cooley's notion of the ‘looking glass self’, that is, the reflexive nature of self in relation to society and the judgements of others, we must consider the issue of psychological well-being for those who find themselves displaced and in hostile environments. Psychologists have already argued that the internalisation of hostility into one’s own self-perception can have negative psychological consequences (for an example see ‘personal construct psychology’, Kelley, 1995). It has been repeatedly documented elsewhere in the field that mental health problems related to alienation and hostility are increased in refugees and asylum seekers (Timotijevic and Breakwell, 2000; DeFina, 2003). Indeed Leudar et al. (2008, p.191) concluded that the uptake of hostility themes by asylum seekers/refugees posed a threat to well-being in the form of trauma: *“self-presentations are constructed so as to exclude the relevance of the hostility themes to themselves as individuals, yet in having to acknowledge the themes, these become part of them, with negative consequences for personal well-being.”*

However, it is also important to note that experiences of exile and forced migration do not necessarily lead to mental health problems. Indeed Korac (2003) argues that the way that refugees are received by host countries/communities (their ‘condition of reception’) has a large impact on the experience of being an asylum seeker/refugee and consequences for mental health. Mind (2009) in its report *A Civilised Society: Mental Health Provision for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in England and Wales* found

that restrictive policies on health-care and welfare provisions in the UK, and the resultant exclusion and marginalisation, exacerbated mental health problems for people seeking asylum and with refugee status.

Similarly, Eastmond (2007, p.253) argues: “*While transformation and change are part of refugee experience, not all change is perceived as loss or defined as problematic or unwelcome by all individuals involved*”. I attended a Royal Society of Medicine conference on refugee health in the summer of 2012 at which a GP from 'Freedom from Torture' spoke about how the most horrific instances of physical and psychological abuse are sometimes reported by the victims through a narrative of survival and honour (for having suffered for one's freedom/political aims). Indeed, the re-writing of the self as a means of recovering from trauma and in the process of self-actualisation is a stalwart of Western and Eastern humanistic psychology (Carl Rogers, 1959; Crossley, 2000; Epstein, 2007). Again, it is important to look at the social context in which we make claims about 'asylum seekers/refugees' to ensure that projects for change are tackling the root causes of inequality, rather than relying on one-dimensional narratives of trauma and victimisation. I will take up this problem again throughout this chapter.

1.5 Advocacy Representations of Refugees- Helpful or Hostile?

It has been thoroughly established that hostility towards migrants (including, and some times in particular, those seeking asylum) is a discursive and legislative reality that permeates the public and private sphere. The implications of this omni-relevant hostility are profound; influencing and justifying stricter controls over those who seek asylum and, at times, creating conditions for further personal trauma for those involved. However, as Leudar et al. (2008) began to establish, these hostile voices do not go unchallenged. Informants who were sympathetic towards 'refugees/asylum seekers' challenged the basis of this hostility and indeed

the refugee/asylum seeker informants “*constructed [their identities] in terms of biographical contrasts that made the grounds of contemporary hostile rejections false and irrelevant to themselves*” (Leudar et al., 2008, p.187). To complete a full analysis of how hostility towards refugees is reproduced, we must therefore look at how it is challenged. Lynn and Lea (2003) observed these challenges in their work, again documenting the rhetorical strategies used to negate hostile representations: “*those who dissent construct a quite different image of the asylum-seeker. An ironic reversal of roles takes place which recognises them as being dis-empowered and vulnerable; oppressed by institutional procedures and State practices. Here it is the Government and those acting on their behalf that are seen as untrustworthy and Machiavellian*” (p.448)

The work carried out by Lynn and Lea (2003) and Leudar et al. (2008) reveal glimpses of dissenting voices from those who are sympathetic towards people who are seeking asylum; expressing their disagreement through their letters to newspaper editors and in interviews with researchers. We have also seen that these dissenting voices construct representations of refugees that contrast with those provided by the hostile voices. Below, I will look at some of the literature on asylum seeker/refugee representation in humanitarian and advocacy media.

Immigration and asylum advocacy work takes many forms; the organisations I will look at cover legal representation, well-being activities, campaigning for political rights and housing and education support as well as self-advocacy and empowerment. They span several of the categories outlined by Cambridge & Williams (2004, pp.100-102): legal, professional, ‘citizen advocacy’ or ‘self-advocacy’; each working within their own ideological and practice based limitations. Henderson and Pochin (2001, p.1) define advocacy in the following way: “*The process of identifying with and representing a person’s views and concerns, in order to secure enhanced rights and entitlements, undertaken by someone who has little or no conflict of interests...*”

However as we have already seen having ‘little or no conflict of interests’ is

problematic considering the financial constraints on advocacy organisations and those who operate within them. Two of the organisations I look at in this thesis, *Refugee Act Now* (RAN) and *Immigration Legal Aid Manchester* (ILAM), rely on government funding and work in accordance with government legislation, at times enforcing it (for example RAN's controversial Assisted Voluntary Return Programme) with inevitable consequences for what they do and say (at least on an official level, i.e. in their publicity materials, as we will see) and for how they are received by their clients. As Cambridge and Williams (2004, p.98) point out: “*Advocacy is characterised by diverse paradigms of support and intervention, associated with a range of approaches and by sometimes contradictory or conflicting principles, such as protection and empowerment or control and autonomy*”. This interplay of control and dependency, and empowerment and autonomy will be explored in this thesis again through the lens of how advocates manage their identities relationally to 'asylum seekers/refugees' and how 'asylum seekers/refugees' formulate the work of the organisations and their relationship to it.

Advocacy media is important because it plays a crucial role in improving the public perception of 'asylum seekers/refugees' and winning support for campaign, as well as vital donations from the public and from funders. As we saw earlier restrictions on welfare provisions have stretched the capacity of NGOs and the crisis has only amplified this problem. As Hoijer (2004) concludes:

Humanitarian organisations are dependent on the public as audiences giving money gifts, the media are dependent on the public as audiences paying attention to their texts and programmes...given the mediating role of media, on the one hand between humanitarian organisations and the public, and on the other hand between politics and public opinion, makes it especially important to focus on the public as the audience for humanitarian reporting in the media. (Hoijer, 2004, p.518)

Advocacy media (the campaign videos, booklets, posters and websites) work to foster public support and influence public attitudes but they inevitably have to tackle hostility. Katz argues that due to the

'professionalisation' of advocacy “*activists almost inevitably lose a large part of their critical edge, whether through credentialisation, the demands of ‘competitive contractualism’ or other processes that bolster their ‘social capital’ over and against common well-being*” (cited in Bondi & Laurie, 2005, p.625). This drive to secure social capital, working contracts and to meet the specific credentials of funders, managers and competitors restricts what advocates can say and do. In addition to this, as government’s roll back funding, they roll out governance by enlisting advocates/activists/volunteers into the State’s ‘social work’, limiting time that can be spent on extra- governmental activities and anti-government policy campaigns and actions (Bondi & Laurie, 2005). As Katz argues, professionalization “*reins in, if not outright contains, its new subjects*” (p. 623). The criticism Katz makes here is that the need placed on advocates to appeal both to funders (governmental and non-governmental), and to the public to recognise your cause as valid is inherently limiting; the consensual dominant logic that you appeal to is invariably antithetical to your struggle (as we see in the framing of asylum-seeking in the UK which is predominantly hostile and suspicious).

Indeed, in 1992 the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response drew up a Code of Conduct that, today, governs the members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other NGOs that work in disaster relief. Amongst other things, it states that they “*shall portray an objective image of the disaster situation where the capacities and aspirations of disaster victims are highlighted, and not just their vulnerabilities and fears*” (ICRC, 1992). This move followed the high-profile media reporting of Biafra and Rwanda, two of the major (and controversially governed) humanitarian crises of the 20th Century, depicting images of starving and dying people.

Fowler (1991) examined ideological discourses in the media, taking to task the 'structural features' of media sources (i.e. news channels, newspapers) and the extent to which they shape the ideological content: “*Events and ideas are not communicated neutrally they could not be, because they have*

to be transmitted through some medium with its own structural features, and these structural features are already impregnated with social values which make up potential perspectives on events” (Fowler 1991, p.25). Similarly Kress (cited in Fowler 1991 p. 42) points out that: *“Discourses are systematically organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what is possible to say and not possible to say (and by extension what is possible to do and not possible to do)”*. Advocacy organisations and their media outputs are inevitably shaped by their own social values and are strongly contingent on public support; operating within their own discursive and ideological frameworks.

Goffman's concept of 'framing' is useful here. Frames are *“schemata of interpretation that provides a context for understanding information and enables individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label.”* (Goffman, 1974, p.21). What characterises the framing of advocacy media discourses? How do advocates work within the social and relational limitations and constraints described above? Schegloff points out: *“Any person can, however, be categorized in many ways that are true and the question is; which will be relevant in an interaction and ascendant?”* (cited in Leudar, 2008, p.205). The important analytic question here is: how is asylum-seeking framed by advocates, what features of the settings/context are made relevant and what categories/identities do they foregrounded?

Malkki (1996, p.378), an ardent writer on the topic, observes: *“...one important effect of the bureaucratized humanitarian interventions...is to leach out the histories and the politics of specific refugees' circumstances. Refugees stop being specific persons and become pure victims in general”*. Clearly, the identity work done via (and the social categories drawn on in) these interventions are of issue; people are categorised as 'refugees' contingent on their victim-hood and at the expense of their individual circumstances (political, historical, social etc.). The result of these de-historicising and de-individualising representations is the naturalisation of oppression (for example, the assumption that 'refugees' are people who are

oppressed) and the reproduction of hostility based on these naturalised categories and attributes (for example, refugees are victims with no agency). As Malkki suggests below, this positioning of the refugee strips from the person the agency from which they might make their own claim for political rights:

The dehistoricizing universalism creates a context in which it is difficult for people in the refugee category to be approached as historical actors rather than simply as mute victims. It can strip from them the authority to give credible narrative evidence or testimony about their own condition in politically and institutionally consequential forums. (Malkki, 1996, p.378).

Similarly, Hoijer concludes that the participants they interviewed in their study of compassion to refugees accepted the “*dominant victim code of the media and regard children, women and the elderly as ideal victims deserving compassion.*” (Hoijer, 2004, p.521). Clearly, the victimisation of refugees works to capture the minds of advocacy audiences, but this victimhood is a complex and accomplished matter. Fassin elucidates this problematic in his theoretical work on the figure of the refugee in compassionate discourses; at the top stands the 'eternal hero', then the 'permanent victim', next the 'transitory' victim and finally the “*great mass of asylum seekers who will be classified as illegal immigrants and chased by the police*” (Fassin, 2005:377).

The task then for advocates is to map their clients, or the figure of the 'asylum seeker/refugee' as a general prototype, onto this dominant victim code. Pupavac (2008) documented two tropes in what she termed the 'counter stereotypes' used by refugee advocates. The 'trauma' trope uses gendered images of refugees that foreground their vulnerability and dependence, women and children are particularly easily accounted for here (see Judge, 2010). The second, 'trauma', presents us with de-politicised refugees who are 'exceptionally talented' and therefore 'deserving'. Ruth Judge, in her 2010 paper looking at the 'biopolitics' of refugee discourses notes that these dominant tropes work to exclude the mass of young men asylum claimants (I refer you back here to the situation in Calais,

predominantly populated by young single men) who are not easily mapped into either category due to their gender and their social position. The result Judge says is that “*young men may be particularly susceptible to caricatured xenophobic imaginings*” (Judge 2010, p. 8).

Advocacy discourses also appear to operate within their own discursive frameworks, representing asylum seekers/refugees contingent on a set of what could be called 'sympathy themes'. As Judge (2010) makes clear these narrowly defined categories are problematic. Some would argue that these representations equate to stereotypes that work to contain and dictate what it means to be an asylum seeker/refugee:

Assigning the 'status' refugee, asylum-seeker or 'illegal', however, ensures that those so regarded become locked into a cyclic, stereotypical 'logic' as: '...all subsequent interpretation of their actions is in terms of the status to which they have been assigned' (Jary and Jary cited in Lynn and Lea, 2003, p.428).

Similarly, they play into the very dominant logic that they seek to challenge by constantly raising the bar of what it means to be a genuine refugee and thus eligible for dignified humanitarian treatment.

There is a long-standing history of critical theoretical interventions into charity and advocacy discourses and practice; from literary figures such as C.S Lewis and Oscar Wilde (quoted in the first half of this chapter) to a whole field of critical humanitarian studies. The idea that those who are 'sympathetic' towards, or advocate for, the rights of migrants may be complicit in reproducing the very social hostility they ostensibly seek to challenge, has been documented in global studies of humanitarian intervention such as Barbara Harrell-Bonds controversial *Imposing Aid* (1986) alongside classic studies of migrancy, such as Lisa Malkki's *Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism and Dehistoricization* (1996). These texts critiqued the ways in which humanitarian projects become complicit in discourses and associated forms of governance which marginalise refugee populations.

1.6 Situating the Paradox of Hostile and Helping Discourses

In summary, these discourses of asylum advocacy work to set the agenda of who is worthy of our support and who isn't. They assert specific markers of refugee legitimacy (Judge, 2010). My aim in this thesis is to elucidate how these theoretical problems play out 'on the ground'. Particularly, I want to apply the framework of dialogical network as developed by Leudar and Nekvapil (see Leudar and Nekvapil, 2004 for a synopsis) to understand the context in which these advocacy discourses are produced. This lens, these sets of 'counter stereotypes' that characterise advocacy discourses, could be understood as orientations to the 'hostility themes' that characterise mainstream discourses on asylum seeking. For example they are not criminals, they are victims; they are not bogus, but sufferers of persecution; they are not lazy but productive and creative. It therefore seems plausible that in the same way that the identity representations formulated by sympathetic respondents in the work published by Leudar et al (2008) were understood in terms of biographical contrasts to 'hostility themes', the narratives of those who actively advocate and campaign for 'asylum seekers/refugees' can also be understood through this theoretical lens. The action 'criticism-defence-structure' that Nekvapil and Leudar described in their 2006 paper as characteristic of '*sequencing in media dialogical networks*' (Nekvapil and Leudar, 2006a) can be applied here to understand how hostility frames helping discourses. That these counter stereotypes often manifest themselves in activity occasioned pairs, i.e. asylum seekers/refugees as 'bogus' claimants (perpetrators) or 'genuine refugees' (victims) (see Phillips & Hardy, 1997; Sales, 2002 and Lynn and Lea, 2003), speaks to the utility of the notion of dialogical network in understanding the context of how advocacy discourses are produced.

I therefore want to locate my study of asylum seeker/refugee advocacy discourses at the level of the contested identities of refugees. I will gear my analytic focus towards the strategies used by advocates to manage hostility towards people who are seeking asylum and refugees. To what extent does the hostility enter and consequently frame advocacy discourses? What

implications does this have for how advocates construct the identities of asylum seekers/refugees (relationally to their own positioning as helper)? Many of these studies of refugee representation are grounded in theoretical observations or isolated analysis of public discourses (i.e. mainstream or advocacy media). I want to locate my study of 'asylum seeker/refugee advocacy' talk at an everyday level; exploring both the media and publicity materials and also the talk of members of advocacy organisations. Using a dialogical approach, I will situate this analysis in the context of mainstream and hostile discourses on asylum-seeking for a fuller understanding of how representations of 'asylum seekers/refugees' are reproduced.

I do not want to focus solely on the publicity materials produced by advocacy organisations (with their inevitable pressure to conform to these tropes of refugee aid), but on how these identities are managed on the level of everyday talk. What versions of asylum seeker/refugee identities do advocates, practitioners and volunteers make possible? Lynn and Lea make this distinction: *“those with greater social or political power are more inclined perhaps, to play a 'political game'; with greater eye to the rhetorical effect their talk might have. 'Everyday talk', however, is the 'analytical first base'”* (p.430). Of course everyday talk, captured as closely as possible in this thesis by the narrative interview method (see section 2.4) is not free from the political context; all talk is produced with an eye to context and to locally-situated goals and activities. However, I am interested in how the rhetorical negation of hostility and formulation of asylum seeker/refugee identities varies from the publicity materials to the interviews. Does the hostility and the tropes of refugee advocacy enter the interview setting? Any attempt to explore the inter-connectedness of hostile and advocacy discourses in full must include an analysis of how these frames are worked with and contested locally.

Leudar and Nekvapil (2000) make the important methodological point that:

while refugees/asylum seekers are subjected to hostility, they rarely have the opportunity to assert their identity in public. Such dis-empowerment may be a fact of everyday life, but even so the discursive analysis of hostility towards

them is incomplete unless we include the effects it has on them- the uptake of hostility by its targets so to speak. (p.189)

Importantly then, the voices of the people who are seeking asylum are analysed. As we have seen there is a vast amount of literature that documents the social and psychological consequences of hostility to 'asylum seekers/refugees'. How do people formulate their identities in the context of this hostility? What resources do they draw on to challenge this hostility and make it irrelevant to themselves? Does recognition of this hostility always result in trauma for asylum seekers/refugees? Assuming my informants are more than 'mute victims', what other subject positions do they negotiate for themselves? Can the resources employed by advocates and asylum seeker/refugees in these interviews illuminate new pathways for refugee representation?

1.7 Alternative Visions for 'Asylum Seeker/Refugee' Advocacy

Before I summarise the aims of this thesis, I will first introduce and contextualise some of the ways in which the representation of refugees might begin to break the mould. Critical theorists argue that on a societal level the identities of others are closed and categorised as a means of control, management and exclusion, thus:

The theoretical framework of Marxism for radical psychologists includes, as interconnected sets of analysis, an account of commodification, alienation and individualisation" (Gough and McFadden, 2001:5).

This framework can be applied to asylum seeker/refugee identities when we consider how they are appropriated by media and humanitarian discourses. Arguably a process of commodification occurs here whereby 'hostiles' and advocates sell an idea of the refugee to maximise the efficacy of their goals (such as selling papers or raising funds). How can a Marxian framework take us beyond this process of commodification by those who seek to help and empower? Cunningham argues that a negation of these capitalist forms of social relationships:

...might manifest itself as a 'form of life' less encumbered by the political apparatuses of spectacular capitalism. Such a form-of-life would be an emancipatory politics of non-identity that negated identities and representations such as worker, migrant, (self)consumer, etc. (Cunningham, 2010).

This approach has provided the ground work for the more radical and arguably emancipatory literature on identity, oppression and resistance. O'Neill and Harindranath argue that the intersection of representation and hegemonic discourses should be a focal point for those who advocate for a more progressive figuring and treatment of people who seek asylum,

re-presenting the "unsayable"...help[s] to "pierce us", bringing us into contact with reality in ways that we cannot forget...that counter the instrumental thinking that underpin the hegemonic anti-asylum discourse. (O'Neill & Harindranath, 2006, p.50)

The task is to counter hegemonic discourses in a way that does not produce similarly valorised representations. For example the asylum seeker as 'pure victim' (Malkki, 1996). This 'piercing' of these hegemonic discourse could work to de-naturalise the desensitised plight of asylum seekers; a naturalising process that works to justify the often ineffective response of advocacy and humanitarian agencies and the general apathy from the public, media and politicians. Nightingale and Neilands (1997) argued that 'a critical attitude' can be deployed in the service of charitable and advocacy organisations and some have argued that the employment of narrative methods alone produces critical texts and "*can mobilize "real" change*" (O'Neill and Harindranath, 2006, p.45).

Much of the knowledge generated by advocacy groups, organisations, self organised groups and services supporting asylum seekers and refugees provides much needed alternative voices, dispelling myths and promoting better understanding and knowledge. (O'Neill and Harindranath, 2006:41).

To what extent do advocacy discourses provide a space for the 'much

needed alternative voices' that O'Neil and Harindranath argued for? Arminen (2005), in a conversation analytic review of medical talk observed the routine necessity for patients to present the 'doctorability' of their problems (i.e. their need for medical help) to medical staff. That is, patients presented problems in specific (and pre-determined) ways that worked to ensure they received help from doctors. Similarly, as I have discussed, asylum seekers and other migrants, as well as those who advocate for them, are acutely aware of how problems must be presented in order for cases to be deemed credible and worthy of support (Fassin, 2005). Hence refuting the often stereotyped and valorised identity representations that are mobilised in the immigration and asylum discourse is not straightforward. As Tyler (2010) argues in her paper *Welcome to Britain: "for the asylum seeker, the first and most critical stage moment in this process is being identified as an asylum seeker"* (p.188). However, she argues that this is a non-recognition (asylum seekers have no rights) which conflicts with the struggle to abandon the stigma related to the term.

How can saying the 'un-sayable' work to challenge hostility and constrained discourses and identities? Radical and critical pedagogy proposes storytelling as a means of breaking through the otherwise homogenised discourse on immigration, gender, race, disability, etc. Examples of this are evident in both organised and grass-roots groups (for one example, see the group 'Her-story' online at 'Her-story', <http://www.her-stories.co.uk/>). Malkki (1996) argues for a 'historicising humanism' where historical agency, political memory and narrative authority are granted to, sought from, or facilitated in oppressed groups in order to form solidarities, transcend static notions of self and mobilise social change. Similarly O'Neill, Woods & Webster propose that this form of biographic freedom can:

take us outside of binary thinking and purposefully challenge identarian thinking. They deal with the utter complexity of our lived relations. (2005:75-76).

It can be assumed that hostility is still pertinent to these narratives but that the degree of narrative freedom gives people the space and agency to deal

with hostility creatively and integrate it into their experience. It can therefore be argued that through biography, the lived experiences of others can be shared and understood and that this strategy can be applied to advocacy campaigning and also to the research process. O'Neill and Harindranath in their 2006 paper discuss the importance of biography and ethno-mimesis in understanding contemporary conceptualisations of migration:

Biographic research is involved in the production of meaning, and offers resistance to the dominant power/knowledge axis related to asylum..." and "seeks to... imagine a better future based upon a dialectic of mutual recognition, ethical communication. (Bauman in O'Neill & Harindranath, 2006:44-49).

Several research programmes have also investigated story-telling as a way of building confidence and solidarity within marginalised groups toward increased individual and group agency in the direction of self-empowerment and social change activism. For example, Williams (2003) in a paper titled *Empowering Social Action* used story telling with these precise aims in mind. Within an all- female group made up of several minority nationalities in Aotearoa, New Zealand, individuals were able to transcend previously segregating notions of national or regional identity through sharing diverse but often commensurable experiences. In this case, the story-telling process facilitated successful interventions into social housing led by the participants and motivated by their own concerns. Williams (2003, p.34) went on to argue that, "*the politics of cultural and gender identities became inseparable from those of policy advocacy, and essential to any social action outcome that might be considered 'empowering'*".

Story-telling, or more fundamentally the freeing up of discursive and narrative space within these groups, is important for advocacy work on a number of levels. Firstly, the reproduction of hostile representations and attitudes can be interrupted through the process of communicating the personal and diverse experiences of migrants. Secondly, story-telling is a way of ensuring that the agency lies with the subject of oppression or domination and that it is their desires that drive social change work, rather

than the desires of a humanitarian organisation or campaigner. Weiler (1998) argues, that the individual working in critical education: “*takes as central the inner histories and experiences of the students themselves*” (Weiler, 1998, p.22). This practise is thus essential for the support worker, campaigner or legal representative whose aims should surely be to alleviate hostility and oppression.

Marita Eastmond in her paper ‘Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research’ (Eastmond, 2007, p. 251) argues in reference to those who are seeking asylum or who are living as refugees: “*Story-telling in itself, as a way for individuals and communities to remember, bear witness, or seek to restore continuity and identity, can be a symbolic resource enlisted to alleviate suffering and change their situation.*”

This link between social hostility, oppression and identity has provided the theoretical basis for a large amount of literature on immigration, prejudice and well-being. O’Neill and Harindranath (2006) argued that people are continually re-writing the self in a way that allows them to make sense of their lives and organise them in a coherent way. They also argued that there are certain narratives that keep people in a passive state and that these are also products of a dialectic of social and personal processes.

Taking into account the argument that emancipation is a multidimensional process (Rissel, 1994), the potential for transformation of well being through counter-hegemonic discourses (including story-telling and narrative-sharing) is worth recognition. Crossley (2000) taking a discursive approach toward understanding the self, stresses the importance of language and the ‘order of meaning’: that is, the connections and relationships that make up our experiences and how we understand the world around us. She emphasises the role that stories, myths, fairy-tales and histories play in how we understand the world and also how we understand our own lives. Similarly, Epston and White (1990) observed that through the encouragement of counter hegemonic discourses and personal narrative-telling, self-perceptions that were previously ‘problem saturated’ could be countered. Thus research that is concerned with the empowerment of

marginalised groups has sought to overcome 'problem saturated' identities.

For example in the survivor's movement and more broadly in anti-psychiatry much work has been done to de-stigmatise representations of those who are 'mentally ill'. Traditionally here, as well, social ills are projected onto and internalised by those who are categorised as mentally ill (this notion is characteristic of critical psychology and anti-psychiatry philosophy, see Laing, 1960; Foucault, 1965). The task is for 'survivors', 'asylum seekers' and 'advocates' to move the pathologisation away from the individual or groups of individuals and toward the social relations that make up society.

In a review of story-telling literature in critical pedagogy, Ellsworth (1989) argues that it must be critical in order to be emancipatory. Reviewing anti-racist education and advocacy on an American University campus, she argues that through methods of storytelling and critical pedagogy, sexism, racism, euro-centrism and classism were exacerbated and not challenged. Ellsworth thus calls for teaching, learning and support environments that are responsive to the situated needs and desires of specific individuals in specific contexts. And many have argued that truly emancipatory processes are facilitated by 'critical consciousness' (Friere, 1970), particularly through the encouragement of critical engagement with the stories and experiences of others (Ellsworth, 1989). Razack (1993) argues that through a process of critical story-telling minority groups are empowered to take up their own struggles where they are often merely represented by someone with more footing in the social hierarchy. It is through these processes that new ways of understanding each other and the world emerge and that the knowledge and identities imposed by the status quo are challenged. Shor and Friere's (1987) critical pedagogy outlines how story-telling can be liberating through on-going and critical references to notions of class, race and gender.

The debate surrounding 'identity politics' in feminist and critical theory has led many to argue that the deconstruction of all affirmative notions of identity (such as nationality, gender, religion) has more emancipatory potential than the re-affirming of new, counter-hegemonic identities that

often remain ultimately exclusive. A personal and theoretical motivation for the current project is thus to look at how story-telling or ‘biographical narratives’ are (or can be) used in advocacy campaigns whilst documenting how self-reported and mediated stories orient to notions of race, class and social hostility. Williams (2003, p.37) concluded that “*culture and identity*” were identified “*as important aspects of empowerment*” with reference to participant statements such as the following:

I learn a lot by hearing different experiences that each of us have been individually [sic]. But I won’t forget how we always consider and being proud of who we are, not matter what we are. Tongan and Samoan women living in Aotearoa as a second home. (Williams, 2003:38).

It can therefore be argued that story-telling was emancipatory here because it allowed the construction of counter-hostile identities and solidarities which eventually led to increased agency toward social change activity. The “*reconnection and pride in Tongan and Samoan identities*” (Williams, 2003, p.38) could arguably be understood as an empowering situated management of the relationship between self and place, rather than a re-instated pride with an abstract ‘Tongan’ or ‘Samoan’ identity (see Arendt’s solidarity beyond identity, cited in Allen, 1999). The relationship between the situated negotiation of identity and the social, political and historical constructs of class, nationality and race (etc.) will be a focal point of the project.

Biography, narrative and story-telling have been introduced here as a method of challenging the dominant understandings of marginalised groups. However, reaffirmation of the victim status of migrants (particularly political asylum seekers and refugees) does little to challenge the established moral order or to challenge the ‘victim/perpetrator’ activity occasioned pair (Watson, 2009) that dominates the discourse (the short comings of which have been discussed above). The internalisation or recognition of passive and non-emancipatory identities by the individuals who are being advocated for can lead to a form of self-domination that prevents successful and transformative participation in society. Socially, the reproduction of hierarchies and ‘stereotypes’ (as situated actions not

cognitive functions, see Leudar & Nekvapil, 2000) is perpetuated.

Critical story-telling and narrative and biographic flexibility, potentially allow a person to say the ‘un-sayable’; to re-work identities and relationships. It can be transformative, both personally and socially, and is antagonistic to the dominant social relations that allow some people to participate whilst others are excluded (O’Neill and Harindranath, 2006).

Theoretically, this concept of discursive ‘subversion’ can be traced to the feminist idea that I have already discussed: that identities are and should be recognised as fluid and multi-faceted as should narratives and stories (Walkerdine, 1985; see also Adorno ‘identity logic’ cited in Gibson & Rubin, 2002). It is argued that marginalised groups fail to fit into the hegemonic, positivist model of self and history and thus their experiences become invalid or are moulded into more palatable forms. Consequently, representations and the reproduction of knowledge about these diverse and idiosyncratic experiences become homogenised and abstracted, thus solidifying social and structural hierarchies and systems of domination. The argument here is that when the stories of individuals and their histories are revealed, we are able to transcend the barriers formed by the categorisation of some as ‘others’, to recognise our shared condition and form real unions and solidarities that are more powerful than charity relationships or state-sanctioned concessions. A real challenge is posed when these discourses break out of the pattern of perpetrator/victim and new forms of understanding and solidarity can emerge.

I draw on this literature in order to ask: what subject positions are negotiated in the dynamic biographical narratives produced by advocates and asylum seekers/refugees in the interviews collected for this thesis? How do they negotiate their identities/the identities of their clients in the context of hostile and advocacy discourses? A particular focus will be on how the category victim is worked with. Hoijer (2004) found that parents were referred to as ‘asylum seekers’ and their children as ‘refugees’, they conclude that it is only the children “*whose status as victims is foregrounded*”. The

affirmation of 'victim' status, the very mapping of oneself or another onto the victim category is prevalent in advocacy discourses but it is a complex achievement. It is not a concrete state but a process, a category to which one must continually map themselves. 'Victim-hood' then does not have to be an end-point, but a fluid category around which people can narrate various possibilities for themselves. As Hitchcock argues in *Not Born A Refugee Woman* that: “*The oppressed are victims of social injustice; their significance, however, does not reside in the fact of their victimisation, but in the possibility that their agency will transform their lived relations*” (Hitchcock, 1993, p.1). How is the victim category managed by advocates externally (publicity materials) and internally (interviews/recordings) and by the 'asylum seeker/refugee' informants?

It is also important to note here that whilst many have directed criticism at charitable and advocacy groups, these critiques are motivated by a recognition of the unquestionable importance (and potential) of their work “*...precisely because international interventions (humanitarian and otherwise) are increasingly important, we should have better ways of conceptualising, designing and challenging them*” (Malkki, 1996:379).

1.8 The Research Project- Summary and Aims.

Tyler argues:

“the tension that exists between ‘the urgency of staking a political claim’ (on behalf of asylum-seekers) and the need to reflect critically on the language in which those claims are made, is a tension that we should not seek to alleviate but should encourage and explore in critical theoretical practice.” (Tyler, 2010. p.199).

I want to explore this tension and pose a challenge to the field of refugee representation through an exploration of advocacy talk *in situ*. The question is how does the language and practices of advocates, activists and those who seek asylum avoid assimilation into the framework established by hostile/mainstream/political elites? Situating this problematic in the local

activities of members of asylum advocacy, I will take a broadly ethnomethodological approach; looking at the shared and mutually accomplished representations of asylum seekers/refugees by hostile and advocacy voices.

The literature so far has brought us to the understanding that the mainstream discourses on asylum seeking in the UK (and indeed across Western Europe) are predominantly and pervasively hostile. But there exists a plethora of advocacy discourses that seek to challenge this representation and win public support for asylum seekers/refugees. I use the notion of dialogical network (see section 2.5c) and the work referenced in this chapter by Ivan Leudar and Jiri Nekvapil to suggest that these 'opposing discourses' are thematically oriented to each other and to this extent the hostility frames advocacy discourses. As we have seen, advocates attach their own boundaries and permanence to 'asylum seeker/refugee' identities and theorists and campaigners have started to challenge this. They seek to explore how the figure of the refugee is constructed by those who seek to help and consider the implications of this for the social and political understanding of refugees and for refugee empowerment and political rights.

I will use Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA, see section 2.5 b) to ask: to what extent does the category work done by refugee advocates maintain the generalised moral order of mainstream asylum discourses? Are 'asylum seekers/refugees' presented as 'pure victims in general?' (Malkki, 1996), what other categories are possible? How do refugee experiences relate to this established discourse and is there dialogical space for advocates/refugees to break out of this mould, or are the subjects of advocacy 'reined in and contained' (Laurie and Bondi, 2005)? Is the un-sayable more easily said in the interviews away from the public eye and the need to 'stake a political claim', and appease an ever more difficult to persuade public? When the un-sayable is said, what does it look like? Does it point to new directions for 'asylum seeker/refugee' representation? I want to embed these theoretical questions that are being aimed at advocacy and humanitarian organisations in the everyday practices of those organisations.

This project focuses on the publicity materials and talk produced by and within four local advocacy and campaigning organisations in the North West of England with the aim of gaining a grounded insight into how these struggles manifest in everyday settings.

The field of academic research is a sphere that equally boasts affirmative and mediated ‘facts’, particularly in traditional psychological methodologies. Critical practices are thus essential in re-addressing the power imbalances and ethno-centric understandings that masquerade as universal truths in academic work. Through the use of biographical methods the idiosyncratic and anti-normative realities of everyday life begin to emerge. In this vein the current research project will study people's methods *in situ* in order to elucidate possible counter-hegemonic narratives in the hope of finding new challenges to the paradox of hostile helping. A detailed overview of the methodology is provided in Chapter Two.

2 Method

“...the method is not a reified, standardised resource to get at something separate from it (data), but constitutes its very object, and the interaction embodied within it” (Speer, 2002, p. 512).

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will outline the methodological approach I have taken towards the research questions outlined in Chapter One, the procedure I have used to gather materials (including how participants were recruited) and the analytical approach employed to analyse the interview recordings and transcripts. As the epigraph suggests the choice of methodology is not incidental to this thesis (Jayussi; 1984). Rather the ethnomethodological (Garfinkel, 1967) approach is chosen in account of its literal meaning: to study people's methods. As I discussed in Chapter One, I am primarily interested in how participants (advocates and asylum-claimants) of asylum seeker/refugee advocacy negotiate hostility towards refugees/themselves, what methods *they use* to produce counter representations, to negate this hostility and to construct new descriptions and meanings. Consequently my methodological and analytical approach has to remain sensitive to the idiosyncratic nature of the materials. However the approaches I use must also be adequately flexible to account for the 'polyphony' of voices, meanings, circumstances and contexts via which these texts and narratives are formulated (Bakhtin, 1929). This pragmatic approach, that aims to name general tendencies whilst dismissing claims to immutable facts or truths, and negates the abstraction and reification of theoretical concepts and tools from their basis in practice, will be detailed below.

I will begin by detailing the research projects that preceded this thesis before outlining the process of data collection and recruitment, the interview method and the analytic approaches.

2.2 Pilot Work

In Chapter One I discussed the paper *Hostility Themes in Media, Community and Refugee Narratives* (Leudar, Hayes, Nekvapil and Turner, 2008) from which this thesis is in part inspired. The paper was published in *Discourse and Society* as I entered the final year of my undergraduate degree and started working with Professor Ivan Leudar as my supervisor. My dissertation project was grounded in this work which I continued into my Masters study, also under the supervision of Ivan Leudar. The projects are briefly outlined below.

Identity Construction in the Personal Narratives of International Students: the Relationship between Media, Discourse and Identity.

Undergraduate Dissertation.

Here, I analysed the extent to which 'hostility themes' (as identified by Leudar et al., 2008) entered the narratives of international students at the University of Manchester. I used Membership Categorisation Analysis (see section 2.5b.) to establish how international students categorised themselves (i.e. foreigner/student) and how they made the themes relevant or irrelevant to themselves. I analysed articles containing content on 'foreigners' and 'immigration' in two newspapers: The Guardian and The Daily Mail and I conducted Narrative Biographic Interviews (see section 2.4) with students. Students negotiated for themselves incumbency of the categories 'student', 'young person' etc. and the hostility themes did not enter the talk. I concluded that orientation to hostility themes is in part contingent on settings and thus the primacy of the 'student' category rendered the hostility themes largely irrelevant to these narratives.

Construction of Immigrant Identities in Government Discourse.

Masters Dissertation.

I analysed how the identities of migrants were managed in relation to 'hostility themes', in parliamentary debates and newspaper articles,

following the introduction of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Bill. This time I specifically looked at what footing was afforded to migrants in the talk that ensued. I collected parliamentary transcripts from Hansard and press releases distributed by the UK Border Agency. I also collected newspaper articles addressing the Bill using the search engines on The Daily Mail and The Guardian websites. Using the notion of dialogical network (see 2.5c.), I observed that the talk surrounding the Bill was in a sense self-limiting; only representing the voices of mainstream contributors (such as MPs, NGOs etc.). Representations of migrants occurred within a limited state-focused or humanitarian framework, with no platform available for marginalised or first hand migrant experiences. Established and often hostile representations of migrants remained largely unchallenged.

This work laid the foundations for the current research project. In both studies 'dialogical network' was employed to understand how hostility towards migrants is distributed through mainstream media and political talk, how hostility themes enter this talk and how they are challenged. In particular, the observation by Leudar et al (2008) that 'hostility themes' are pervasive and pertinent to the talk of those who are sympathetic to asylum-seekers/refugees and to asylum-seekers/refugees themselves, led me to ask the question: how do advocates manage this hostility and with what consequence for those who they advocate for?

2.3 Data Collection and Recruitment of Participants

I collected two kinds of materials for this project. I started by collecting the publicity materials produced by the four organisations and I then carried out Narrative Biographical Interviews (see 2.4) with staff, volunteers and clients at the organisations. I will outline the data gathering and recruitment procedure for both sets of materials below.

a. The Advocacy Organisations

The Manchester Refugee Support Network Database lists over 100

organisations working with refugees and people seeking asylum in the North West (MRSN, 2012). The scope of the project limited my focus to four organisations which were selected to demonstrate the spectrum of organisational involvement in asylum and immigration matters. For example the organisations range from a large NGO, a legal aid unit, a self-organised asylum seeker group and an activist group campaigning on immigration issues. These organisations were also selected on the grounds that they do not stand in isolation either practically or discursively; they frequently interact with each other. The four organisations are detailed fully below; their names have been changed to protect the identities of the participants as outlined in the ethical agreement (see 2.4 c.). All other descriptions are accurate.

Access to participants was relatively straightforward as I have volunteered for several Manchester-based refugee organisations for six years prior to this research project. I contacted the organisations via email and telephone. I arranged research placements at which where I attended meetings and drop-ins, collected publicity materials, took field notes and interviewed staff and volunteers one-to-one. I aimed to explore the 'lived experience' of asylum advocacy (O'Neill & Harindranath, 2006) for members and accordingly I refrained from revealing too much about my particular interest in hostility. I approached people on the basis that I was interested in 'improving communication in immigration advocacy'. In section 2.3 I will give further details about how this initial contact and the interviews were framed.

Immigration Legal Aid Manchester (ILAM)

ILAM provides independent legal advice for individuals with immigration and asylum matters under the government's Legal Aid Scheme. The organisation is a registered charity and advocates for the legal rights of those seeking to enter the UK under asylum and immigration controls. The organisation has a socialist background and a visible campaigning element to its. ILAM describes itself, on the website, as both a legal advice service and a campaigning organisation, that understands its work as vital in the move towards a more just immigration system. I shadowed case workers and provided administrative support over six weeks, whilst collecting

materials and interviewing staff and clients. I approached clients at the weekly 'drop in' and asked them if they would like to take part in a research project collecting people's experience of immigration advocacy with the aim of improving communication in this area. I also advertised the project via posters and approached staff and volunteers directly asking them if they would like to take part.

Refugee Act Now (RAN)

Refugee Act Now is an independent registered charity that works directly with people seeking asylum and people with refugee status, to provide information, resources and support toward building new lives in the UK. They describe themselves as having a radical approach to issues around immigration, with a strong focus on the empowerment of refugee communities. In their words they are "*working in partnership with refugee communities*". The organisation operates on a national level and is Home Office funded. It works closely with a range of statutory services to provide advice, signposting, legal and social support and also campaigns to influence legislative reform. They have delivered a number of high-budget media-focused national campaigns on the topic of destitution and asylum. I shadowed case workers, volunteered on a cycling project and observed training sessions and management meetings, taking extensive field notes. Again, I approached staff, volunteers and clients for interviews.

Against Immigration Controls (AIC)

Against Immigration Controls is a self-organised, non-funded activist group on the radical-left end of the pro-immigration spectrum. The group defines itself as a theory and direct-action group, with anti-capitalist, anarchist and anti-authoritarian roots. It positions itself against government and corporate bodies that exist to manage and control immigration. The group is part of a wider informal network that emerged out of the anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist networks of the late nineties. All members are unpaid 'activists'. The group does 'solidarity work' with 'all migrants' and uses 'direct action' tactics against the immigration management system. The organisation has a history of organising protests, taking direct action and supporting anti-deportation campaigns with self-organised migrant groups (such as migrant

workers) and people seeking asylum. I have had previous involvement with this group and I contacted members and asked them to take part in interviews. There were no 'asylum-seeking' people working with this group, in part due to the more abstracted nature of their work, and I will discuss this further in Chapter Six.

Asylum Seeking Women Unite (ASWU)

ASWU is a self-organised group formed by and for women asylum seekers. They are part of a national organisation, with another group in London, and are supported by a small volunteer base of non-asylum seeking women. The group is organised with a management committee primarily made up of women without status and is funded by public donations and local and national community grants. The group holds weekly drop-in sessions where over 50 women meet, support each other and take part in activities. In addition to mutual aid and support sessions there are also management committee meetings and anti-deportation campaign meetings for skill sharing and practical solidarity. The group is also engaged in a number of public activities, they regularly hold stalls at local community events where they publicise their anti-deportation campaigns. I attended weekly drop-in sessions, again taking field notes speaking about my research project and inviting members to take part.

b. Publicity Materials

The four organisations each produced an abundance of 'publicity materials' and I selected the materials on the basis that they were at the forefront of their websites etc. To this extent they provided the 'face' of the organisations. These materials were analysed (see section 2.5) to establish how 'hostility themes' were made relevant by the organisations and how they managed this hostility in relation to their clients. I then went on to analyse how the identities of 'asylum seekers/refugees' were put under description by the organisations. I observed shared themes around which 'asylum seeker/refugee' identities were managed (I.e. victim-hood) and organised the materials in accordance with these locally produced themes. Through this process a number of materials that deviated from these themes

became apparent and I have included these at the end of each chapter. Due to the constraints of the word limit not all of the materials analysed are included in the final thesis (these are starred in the table below).

Figure 1: Breakdown of Publicity Materials

Organisation	Materials Collected and Analysed
Refugee Act Now	Refugee Employment and Integration Service (REIS) Briefing Sheet*, 'Destitution Campaign' video and booklet, 'Mobiles, Money, Mayhem: The Facts and Fibs about Asylum Seekers' booklet, Refugee Awareness Campaign booklet.
Immigration Legal Aid Manchester	Two 'case studies' from the website, text from 'introduction' section of website*, text from 'campaigns' section of website, 'news reel' section of website.
Against Border Controls	Protest 'call out' for action against occupation in Gaza*, action call out for solidarity in Calais*, 'introduction to organisation' pamphlet and 'who we are' text from website, 'mayday' event information from website.
Asylum Seeking Women Unite	Two stories from the book 'How I Became an Asylum Seeker', text from 'Recommendations for Working with Women Asylum Seekers', anti-deportation campaign text from website.

c. Interviews

I contacted potential interviewees via posters, emails and face to face communication. The poster and email read: *'I am currently looking to collect data for a research project titled 'Constructing Asylum Seeker Identities in Advocacy Work'. I am interested in the communication between advocacy workers and clients and how this impacts on the lives of those seeking advocacy services.'* The specific research focus: how hostility enters into advocacy talk, was left out of the recruitment materials and interview

openings. This was primarily to avoid influencing the way the participants spoke to me, or how they made particular themes/categories relevant in their interviews. The literature suggests that hostility can often be mundane, implicit and banal, 'tacitly acknowledged' rather than explicitly dealt with (Leudar et al., 2008). I did not want to foreground the relevancy of 'hostility' to these narratives by flagging it as a central concern for the thesis as I felt this could have confounded my ability to observe how hostility was situated spontaneously in these narratives (see section 2.4 for more on 'Narrative Biographic Interviews').

I approached staff, volunteers, students on placement and asylum seeker/refugee clients face-to-face and invited them to take part in an informal interview. I requested that informants pass on the information about the study to colleagues and friends; through this relatively straightforward 'snowball' method I made 30 recordings that averaged at 60 minutes each, as well as collecting extensive field notes. I conducted all interviews using Narrative Biographical Interviewing technique (see section 2.4), in total 20 interviews were collected using this method. Two of the interviews were semi-structured evaluations of a group project I was volunteering with; interviewees were therefore responding to specific questions such as 'what do you like about the cycling group?' These interviews did not produce adequate narratives (they consisted mostly of yes and no answers) and so were not used. I made six recordings of group training sessions and meetings and I downloaded three talks from the internet given at a *Against Immigration Controls* national gathering. I took field notes in two 'case work' sessions at *Refugee Act Now*; I was not able to record these sessions as case workers were bound by confidentiality guidelines.

Before I started recruiting participants I intended to look at communication between advocacy workers and clients. However I soon came to realise that it was for the most part not possible to record these interactions. These 'case work' and advice sessions were conducted under the proviso of strict confidentiality. By adopting the notion of dialogical network I was, however, able to analyse how the isolated talk of advocacy workers and

their asylum seeking clients interacted dialogically (see section 2.5c. for a more extensive explanation of dialogical approaches).

A break down of participants follows (vol=volunteer, staf=staff, AS=asylum seeker, ref= refugee). Not all of the materials collected have been used in this final thesis. Extracts from the interviews were included on the basis of their orientation to hostility themes and as concrete moments of self-presentation or negotiation of asylum seeker/refugee identities.

d. Participants

Figure 2: Breakdown of Participants

Participant	Status	Organisation	Type of recording/observation
Sally	British/vol	ASWU	Interview
Helen	British/vol	ASWU/AIC	Interview
Janet	African/AS	ASWU	Interview
Elizabeth	Congo/AS	ASWU	Interview
Lisa & Dorothy	African/AS	ASWU	Interview
Ulrika	British/vol	ASWU	Interview
Nicola	British/vol	RAN	Interview
Jane	British/vol	RAN	Interview
Isabelle	African/AS	RAN	Evaluation*
Elle	Iranian/AS	RAN	Evaluation*
Group of vols	Mixed/vol with status	RAN	Boundaries Training**
Group of vols	Mixed/vol with status	RAN	Advocacy Training**
Staff	Mixed/staff	RAN	Management Meeting**
Caseworker/client	British/Chinese	RAN	Casework Session (field notes)
Staff	Mixed/staff	RAN	Management Meeting**
Omah	Iranian/AS	ILAM	Interview
Jasmine	Jamaican/ref	ILAM	Interview

Lee	British/vol	ILAM	Interview
Sara	British/vol	ILAM	Interview
Mrs Belba	African/ref	ILAM	Interview
Rick	British/staff	ILAM	Interview
Naomi	British/vol	ILAM	Interview
Staff	Mixed/staff	ILAM	Training Session**
Mo	British/vol	AIC	Interview
Rob	British/vol	AIC	Interview
Hayley	British/vol	AIC	Interview
Mel	British/vol	AIC	Interview
John	British/vol	AIC	Interview
Ann	British/vol	AIC	Interview
Bridget	British/vol	AIC	Interview
Clara	Nigerian/vol	AIC	Interview

* Project evaluations carried out as part of voluntary work, they did not follow NBI format; they are semi-structured interviews.

** Group recordings

2.4 Narrative Interviews

All of the interviews were conducted by myself, LW, and followed the Narrative Biographic Interview format. This style of interviewing encourages the production of spontaneous narratives and involves minimal guidance (initially) from the interviewer (Rosenthal, 1993). Whereas traditional interview methods view language as 'representational', a means to investigate people's states of mind through their descriptions (Silverman, 1993), here I approach the 'interview' with the following principles in mind (taken from Baker, 1984):

1. Interviewing is interactional, members draw on cultural knowledge including how members of categories routinely speak.
2. Q's are not neutral they shape how and as members of which categories members should speak.

3. Accounts not reports, i.e. accounting by member of category for activities attached to that category. This is central. How interviews and respondent use Membership Categorisation Devices (MCD) to generalize version of social reality built around categories and activities and local production of versions of moral order.

This style of interview complements the use of Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA, see section 2.5b.); it allows the interviewee to bring their own categories, themes and relevancies to their narratives, and the interviewer treats these as mutually constructed accounts, with an awareness of the inherently interactional nature of the interview and indeed all social settings.

In total I conducted 20 interviews using this method. I introduced the interview theme as follows: “*can you tell me about your experiences of immigration, specifically your experiences of advocacy?*”. It is important to note that I amended my interview opening following the first two interviews I conducted with asylum seeking/refugee participants. To begin with I framed these interviews in the following way: “*can you tell me about your experience of coming to the UK?*” I decided to alter this opening slightly as I felt it unnecessarily prompted people to talk about what happened to them *before* they came to the UK. These experiences were typically very traumatic, and as they were not immediately relevant to the interview question, I chose to frame the interview more generally: “*can you tell me about your experience of immigration?*” However, I found that this made little difference to how interviewees produced their talk; they almost consistently produced a chronological account initially focusing on *why* they came to the UK and what stage they were at with their asylum claims. I understood this in the following way: that the talk is designed for the specific setting but it is also, often, socially contingent. For example, this particular performance of story-telling can be understood as an orientation to the 'culture of disbelief' and 'will to exclude' that surrounds asylum seeking, and the need to justify one's grounds to be in the country. It can also be understood in the context of the interview setting, where I am

positioned as 'advocate' or 'white western ally', to whom asylum claimants routinely share their story in this particular format (this is discussed further in the analysis in Chapter Five). As Rapley points out:

“The ‘data’ obtained are highly dependent on and emerge from the specific local interactional context and this local interactional context is produced in and through the talk and concomitant identity work of the interviewer and interviewee.” (2001, p.316)

The narrative interview opens us up to the complexity of accounts, and requires us to consider these complexities (which are features of all social interactions) in our analysis. The particular interest of this research project is in how members orient to and negotiate social categories through talk; it was therefore particularly important to consider which categories I, as interviewer, introduced and how they, in turn, produce the interviewees talk (Baker, 1984). Also, to bear in mind that this may be very subtle. For example, the minimal framing of the interviews still worked to produce particular responses from the interviewees. I asked participants to tell me about *their experience* of immigration. In this sense I was inviting them to provide me with a *personal account* and to orient themselves to the category 'immigrant' (see Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). Similarly, interviewees resisted the categories I introduced (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995); one interviewee challenged my use of the term 'advocate' and indeed this often had to be explained, in *my* terms. As Rapley points out (2001) *“interviewers doing being facilitative and neutral does not mean that they are being facilitative and neutral in any traditional sense.”* (p.310). Although I endeavoured to create a neutral setting, I inevitably framed the narratives to some extent. The term advocacy, for example, is identity and relationship implicative, indexing the activity occasioned pairing (Watson, 2009) 'advocate'/'advocated for'.

The opening theme was a mutually accomplished achievement. 'Advocate' interviewees had a tendency to situate the question as an invitation to speak about their personal experience of immigration, talking about their family and childhood, rather than their work. Whereas (as I have mentioned above)

asylum seeker/refugee interviewees primarily focused on 'why they came' although this interest was not *specified* in the opening. Both of these spontaneous interpretations and personalisations of the interview theme are discussed more in sections 4.1 and 5.2 respectively. What is important, however, is that my analysis took into account an awareness of the mutually accomplished activities taking place in the interview setting.

I used minimal continuers such as 'ok yeah' and 'mm:: hm::' to demonstrate my attentiveness to the speaker and to minimise my influence on the narrative. However, I was aware that even these minimal expressions at times noticeably influenced interviewees' responses (Fitzgerald, 2010). For example, they indicated signs of agreement with interviewee complaints and sympathy with their stories. This worked to position me as not only researcher, but sympathetic advocate. Certain parts of people's stories were particularly traumatic for them to tell; they spoke of rape, torture, death and destitution and I found it appropriate to use reflective responses here (Rogers, 1951) in order to provide a safe and empathic environment for the interviewees. These kinds of reflections are intended to communicate understanding to the other speaker and avoid introducing new meanings to the issues under description (Mearns and Thorne, 1990). Formulations, as the first part of an adjacency pair (Heritage and Watson, 1979), invite the informant to accept, reject or modify it, on their next turn. At all times I tried to deliver my input in accordance with how interviewees formulated their experiences.

For example, one informant, Elizabeth, a woman whose asylum claim had not been granted, talked about the difficulties she was having without status at which point she became upset and started to cry (line 2). Prior to this Elizabeth had been speaking about her voluntary activities and how she had found strength through them, here I reflected this back to her:

Elizabeth

- 1 E: I'm useful. I can do something but I can't I have no status, no paper, immigration
- 2 doesn't accept me yes- yet so it's very hard, very hard (starts to cry)
- 3 L: you obviously are very strong I mean you- it sounds like you are doing a lot
- 4 despite not having your status there's lots of things that you're doing at the moment
- 5 E: that's why I try to manage and I say, I say "no let me wake up, I cannot sleep
- 6 forever, let me wake up". I went to the college now
- 7 L: yeah
- 8 E: I'm involved in different organisation.
- 9 L: yeah
- 10 E: I try to build myself I feel a little bit better
- 11 L: right
- 12 E: not better at all but a little bit

At all times, considering the difficult topics the interviews elicited, I tried to draw on my knowledge of person-centred counselling skills (in which I hold a Level 3 certificate) to create an empathic, yet non-directive environment for the interview. Considering the hostility that many of the informants routinely face, and the bureaucratic framework through which they are used to telling their stories, I wanted to create an interview environment that was flexible and non-judgemental. I am interested in how mainstream discourses and institutional environments frame self-presentations. Eastmond summarises this nicely:

For instance, a therapeutic, legal or research setting, each with its specific purpose, idiom and set of power relations, would produce somewhat different renditions of the same event. Bosnian women in a Croatian refugee camp were talking to each other about their experiences of war as an important way to relieve their suffering (Mimica 1997). Recounting the same experience for a different purpose, as in as asylum hearing with a more sceptical audience assessing a story with a different set of criteria, would necessarily affect the narration, requiring a more strategic presentation of self. (Eastmond, 2007, p.250)

Of course to what extent the interview setting, and my particular presence as interviewee, was procedurally consequential for the 'strategic presentation of self' had to be taken into account in the analysis. I was frequently positioned as 'sympathetic' and an 'ally':

Janet

- 1 J: I'm happy for your interview because I know you're very, very nice you know
 2 I'm happy every time you meet me I can do forever the interview I'm not gonna feel
 3 upset because you're always [---] us when we go to [name of org] and revive I see
 4 you I always see you talking to people, come near to people,
 5 L: mm:
 6 J: know their experience you know speak to us you know some people not give that
 7 time you know
 8 L: yeah
 9 J: you can leave your college school, go to us, go take your time,
 10 L: yeah
 11 J: if you get problem we can explain to you, you can give us advice
 12 L: mm:
 13 J: you can tell us well you can go here you can go this way this can help you these
 14 people can help you, you can direction tell me don't know where you going,
 15 L: right
 16 J: if me get problem but you always [---] us you know I always see you I always see
 17 you , then I'm happy for your interview, I'm really happy
 18 L: thank you
 19 J: thank you too

This positioning undoubtedly influenced the narrative; I may not have been deemed to be as judgemental or hostile as some audiences. However that the hostility entered this 'sympathetic' setting speaks to its pertinence to 'asylum seekers/refugee' narratives (this is discussed further in Chapter Six).

It is common practice when using the Narrative Biographical Method to conduct a second interview, in which further questions can be asked based on disclosures in the first (Wengraff, 2001). Due to the transient nature of the organisation's clientele, and the unstable life circumstances that many 'asylum seekers/refugees' find themselves in, I predicted that it would be difficult to conduct second interviews at a later stage. Instead, I divided interviews into two halves and after a short break of five or ten minutes, I asked some 'focusing' questions. Such as: "*you mentioned that you volunteer at X can you tell me more about that?*" in this way focusing in on the themes that were produced by the interviewee.

Clearly, collecting spontaneous narratives on particular themes is a complex matter, and this is why I chose this method; it has the potential to capture this complexity. Seale (1998) identified two major traditions in interviewing: interview data as a resource and interview data as a topic. I follow the tradition of the latter whereby, *“the interview data collected are seen as (more or less) reflecting a reality jointly constructed by the interviewee and the interviewer”* (cited in Rapley, 2001, p.303). The interview is deemed to be a site of social interaction in which (as with all social interactions) *“...the interviewees' subjectivity is locally produced sequentially in and through talk”* (Rapley, 2001, p.307). Therefore the mutually constitutive character of the setting must be brought into focus. The interview context in itself must therefore be taken into account in the analysis.

I chose this technique as a means of accessing the spontaneous methods that people use to make sense of, and represent, their experiences. This is of vital importance to the integrity of the research as I am primarily interested in how hostility tacitly frames advocacy and asylum seeker/refugee talk. Of course, it can be argued that the interview is a socially contrived setting, one antithetical to gathering 'natural' data on 'people's methods' in everyday social interactions (see Speer, 2002; Lynch, 2002; Ten Have, 2002). However there are several established critiques of this position that can be applied in light of the current research project. Firstly, it would have been impossible for ethical and legal reasons to audio-record clients and staff speaking within an advocacy setting; confidentiality issues prevented this at all of the organisations. Also, the Narrative Biographical Interview method allows the participant to make use of a wider range of categories, relevancies and themes than might be available in the formal advocacy setting. For example, although I was positioned as an advocate and ally of the interviewees (as the previous extract in part demonstrated) the interaction, and my role within it, was arguably not as pre-determined as it might have been with a client and their case worker. A degree of flexibility might have been possible due to the relative novelty of our relationship.

This ambiguity could have had the opposite effect and what it is most

important to consider is that the interview setting, like all other settings for social interactions, must be assessed for their procedural consequentiality (Schegloff, 1992). No settings are neutral and in interviews, as in all other social interactions, members are in a process of self and meaning making that is contingent on the local interaction. The characteristics that feature in interview settings; the mutual construction of identities etc., are features of everyday interactions. The interview is merely a 'specific form' of social interaction (Rapley, 2001). Ultimately, as Cicourel (1964) made clear, interviews are sites of social interaction and must be analysed with this in mind. This is what Mazeland and Ten Have (1996) described as the essential tensions of interviews. This pragmatic approach adds depth and dynamism to the investigation.

The Narrative Biographic Interview does, then, have a high degree of ecological validity when we take into account, through our analysis, how the setting is procedurally consequential for the accounts provided. Similarly story telling is recognised as a very natural form of talk (Bruner, 1990); we describe and make sense of our world in stories. By allowing people to tell their stories we can begin to see how they create meaning in their worlds and this also provides insight into the interplay between self and society; the stories, themes and categories that people draw on to make sense of their worlds (Behar, 1990, 225). And as Rapley argues, *“An awareness of the local context of the data production is central to analysing interviews, whatever analytic stance is taken when analysing the data”* (Rapley, 2001, p.306).

Finally the narrative-turn in psychology or Volkerpsychologie (Farr, 1983) always had a particular interest in the contested identities and experiences of refugees. One prominent example of this is Gordon Allport's work (1942) on the life-histories of refugees from Nazi Germany. This is particularly important as asylum seekers/refugees are routinely represented by others (O'Neill and Harindranath (2006). As Kearon argues, there is a *“need to engage with the everyday lives of the socially excluded and potentially criminalised other... as autonomous actors with their own mundane, ordinary, and unspectacular sensibilities and structures of feeling”* (cited in

O'Neill and Harindranath 2006, p.41). Biographical research can inform and empower: “*Representational failures and injustices inherent in the status quo largely stem from the marginalisation of subaltern voices and alternative biographies and histories.*” (O'Neill and Harindranath 2006, p.43).

Story-telling is a powerful tool for understanding migration discourses, and many participants in this research projected reported being very grateful for a free space in which to narrate their experiences. This interview method allowed me to explore their 'subaltern' narratives. As Bauman argues:

Biographic research is involved in the production of meaning and offers resistance to the dominant power/knowledge axis related to asylum...” and seeks to... imagine a better future based upon a dialectic of mutual recognition, ethical communication... (cited in O'Neill & Harindranath (2006, p.44-49).

Do the narratives collected here produce new meanings that are not commonly featured in advocacy discourses? Do they “*take us outside of binary thinking and purposefully challenge identarian thinking?*” (O'Neill, Woods & Webster, 2005, p.75-76).

b. Recording and transcription

All interviews were audio-recorded. The total duration of the recordings was 818 minutes (approx. 14 hours). The longest interview was 71 minutes, the shortest 11 minutes. The average length of interview was around 30 minutes. These were transcribed verbatim using simplified Conversation Analytic Conventions (Jefferson, 2004).

c. Ethics

The study was granted ethical approval from the University of Manchester Psychology Department. All participants signed consent forms for the interviews and the audio recordings, and were told that they could withdraw at any time without the pressure to provide an explanation. Participants were told that the organisation names and personal names would remain

anonymous. Participants were signposted to relevant organisations and services, if I felt that issues or problems had come up in the interview that required further attention.

2.5 Analytic Principles

a. Ethnomethodology

“For the most part the experimental program paid no attention to the meanings which subjects might have given to what was happening, nor were the conversations that ordinarily surround and partly constitute social interactions included within the methodological scope of mainstream research” (Harre, 2001, p.688)

I am interested in meaning making; the meanings that people (in situ) imbue their identities with and the identities of others and how the meanings that others generate are made relevant or irrelevant to a person's narrative and self-presentation. Rather than applying a pre-determined theoretical framework (which as we have seen, is common, particularly in refugee studies), ethnomethodology has provided me with a praxiological framework with which to capture how members negotiate meaning and identities *in situ*. As Jayussi (1984, p.9) argues:

one of the significant things about an ethnomethodological approach to the study of social life is that members' common-sense understandings are neither ironised and banished to the realm of irrelevance nor used uncritically as resources for mechanistic sociological description.

Garfinkel, a forerunner of the ethnomethodological approach, brought to light the 'essential reflexivity of accounts' (Garfinkel, 1967). The implication for empirical work is that it raises the possibility of studying the methods through which people assemble the features of everyday life in a reportable and accountable way. Members achieve this intelligible organization through coordinated and procedural behaviours or methods and practices. Thus, the challenge for scientists is not simply to apply a pre-set

theoretical framework to these activities, but to document ways in which members already organise their activities in an intelligible way for others (Garfinkel, 1968).

One important feature of Garfinkel's ethnomethodological approach, for my work, is the study of indexicality. This concept is so central to the ethnomethodological approach that: "*Garfinkel initially defined it [ethnomethodology] as an examination of the rational properties of indexical expressions*" (Leudar, Sharrock, Hayes and Truckle, 2008, p.1). Indexicality refers to how actions and expressions index particular features of their environment; it is through this indexicality that we can analyse their meaning (Garfinkel, 1967). Meaning does not reside inside a person's head, a truth that the psychologist is tasked to uncover. Rather, actions and expressions are social, and can only be understood in their contexts. The work of Anscombe (1957) is also important, as it stressed that any given action can in fact be put under any number of descriptions. A central concern for analysts, then, is a consideration of what contexts people *make relevant* and how they reflexively put actions and expression under description.

Leudar and Sharrock extended these ideas, and Gurwitsch's theme/thematic field configuration (Gurwitsch 1964), with their concept of 'structured immediacy': "*'structured immediacy' relates to the way that matters of context are made immediate to the doings in and identity of an occasion, with relevant contexts being actualised in and through those doings*" (Leudar et al., 2008b, p.2). This conceptual framework, as an extension of other analyses of context, emphasises that the making relevant of these 'horizons', 'grounds' and thematic fields is an active accomplishment of the members. We are not passive recipients of our contexts, we *use* them to do things in the present and in doing so we create them.

In this sense 'context' is not merely a container (Leudar et al., 2008) but provides the ground in a figure/ground relationship where both parts are mutually constitutive. As Leudar et al. (2008) point out, "*the here and now' is not an independent absolute locus of an action but is defined*

circumstantially and in interaction”. I am interested in what features of this 'ground' advocates and asylum seekers/refugees make relevant to their talk. How 'hostility themes' put activities under certain descriptions and how people negotiate this by generating for themselves biographical contrasts (see Leudar et al., 2008), putting their clients/themselves under new descriptions.

Spending time volunteering at the organisations and speaking to staff and clients was vital to get to the contexts in which meaning is produced; to learn how identities are produced as social actions and with what observable outcomes. To some extent, the project is inspired by Participatory Action Research projects (PAR, see Williams, 2003), where the aim is to use your research as an intervention into a group or project with the feedback and input of its members. The members of the organisations I studied were not involved in the development of the research question, and the complexity of the aims were not introduced to participants (to avoid introducing themes that might influence talk). Hence the project did not have the same reflexivity as most PAR projects. I did, however, work with the organisations to look at their communication by providing audits and feedback on case work sessions and publicity materials. PAR is grounded in the ethnomethodological aim of ‘understanding people’s methods’ for producing socially recognisable and understandable practices and actions. The researcher does not ascribe the meaning, members do. By grounding my work in ethnomethodology and PAR I felt I was positioning myself in a way that “*diverse and plural understandings*” of the organisations, their members, and their talk could emerge (O’Neill and Harindranath, 2006, p.41). I wanted my thesis to be rooted in real-world observations of different organisations and to form an intervention into their practices; in this sense it is both ethnomethodological and action-oriented.

b. Membership Categorisation Analysis

Sacks (1974) wrote extensively on the importance of conversation as ‘the site’ for doing social life. Since his work in *Lectures on Conversation* (1992), conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorisation analysis

(MCA) have been used to explore the sequential unfolding of language, and to demonstrate the importance of categories for how people understand the world around them. In particular in his paper *The Baby Cried. The Mummy Picked It Up* Sacks (1972) described how members make use of categories (baby, mummy) and collections (in this case the family) in order to make sense of local discursive ambiguities. We use social categories and our normative assumptions about them to make sense of the world.

MCA, then, is concerned with social identity; specifically with the social and linguistic resources people use to establish identities in interaction. Identities are not fixed in advance of an interaction but managed through them; drawing on social categories and our normative assumptions about them. Sacks (1992) made the observation that any person can be categorised in a number of different ways, i.e. asylum seeker, refugee, child, sister and that what is of interest to the analyst is why particular categories are used at particular times, and what these categories indicate in terms of possible actions (to which members of the category are normatively engaged, i.e. 'category-bound activities'). For example, in their publicity materials, ILAM refer to their client as 'only six years old' (Josephine, Chapter Three) invoking norms of youth, naivety and innocence.

So language provides us with the means to categorise people as incumbents of categories and particular social roles (Hester & Eglin, 1997). MCA can be used to make visible how people manage social categories in their sense and meaning making. It can be used to reveal how I, as the researcher, am positioned in the talk; for example, as an 'ally' (as we saw earlier), opening up considerations of how my role is procedurally consequential.

I am interested in how people manage themselves (and others) as members of particular social categories and how they manage problems (i.e. hostility) related to these categories. In particular I am interested in how people negotiate and manage category conflict and change (see Sacks, 1979). For example, in the interviews 'advocates' (see Lee, Extract 5, Chapter Three) struggle with the categories 'economic migrant' and 'asylum seeker'; attempting to equate them through notions of justice but ultimately

maintaining the distinction.

When looking at how the organisations negotiate the identities of their participants in relation to other exophoric circumstances of the talk, orient to hostility themes and maintain or subvert the established moral order, I am not trying to uncover cognitively produced stereotypes or ingrained biological prejudices, rather to observe social actions within particular discursive settings. I am looking for themes that are *socially* produced and reproduced, which cannot be understood solely as instances of individual bias. These themes form part of a structure around which certain discourse can be framed (Leudar et al., 2008).

I will use membership categorisation analysis (MCA) as one tool for understanding socially produced and situated notions of self. The analysis of membership categories does not technicalize the notion of personhood, as many theories of self have sought to do. Rather it looks at what resources language provides speakers with to represent each other in social interactions. It looks at how ideas of self manifest practically, through language and interaction. MCA demonstrates the work that members do in formulating and understanding the social world; this is where notions of self and identity are produced and reproduced. Additionally, through the analysis of member's orientations in a given situation (via category use in this case), which are explicitly and interestingly reflexive, the socio-political categorisations that permeate social life are made relevant. Thus MCA can also facilitate an understanding of the socio-political context in which categories are produced (Fitzgerald and Housley, 2009).

c. Dialogical Networks

Finally, identity negotiations *in situ* do not manifest as discrete or isolated events. Bakhtin in his 1929 work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* identifies what he described as a polyphony of voices from discrete times, places and speakers. For him this reflected the crucial inter-subjectivity that permeates one's view of one's self, others and the world around them. This inter-subjectivity or 'inter-textuality' is captured in Leudar's notion of

‘dialogical network’ (Leudar, 1998).

The point of this analytical framework is to open the analysis towards the fact that participants have to orient themselves to the exophoric circumstances of their talk. The notion of dialogical network allows us to be alive to this possibility, and to include these orientations in our analysis of talk. For example, in the materials I have collected, openness to the idea of ‘dialogical networks’ allows me, as analyst, to explore and reveal the exophoric voices and positions that are at play in the locally produced talk. In particular how hostilities towards asylum seekers/refugees, that are voiced in other times and places, frame the narratives and texts under analysis. As Leudar and Nekvapil (2004) observe: “*Participants are sometimes involved in two ‘conversations’ at the same time- with those present and those absent*” (p.248).

As Leudar and Nekvapil (2008, p.190) have demonstrated in their work “*cohesion of dialogical networks can be also achieved by the coordination of the participant’s membership category work*” (see Leudar et al., 2004; Nekvapil and Leudar 2006b for an overview). The notion of dialogical network can and will be used “*to ascertain the way refugee identities are contested and formulated in ongoing and distributed conflict*” (Leudar et al. 2008).

d. Group Analysis

As much of the material as possible was analysed in a data group with Ivan Leudar, Jacqueline Hayes, Joanna Baker and Hannah Berry. All of whom are researchers experienced in using these methods. This collective analysis allowed alternative understandings of the materials to be shared, and heard, and ensured that reliable conclusions were drawn. In turn this provided rich and varied interpretations of the materials, all of which were considered in the final analysis and conclusions.

3 Advocacy Organisations

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this section is to explore how ‘hostile’ arguments- that is, arguments whose ‘action-orientation’ is to exclude asylum seekers/refugees- enter into the publicity materials produced by the four advocacy organisations under evaluation. That this hostility characterises the ‘thematic field’ (Gurwitsch, 1964), within which these materials are constructed, hardly needs reiterating again here. As Leudar et al. (2008) and many others have already demonstrated, hostility towards asylum seekers/refugees is persistent and prevalent (both systemic, see Statham, 2003 and discursive see Sales, 2002, Lynn and Lea, 2003). I demonstrate that these materials are constructed in orientation to this hostility as a means of establishing the partial context for the materials that follow. In Section 3.2, adopting an ethno-methodological approach, I explore how members make relevant these hostile arguments, and how this hostility is situated by the organisations. Using MCA I analyse how the participant categories are set up by the organisations; demonstrating how the identities of ‘asylum seekers/refugees’ are managed in order to negate the hostility directed towards them. In Section 3.3 I explore, in more detail, how asylum seeker/refugee biographies are constructed in contrast to this hostility. In Section 3.4 I will look at two anomalies which diverge from the major themes that emerged from the data.

In Section 3.2 I present a number of extracts from the publicity materials produced by the four organisations. The seven extracts in Section 3.2 are selected to demonstrate the (accomplished) relevancy of the hostility to advocacy texts. The first three extracts are taken from a ‘myth busting’ booklet produced by *Refugee Act Now* in which the authors make the hostility relevant through reported speech (see Holt, 2000 for an applied example). This explicit orientation provides a clear introduction to the analysis in this section. The second and third extracts demonstrate how the

organisations re-work the participant categories in order to refute the hostility. Specifically, how the hostility is situated so as to establish the authorities as ‘perpetrators’ and asylum seekers/refugees as ‘innocent victims’. Finally, I will present two extracts in which asylum seeker/refugee voices are positioned in orientation to the hostility. In Section 3.3 I will present a further three case studies that I use to demonstrate how the ‘major status’ (Hester and Eglin, 1997) ‘victim’ is achieved. This analysis is divided into two sections, looking at how notions of ‘passivity’ and then ‘suffering’ are used to manage people’s incumbency of the category ‘victim’. In Section 3.4 I present two case studies in which the major status negotiated for ‘asylum seekers/refugees’ diverges from that in the other materials collected.

3.2 Situating Hostility in Advocacy Publicity Materials

Leudar et al (2008) observed that orientations to hostility themes are not always voiced explicitly. In some cases members use reported speech to quote the arguments made by their opponents, explicitly recruiting their words to formulate a defence (Antaki & Leudar, 2001). However, in many cases the hostility simply provides the field against which the meaning of the talk can be more fully understood. This orientation is often implied, and this in itself is an important analytical observation that highlights the pervasiveness of the hostility and its potential to frame spatiotemporally distributed instances of talk. Leudar et al (2008, p. 207) conclude: “*the sequential structure ‘hostility theme – defence’ was implicit (hostility themes do not have to be explicitly voiced, they seem omnirelevant).*”

The omni-relevance of 'hostility themes' is evident in the materials that follow. At times voiced in the style of reported speech, at others hearable as constituting the exophoric circumstances of the talk against which specific meanings are generated.

a. Using Hostiles Words: “Mobiles, Money, Mayhem”

Mobiles, Money & Mayhem. The Facts and Fibs About Asylum is a

pamphlet produced by *Refugee Act Now*, that, as the title implies, is specifically designed to counter myths about refugees. The aims are formulated in lines 6-9 of the first extract below, “*The Facts & Fibs About Asylum is an essential pop-it-in-your-pocket guide from refugee action. It gives you a chance to get to the bottom of some of those sensational stories, outrageous myths and big fat fibs that are told about asylum seekers and refugees in Britain today...*”.

The pamphlet is produced as part of the organisation's on-going ‘Refugee Awareness’ campaign, and is divided into several sections; each confronting what are formulated as ‘myths’ about asylum seekers and refugees. For example, the booklet begins with an explanation of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and outlines the correct legal categories for people immigrating to the UK. Following this, there are sections titled *Britain is a soft touch for asylum seekers*, *Asylum seekers come here just to cream off our benefit system* and *You can’t move in Britain for Refugees*. The booklet also includes a section on the ten ‘*scariest countries that people flee from*’, which details how and why people might be forced to leave certain countries. In short, the booklet identifies some of the most frequent complaints against refugees and asylum seekers and sets out to disprove them. Throughout, there are a number of case studies that provide the first hand experiences (although edited by the organisation) of refugees and asylum seekers, I analyse one of these in detail.

Extract One: *Refugee Act Now, Feb, 2010*

- 1 “*Mobiles, Money and Mayhem. The facts & fibs about asylum...a pop-it-in-your*
- 2 *pocket guide.*”
- 3 Those refugees and asylum seekers...Coming here just to pick up crisp new trainers
- 4 that they run around in to harass the decent folk of Britain, laughing as they install
- 5 their free satellite TV in the council flats that they queue jumped to get. It’s
- 6 outrageous isn’t it? In fact it’s quite unbelievable. The Facts & Fibs About Asylum
- 7 is an essential pop-it-in-your-pocket guide from refugee action. It gives you a
- 8 chance to get to the bottom of some of those sensational stories, outrageous myths
- 9 and big fat fibs that are told about asylum seekers and refugees in Britain today.
- 10 Read it through to answer any number of questions like, “why do asylum seekers get
- 11 given second-hand cars?”

Several of the ‘hostility themes’ documented by Leudar et al (2008) are made relevant here. The title *Mobiles, Money, Mayhem* (line 1) orients towards the specific arguments that asylum seekers/refugees are here for economic reasons, and are a source of anti-social behaviour. This is continued later on in lines 4 to 5: “*Laughing as they install their free satellite TV in the council flats they queue jumped to get*” (line 4-5). The themes documented by Leudar et al (2008, p. 199); ‘lazy’, ‘anti-social’, are easily recognisable as common argumentative strategies used to put into question the validity or rights of asylum seekers/refugees and feature here (themes which also enter government asylum policy, see Finch 2001, particularly so post-crisis, see Eaglesham 2009). As we will see, the action-orientation of this text is to deny the factual credibility of the hostility; the organisation accomplishes this in a number of ways. However, to begin with, the hostility is general. Refugees and asylum seekers are not decent people (line 3-4), indeed they are immediately excluded from the collection ‘decent folk of Britain’. In this sense, the hostility is neither contingent nor thematised (as Leudar et al, 2008 argued in relation to their notion of hostility themes). Here the hostility is general and pervasive, unwarranted and un-negotiable.

The exaggerated prose of the ‘sensational stories’ (line 8) that are organised around these hostility themes are mimicked by the organisation; “*coming here just to pick up crisp new trainers*” (line 3). As Antaki and Leudar noted in their 2001 paper *Recruiting the record: Using opponents exact words in parliamentary argumentation*: “*while alluding to others talk, the speaker is using the opportunity of paraphrase to redescribe what they say in terms which are loaded with evaluation*” (Antaki & Leudar, 2001, p. 473).

Here the hostility is situated as ridiculous, the language is hysterical and persecutory and *Refugee Act Now* denies the factual basis of the argument on several grounds; a contrast is made between the hyperbole of the extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) in lines 3 to 5 and the straightforward “*pop-in-your-pocket*” “*facts*” (line 2) that the organisation offers the reader. The premise that asylum seekers/refugees come to the UK to knowingly exploit economic opportunities is formulated as “*outrageous*” and as a

“*myth*” and a “*big fat fib*” (lines 8-9); they are outrageous stories which the readers are invited to disbelieve, “*it’s outrageous isn’t it?*” (line 5). The voice of the hostiles are alluded to, and a level of rhetorical irony is added, which has the effect of de-constructing and negating its credibility.

Whereas the hostile argument is voiced by an unnamed agent, an unaccountable view that is ‘out there’, the counter argument, the facts which are promised to the reader, are formulated as a shared accomplishment. The organisation and the reader, together, will “*answer any number of questions*” (line 10) posed by the hostiles.

So, the organisation aligns itself with the reader against the unnamed hostiles whose arguments are situated as “*outrageous*” and “*sensational*” (line 6-8). The participant categories (Hester and Eglin, 1997) set up are as follows: the unnamed **hostiles**, the liars who tell exaggerated fibs about asylum seekers and refugees; the **organisation**, the allies who seek to tell the truth about asylum seekers; the **British public**, the false victims of asylum seekers; and the **reader** the cynical and inquisitive member of the public who wants to find out the truth about asylum seekers. As membership categories they are defined in terms of category-bound predicates and relationally through their joint activities (Watson, 1978).

There is no lengthy narrative description given to asylum seeker/refugee identities. We do not know who they are, but we know who they aren’t (so to speak); which of course achieves some level of identity work for the incumbents. They are the subjects of lies and misinformation, they are the falsely accused.

There is another implicit participant at play here, the authorities who give “*those refugees and asylum seekers*” their “*free satellite TV*” and allow them to “*queue jump*” for their “*council flats*”. The organisation situates these aspersions as ‘outrageous’, orienting against the position that the state molycoddles asylum seekers/refugees. The activity-occasioned pairing (see Leudar and Nekvapil, 2000) via which the ‘British public’ and ‘asylum seekers’ are pitted against each other in the competition for government

resources (see ICAR, 2012) and provisions is thus challenged. The British public are not victims, they are *false victims*. Asylum seekers and refugees are not malignant, but the wrongly accused.

The category predicate ‘lying’ is often bound *in situ* to the category ‘asylum seeker’. As Lynn and Lea conclude in their 2003 paper, “*The existence of the 'bogus asylum-seeker' or 'economic refugee' as a tangible entity has formed part of common knowledge for some considerable time*” (p.432, see also Souter, 2011). This proposed quality, being a liar, is re-formulated here as belonging to the unnamed hostiles who tell ‘*big fat fibs*’ (line 9), and instead ‘asylum seekers’ are re-characterised as the victims of these lies.

In summary, *Refugee Act Now* orient their text to generalised and thematically organised ‘hostility themes’ that work to exclude asylum seeker/refugees. In doing so, they formulate the hostility as ridiculous; mocking the sensationalist rhetoric that characterises the hostility and meeting this with a reasoned ‘pop-it-in-your-pocket guide’ (line 7). By outlining these ‘facts’ the organisation manage a reformulation the activity-occasioned pairing ‘asylum seekers’ as perpetrators, ‘British public’ as victims, by switching the poles of the membership categories.

The following extract is taken from the same booklet under the heading *Asylum Seekers come here just to cream off out benefit system* (line one). Again the hostility is represented as unfounded. The organisation makes relevant the argument that asylum seekers/refugees come to the UK to exploit the welfare system (again this reported speech is evaluatively loaded) and construct a counter narrative.

Extract Two: *Refugee Act Now, Feb, 2010*

- 1 “*Asylum Seekers come here just to cream off our benefit system*”
- 2 The report concluded that the main reasons why some people seek asylum here are
- 3 their countries historic links with good old colonial Britain, the presence of family
- 4 and friends and that fact that English is a global language. Not because it is a sure-
- 5 fire bet for a new life that’s sugar-coated with state benefits. If you were that person,
- 6 uprooting your entire life, wouldn’t you try and find the safest place to go to?
- 7 Somewhere that you think you might fit in more easily, where you wouldn’t be

8 faced with the same set of problems. It's not a crime to try and find those things, it's
9 a basic human instinct for survival.

Again the extreme case formulation in line 1 "*just to cream off our benefit system*" is counter-posed to the reality of asylum seeking put forward by the organisation, '*it's a basic human instinct for survival*' (line 9). Although it is not stated explicitly here that the position in line 1 is a 'fib' or 'outrageous', the exaggerated tabloid prose works to undermine the credibility of the position in contrast to the rational formulation of the denial. The narrative that sits between the accusation in line 1 and the conclusion in line 7 is set up as a reply to the statement in the first line. This is made explicit in line 4 where a delayed retaliation is made, "*Not because it is a sure-fire bet for a new life that's sugar coated with state benefits*" (line 4-5) and in line 8 "*It's not a crime to try and find those things...*". The organisation re-situates the accusation as false and, even if it were true, as morally passable.

By reporting the hostility in this way the organisation sets itself up as rational, and opposed to the sensational hostility represented by tabloid newspapers. In this sense, the organisation points to the source of the hostility in a vague way and importantly contrasts the biased reporting with the factual and rational style of their counter arguments. The notion of dialogical network is useful here; the organisation, through the booklet, identify a distributed hostility and react to it. As we will see, the organisation uses this space to construct a contrast to the accusations and to deny their validity. The organisation manages a re-formulation of asylum seeker/refugee identities; putting them under description as persecuted people with normal motivations. This works to 'fill out' and evidence the 'facts' presented in Extract One.

The title is identity implicative. 'Asylum seekers', as in the first extract, are people who come to the UK for their own economic advantage. The exaggerated 'creaming off' implies a degree of greediness and blasé malignancy. 'Asylum seekers', the perpetrators of this purported offence, are thus excluded from the collection of those who might be the rightful

benefactors of ‘*our benefit system*’ (line 1). Who this ‘our’ is inclusive of is not stated, although it can be read as including the reader, who is supposedly rhetorically invited to share this view, and could include other ‘British citizens’ who have some rightful, legal, moral claim to these welfare provisions. Regardless, the ‘our’ is left without further description here. The action-orientation of this line is to construct ‘us’ as victims of ‘asylum seekers’. By making this position relevant the organisation provides a ground against which a contrasting narrative of asylum-seeking can be constructed. Interestingly, the argument here is between *Refugee Act Now* and the agents of the hostility, the subjects of this purported hostility; ‘asylum seekers/refugees’ are not present.

The formulation in line 1 would have it that asylum seekers have a life of care free luxury, handed on a plate by the British state. This formulation is somewhat implicative of who the agents of this hostility might be, again mirroring a recognisably sensationalist tabloid-style reporting. In contrast to this, the organisation presents us with the life of the asylum seeker as a life of pure survival. Asylum seekers here are people ‘uprooting’ their ‘entire’ lives, a serious and life changing choice which bears a stark contrast to the throw away accusation in line 1. These are people who are unsafe, who don’t fit in, who have problems, and who are seeking a resolution to this by coming to the UK: “*wouldn’t you try and find the safest place to go? Somewhere that you think you might fit in more easily, where you wouldn’t be faced with the same set of problems?*” (line 6-8). The rhetorical questioning: ‘*if you were that person...*’, ‘*wouldn’t you...*’ at once draws in the reader, challenging them to reconsider their (possible) conservative beliefs and normalises the process of asylum-seeking. In turn the organisation presents itself as holding more liberal and sympathetic views-which it invites the reader to share. Their actions are situated as the product of ‘*a basic human instinct for survival*’ (line 9); these are ordinary people making accountable decisions in extraordinary circumstances.

The organisation puts the activity of asylum seeking under a new description: asylum seekers are not illegitimate exploiters of ‘our’ benefit system rather they are rightful claimants to the products of Britain’s colonial

past. This is evidenced with a Home Office report that is mentioned prior to this extract. The voice of the Home Office adds a degree of authority to this re-orientation. Asylum seekers are not strangers, ‘others’ who can be positioned against the British public, they are people with “*friends and family*” in the UK (line 3-4), who share English as a “*global language*” (line 4); people whose countries are historically, culturally and socially linked to the UK. The organisation achieves a reversal of the ‘othering’ (Foucault, 1990) implied in the title, they do this by outlining the shared category predicates of these originally opposed categories. The thematic field is widened temporarily to include British (colonial) history rather than simply the here-and-now economic situation.

So in contrast to ‘asylum seekers’ as economic chancers, as the hostile voice in line 1 would have it, ‘asylum seekers’ are both victims seeking safety and normality and rightful benefactors of British wealth and opportunities. The accusation of immoral activity in line 1 is juxtaposed with a series of perfectly accountable choices and actions.

This counter-posing of the hostile argument, which is situated as over-the-top and unfounded (indeed even the source of the argument is ambiguous), with a balanced and historically grounded counter narrative, is continued in the next extract (which is taken from the same booklet). Again the position made relevant in line 1, “*Most asylum seekers and refugees are criminals*” is immediately recognisable from some areas of the right-wing press and indexes the vulgarity of their arguments (see for example ‘*Benefit Cheat asylum seeker had 500,000 in the bank and drove a Mercedes- but was caught out by wife's fur coat*’, Tozer, 2008). As Pomerantz argues, ‘extreme case formulations’ are often used to portray “*a situation as a legitimate complainable*” (Pomerantz, 1986, p.227). The statement “*Most asylum seekers and refugees are criminals*” is clearly formulated (and mirrored here) in such a way as to ensure that it is hearable that asylum seekers and refugees are very likely to be engaged in criminal activity. The effect here, however, when situated within the organisations narrative of asylum-seeking, is to mimic and invalidate the arguments and categories set up in line 1. Again the hostility is made relevant as a basis for formulating a

counter narrative; this is the ‘action-orientation’ of the text.

Extract Three: *Refugee Act Now, Feb, 2010*

- 1 *“Most asylum seekers and refugees are criminals”*
- 2 Aren’t there always a couple of rotten apples to spoil the barrel, a couple of bad eggs
- 3 in every community that ruin it for the rest of us by bringing crime to our streets?
- 4 It’s the same story worldwide and that includes the asylum seeker and refugee
- 5 community too. But you’ll be pleased to hear that the entire asylum and refugee
- 6 population aren’t out raping and pillaging their way round the UK.
- 7 A report published by the Association of Chief Police Officers found no evidence
- 8 that asylum seekers are more likely than anyone else in the community to commit
- 9 criminal offences, and that asylum seekers are more likely to be the victims of crime
- 10 than the perpetrators.

Several possible categories are set up here to which asylum seekers and refugees might belong. In line 1 the view that asylum seekers/refugees are ‘criminals’ is introduced. In lines 2-4 asylum seekers and refugees are negotiated as incumbents of a diverse community like any other. On the other hand, in line 9 it is proposed that asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable to crime. The organisation constructs a contrast between the hostile accusations in line 1 and the counter narrative they offer. This time, the organisation explicitly reverses the social categorisations put into motion by the hostiles, foregrounding one particular dichotomy along which asylum seeker identities are managed: ‘criminal vs. victim’ (reference Van Dijk 2000c) and opting for the latter.

The effect of this narrative is to remove the significance of ‘criminality’ from the asylum seeker/refugee community: “*aren’t there always a couple of rotten apples to spoil the barrel?*” (line 2). Criminality is not a feature specific to, or more salient amongst, asylum seekers and refugees, it is not a category-bound characteristic; rather it is a phenomenon equally distributed amongst all communities. By equating the “*asylum seeker and refugee community*” (line 4-5) with “*every community*” (line 3) the incumbents of the category ‘asylum seeker/refugee’ are normalised. ‘Criminality’ as a somehow prevalent or *essential* feature of the refugee category is removed.

New predicates are associated with the category. As Leudar and Nekvapil observed in their analysis of the management of Roma identities in Czech television debates:

The Czechs' membership category Romany was contested by Romany activists and by their allies, who tried to change it. They did this by associating new predicates to it, by dissociating old ones and by changing the collections into which the category belongs. (Leudar & Nekvapil, 2000, p.507).

Refugee Act Now manages a category change: asylum seekers/refugees are like any other community member. Asylum seekers/refugees as ordinary members of the community bears a stark contrast to the “*raping and pillaging*” accusation that is oriented towards in line 6.

However, this attempt at equating ‘asylum seekers and refugees’ with other communities has the dual effect of giving new boundaries and permanence to the ‘asylum seeker and refugee community’. The social features of their community are shared in common with others, but they remain a distinct group. Yet this re-affirmation of the boundaries of the ‘asylum seeker/refugee’ category does, as we have seen, allow the organisation to imbue it with new meaning; “*asylum seekers are more likely to be the victims of crime than the perpetrators*” (line 9-10).

The organisation meets the generalisation made in line 1 with a more idiosyncratic description of the asylum seeking ‘community’, this works to free the incumbents of this category from the criminality allegation. However, in line 9-10 the organisation formulates its own generalisation ‘*asylum seekers are more likely to be victims of crime*’. As was the case with the ‘extreme case formulation’ in line 1 it is rhetorically more powerful than stating ‘some asylum seekers aren’t criminals, sometimes they are victims of crimes’ (Pomerantz, 1986) and here the statement here is backed up by the voice of the Association of Chief Police Officers. The organisation does not attack the sentiment that some refugees might be criminals, rather it challenges the exaggerated style of the hostility. It does

this by positioning refugees as 'just like us' (just, but not quite) and by recruiting the authoritative voice of the police (see Antaki & Leudar, 2001).

By analysing these three extracts I have demonstrated how the organisation orients itself towards 'hostility themes' (Leudar et al, 2008). In this case, themes of 'economics' and 'criminality' are made relevant and are situated by the organisation in a way that undermines their credibility. This is done both rhetorically, by juxtaposing the hyperbole of the hostile voices with the reasoned and grounded arguments put forward in the texts, and also by constructing counter identities for 'asylum seekers/refugees' (for example Extracts 2 and 3). In denying the hostility themes *Refugee Act Now* constructs itself as a rational body on the other hand the open collection of 'hostiles' are irrational and vulgar.

b. Calling-Out Systemic Injustice

The following extracts are taken from the 'campaigns' sections of the *Immigration Legal Aid Manchester* and *Against Border Controls* websites. Here, we see an orientation towards what the organisations describe as systemic hostility towards 'asylum seekers/refugees' and the political arguments made by the anti-immigration lobby. Again, this hostility and 'injustice' provides the ground against which counter-narratives are formulated.

Extract Four is taken from the 'campaign' section of the *Immigration Legal Aid Manchester* website which promotes a political campaign that the organisation are involved in. At the time of the research the featured campaign dealt with the proposed cuts to legal aid in the controversial Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill (Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act, 2012). The arguments put forward are attributable to the organisation as a whole, "*Immigration Legal Aid Manchester (ILAM) supports the right to work...*" (line 3) and, all else equal, can be assumed to represent all of its members. The extent to which the representations formulated here map onto the interviews will be explored in Chapter Four.

Extract Four: *Immigration Legal Aid Manchester, March, 2010*

- 1 The climate in which people come to the UK to claim asylum is hostile and there
 2 are many injustices within the system.
- 3 Immigration Legal Aid Manchester supports the right to work for all people who
 4 are claiming asylum. We believe that the right to work is a basic human right, upon
 5 which people build their independence, self esteem and confidence. To deny people
 6 the right to work leads to stigmatisation, isolation, and increased poor physical and
 7 mental health. It also feeds the racism and xenophobia which every society has a
 8 duty to fight against.

Here, the hostility is generalised and characteristic of the climate, it is temporally stable and pervasive: “*the climate in which people come to the UK to claim asylum is hostile*” (line 1). The introduction of hostility provides the ground against which the rest of the text is constructed. Although it is not outlined in lines 1-2 exactly *how* the climate is hostile or what injustices take place, by making the hostility relevant the organisation allows the actions that follow to be hearable as part of this injustice. The formulation in line 3 that *Immigration Legal Aid Manchester* “*supports the right to work for all people who are claiming asylum*” is hearable as an orientation to the 'economic' hostility theme. The “*right to work*” (line 3) could be understood as an economic or bureaucratic issue, but here it is situated as a mechanism of hostility and injustice. The hostility is not just linguistic but something practical and in fact self-fulfilling; by denying the right to work dependence on benefits is necessitated, which is in turn interpreted by the hostiles as scrounging or 'creaming off' welfare provisions.

'People who are claiming asylum' are victims of this systemic hostility. The negotiation of asylum seekers as incumbents of the social category 'victim' is further managed in lines 5-7. They are people whose independence, self-esteem and confidence may be compromised, who are stigmatised and isolated, and who may have poor physical and mental health. These are not characteristics attributable *a priori* to asylum seekers but rather the consequences of their exclusion from normal civic life. Although the

organisation does not state explicitly that those who deny asylum seekers the right to work are racially or xenophobically motivated the policy is tied to the perpetuation of such animosity (line 7-8).

Asylum seekers then are the victims of unjust policy that excludes them from work. This reverses the common formulation in which asylum seekers are either 'stealing our jobs' or lazily 'creaming off' the benefit system. The identity of the organisation, those who deny the right to work and asylum seekers, are re-organised around the activity of 'work'. First of all, the issue of work is formulated as something that is denied and that this denial is unjust, in contrast to the largely accepted notion that asylum seekers *do not want to* work, or are taking 'British jobs'. Secondly asylum seekers are the victims of this denial and the establishment or general British culture (the hostiles are left unnamed) are the perpetrators of unjust acts.

This denial of rights and enforced inactivity is not an accountable way of treating victims. Hence a re-working of the hostility is again managed: the government are perpetrators of morally unaccountable acts and asylum seekers are the innocent victims. Not only that, they are victims who are trying to assert their independence and who want to be active members of the society (line 6). In this sense the organisation denies the possibility that people seeking asylum are 'lazy' or do not want to work. Although the organisation implicitly agrees with the hostiles that asylum seekers claim benefits (line 5-8), they subsume this as a consequence of exclusion and the hostiles' failure to respect human rights (line 3-4). It is implied that 'people seeking asylum' *want* to work but are *excluded* from doing so. This notion gives further moral fervour to the argument that asylum seekers should be allowed to work.

The organisation makes a political claim for the right to work and yet situates this necessity as a welfare issue; by denying people the right to work you deny their ability to lead independent and healthy lives. The organisation then manages for itself incumbency of the membership category 'advocate' supporting and promoting the rights and welfare of 'asylum seekers'. The hostiles, on the other hand, are not only vulgar and

misguided but also active in creating the world in which their lies (that people do not want to work) become true. Asylum seekers are misunderstood and consequently they are denied their basic needs. Whereas in the previous extracts taken from *Refugee Act Now* the accuracy of misunderstandings or accusations were disputed, ILAM situates them as a function of xenophobia and racism.

The next text extract provides a similar example. The mainstream political response to immigration is called out (this time introducing a broader category of migrants than 'people who are claiming asylum'). The participant categories are set up as follows: the local community, the audience, the organisation, immigrants and politicians. The careful juxtaposition of these categories, and the way they are put under description, generates new meanings. The 'hostile' political agenda that is made relevant throughout the text provides the ground for this re-formulation of events and actors. The extract is taken from a poster produced by Against Border Controls advertising a community Mayday event.

Extract Five: *AIC, July, 2010*

- 1 Against Border Controls calls for a 'You Cannot Represent Our Diversity' anti-
- 2 election bloc on the TUC May 2 day march (Sat 1st May, 12pm, All Saints Park-
- 3 look out for the banner) and a celebratory BBQ and Alternative Speakers Corner on
- 4 Saturday 1st May in Birley Fields, 3pm, between Bonsall St and Stretford Rd,
- 5 Hulme. Hulme has a long tradition of dissent and resisting mainstream ideas of how
- 6 the 'local community' should be doing things. Let's keep it going and celebrate one
- 7 of the best bits of public green space in South Manchester at the same time.
- 8 The three main political parties, as well as the whacky ones like UKIP and the BNP,
- 9 assume that being 'tough on immigration' is the way to win votes.
- 10 If you're sick of such simplistic scape-goating ideas, which divide people against
- 11 one another locally and globally and never look at the causes of inequality, join us
- 12 on May Day!
- 13 Come together to celebrate diversity and community! No Borders, No Nations!

The title of the election bloc introduced in line 1 "*You Cannot Represent*

Our Diversity” sets up the relational participant categories around which this text is framed. Who the incumbents of the respective categories are is not immediately clear, but as the agents behind this ‘call’ (line 1) the ‘our’ can be read to include members of Against Border Controls. The “‘local community’” (line 6) are also negotiated as members of the category ‘our’; the apostrophes suggest that the organisation does not align itself with the interpretation of community offered by the unnamed hostile voice (which as we will see is attributable to politicians). However people living in “*Hulme*” (line 5) are hearable as being part of this community, with its history of dissent (line 5), with which Manchester No Borders aligns itself. The silent ‘us’ in “*Let’s keep it going*” (line 6) encompasses these community members and the reader. The organisation also aligns itself implicitly with immigrants, whom the political parties attempt to alienate but who in fact make up the “*diversity*” of the “*community*” (line 13). Against Border Controls then sets itself up as an active agency that is doing things for its members and for the community, including immigrants. It positions itself as a member of the collection glossed by ‘diversity’. Migrants are subsumed into this collection too- they are not just like us (a strategy used in some of the materials produced by the organisations), in fact *we are all* different.

The identities of the ‘you’ who are pitted against the ‘us’ are implied in the title of the bloc, ‘*anti-election bloc*’ (line 1-2). The ‘you’ then can be understood to include the political parties running in the election, the faces of electoral politics. This is confirmed in lines 8-9. The title of the bloc indexes a political misrepresentation; of the “*local community*” and specifically ‘immigrants’ who are wrongly accused as the source of social problems, “*such simplistic scape-goating ideas, which divide people against one another locally and globally and never look at the causes of inequality*” (line 9-10). The hostile positioning indexed in lines 10-12: ‘immigrants’ versus ‘community’ is thus re-worked by the organisation and framed as ‘politicians’ versus ‘community’, with immigrants positioned as incumbents of the community.

Here “*simplistic scape-goating*” (line 10) by politicians is made relevant and

‘called out’ by the organisation. Direct reported speech (Holt, 2000) is used to introduce the cross party argument of ‘*being “tough on immigration”*’ (line 9). As we saw in extracts 1-3 the ‘opponents words’ (Antaki & Leudar, 2001) are mirrored and situated in a way so as to undermine their credibility, in this case the political parties. Here the argument is situated as ‘*whacky*’ (line 8) and ‘*simplistic*’ (line 10) and as politically motivated; not as a dignified political choice (it is attributable to all parties) but as a tool for winning votes. The organisation provide a pragmatic account of the hostility that is contingent on the local elections; it is a tool for politicians to win votes, but the implications of this are that the population is hostile. Due to the localised nature of the group’s work, the denial of the hostility can be heard as being relevant to the local community only; they do not deny the hostility in general.

Using the arguments of their opponents the organisation re-works the moral order established by the hostiles; by introducing the hostility as a form of misrepresentation the participant categories are framed in a new way. Immigrants are the wrongly accused, the political parties are the manipulators of the truth and the local community are aligned with ‘immigrants’ as the subjects of political propaganda. They are also included in the variety that is ‘us’.

c. Acknowledging Hostility Themes through Asylum Seeker Voices

The organisations at times employ the voices of asylum seekers and refugees in their publicity materials. The question of whose voice is represented, and through whose framing, is important here. In the next extract the organisation, *Refugee Act Now*, presents a ‘case study’ of a Somalian woman who is claiming asylum in the UK. The extract is presented in the first person and yet it will have undoubtedly been edited by the organisation. Extract Seven is a screen play written by a female playwright (who was seeking asylum) in collaboration with a British community theatre director. Whose voice do the case studies represent? The texts present us with a polyphony of voices, multifarious, conflicting and spatio-temporally discrete (Bakhtin, 1929).

Anti-asylum arguments are again made relevant here. The following extract is included by the organisation in a section of the *Mobiles, Money, Mayhem* booklet titled *Britain is a soft touch for asylum seekers*. Here, as in extracts 1-3 the case study is framed by the hostility which is made relevant through reported speech in the opening title. Again the narrative that follows works to negate the accusation made by the hostiles. The use of a first person narrative further delineates the reality of asylum seeking from the hyperbole of the hostile argument. Ikraam's narrative, as placed by *Refugee Act Now*, sets up a contrast between the argument implied in the title: that asylum seekers come here for economic reasons and a description of what life is really like for someone seeking asylum.

Extract Six: *RAN, Feb, 2010*

- 1 '*Britain is a soft touch for asylum seekers*'.
- 2 Ikraam, Somalia
- 3 “when I came to the UK I was the only black person living in my area and I tried
- 4 very hard to integrate and not to look different. Some people accept you and some
- 5 people don't.
- 6 Some people think asylum seekers come over here because of economic reasons
- 7 rather than because their life is in danger. The asylum system is far away from being
- 8 what many people think it is. It is not an easy process, there are lots of checks,
- 9 taking finger prints and going through your story. The reality is far from the
- 10 perception. The system is not a soft touch.”

Again the agency behind the hostility is left unspecified, “*some people*” (line 4) hold the “*perception*” (line 10) that “*asylum seekers come over here because of economic reasons*” (line 6). The hostility is formulated as false, it is a “*perception*” (line 10) that “*the reality is far from*” (line 7). In contrast the 'reality' is spoken with the authoritative (with a small a) voice of a woman who is seeking asylum.

The accusation in the title implies that 'Britian' should be more determined and resolute in managing its intake of asylum seekers. Ikraam's story, as presented by the organisation, provides an opposing account of Britain's response to asylum seekers, “*it is not an easy process, there are lots of checks, taking finger prints and going through your story*” (line 8-9). This

notion of Britain being a 'soft touch' is identity implicative for those Britain seeks to control; surely they must be people who need careful management, who are possibly playing the system and taking their chances? This is explicated in line 6, "*some people think asylum seekers come over here because of economic reasons*" and is contrasted again with asylum seekers in general and the woman we hear from in this case study whose "*lives are in danger*" (line 7).

In contrast to the implication that people come here and have an easy life the activities tied to asylum-seeking here are isolation, rejection, high levels of bureaucracy and potential re-traumatisation by having to re-tell and re-live one's story (line 9). She, and other asylum seekers, are people whose lives are at risk and yet are further punished on arrival in the UK, they are victims of repeated persecution. The two competing representations of 'asylum seekers' are juxtaposed: Ikraam's voice is authoritative, she is a woman who has "*tried very hard*" (line 3-4) and yet despite this some people chose not to accept her (line 4). Her skin colour is formulated here as a source of hostility (line 3-4). Again she is a reasonable woman and the organisation evidences its position through her voice. Her narrative puts into question the story told by the hostiles. Ikraam's experience and the experience of others in her position are put under description in such a way that it is possible for the reader to hear the final statement as warranted and true: "*the system is not a soft touch*" (line 10).

The following extract is taken from a play produced by the organisation *Asylum Seeking Women Unite*. The play was written by Lisa, a member of the group with support from local community arts groups. Again the narrative we hear, in this case a section of a script from the play, can be heard as representing a polyphony of voices. Lisa, an asylum-seeking woman, was the primary author, but the play acts as a medium through which the group's work is represented to the public. In this sense the play represents the public face of the group as well as the personal experiences of its membership; indeed this dynamic characterises all of the materials produced by this organisation- the members are asylum seeking women who speak from their own experiences but also for the group who exist to

campaign on women's issues and to provide mutual-aid. The play was performed in community theatres throughout the UK at the time that the interviews were taking place and had the aim of educating audiences on 'asylum seeker' experiences.

Using Bakhtin again we can describe the narrative as containing a polyphony of voices (Bakhtin, 1929): the two characters, Monica and Khumbulani, who can be heard as representing the voices of 'asylum seekers' in general; the playwright's voice and that of her colleagues in WAST; the Home Office who are included using reported speech and also the voice of the director. These, at times opposing voices, are brought together through the activity of writing a play, but what does the positioning of this amalgamation of voices achieve?

Extract Seven: *ASWU, November, 2010*

- 1 M: You know my sisters, this life is so hard, it is very hard, I thought I was
- 2 coming here to find some refuge. But it seems as if I am in prison, because I am
- 3 just no one sometimes I wish I was dead and gone with my husband. I am here
- 4 and the Home Office doesn't believe me. (*women hum `we shall overcome'*)They
- 5 think I'm lying, I am even started to believe that I am a liar. Because the things
- 6 that I tell them, they can't believe it. I am just living with nothing, I do not have
- 7 anything. Every time I go to Dallas Court to sign, I have hope but they only tell
- 8 me thank you and see you next month. This world is so tough.
- 9 (Women all comfort)
- 10 K: I was like you my sister. I had depression. I lost my mum, my sister, back
- 11 home. I had been refused three times and even the high court. No accommodation,
- 12 no vouchers, no nothing, no food, no money, no friends. I fell pregnant my sister, I
- 13 did not expect to fall pregnant (*pause*) this life. Seven months pregnant, with
- 14 nothing.
- 15 They contact home office, they refuse me. I had to sign in at Dallas court, no
- 16 money. Travel to the hospital, no money had to walk. Had baby, no money, no
- 17 clothes. I did not give up hope. Be strong my sister I had a baby and nothing. Red
- 18 Cross give me clothes and pram for my baby. If my baby sick I have to walk to
- 19 hospital. I wait and wait Then I came to WAST like you. I started to feel better.
- 20 People to talk to, I found a family, friends. When I received the letter from office,
- 21 I could not believe it. I trust nothing from home office. Please be strong my sister
- 22 do not give up. Seven years my sister and I got my stay April this year 2009. Be

Here the hostility stems from the Home Office who “*doesn't believe*” (line 4) Monica's claim, as she states in line 4-5 “*they think I am lying, I am even started to believe that I am a liar*”. The Home Office's scepticism is a matter not only shared with the next character 'Khumbulani' but one that points to the exophoric circumstances of the text. The playwright, through the women, can be heard to be orienting her narrative to the 'culture of disbelief' surrounding asylum seeking; a recognisable theme in asylum discourses (Souter, 2011). It is this action-orientation, this generalised undermining of the credibility of asylum claims that makes the theme recognisable as hostile and against which this narrative is, in part, formed.

The Home Office disbelief then is a matter personal to Monica and Khumbulani but one that also indexes the broader 'guilty until proven innocent' legislative and political stance towards asylum seekers (Asylum Aid, 1999). How do the narratives put together by the playwright here work to usurp this assumption?

The women's narratives again work to render this Home Office disbelief as unwarranted. To some extent the women's narratives foreground the validity of their asylum claims; Monica “*has hope*” indicating that she has some solid ground on which to base this confidence. The disbelief in line 4-5 is attributed to the Home Office who “*think I am lying*” and “*can't believe it*”. It is the Home Office's inability to believe that is foregrounded here, putting their aptitude into question rather than her story. The same theme rings through Khumbulani's story, even when she receives the letter saying she has had her claim accepted she states “*I could not believe it. I trust nothing from the Home Office*” (line 21). This formulation is identity implicative; her authenticity is confirmed and the Home Office are rendered untrustworthy and incompetent (they had previously refused her claim three times, line 11).

This positioning of the Home Office to some extent counters the disbelief

that these women, and others in their position, may face. That asylum seekers are liars or 'bogus' is transposed as a systemic or institutional default rather than as personal or *essential* characteristic of 'asylum seekers'. However the new meanings a priori generated for incumbents of the category 'asylum seeker', to which both of the women are primarily members, are that of suffering and persecution. Monica is someone who has sought refuge and is being denied, "*I thought I was coming here to find some refuge*" (line 1-2). Both women have lost family members "*I lost my Mum, my Sister, back home...*" "*sometimes I wish I was dead and gone with my husband*" (line 2-3) and are "*living with nothing*" (line 6). As Khumbulani mirrors, "*I had a baby and nothing*" (line 16). The loss of loved ones indexes persecution and instability in their countries of origin. Their situations of living are "*tough*" (line 8) and lead to "*depression*" (line 10). Monica states that "*it seems as if I am in prison because I am just no-one*" (line 2-3).

This metaphor of being imprisoned, and this loss of identity, are recognisable as themes in asylum-seeker/refugee narratives. For example, 'M' in the work done by Leudar et al (2008) states, "*and here, what difference when I cannot, I cannot, do something as a human? What difference? What difference between prison for me and here?*" (Leudar et al., 2008, p. 206). These psycho-social complaints, suicidal thoughts "*I wish I was dead*" and self-alienation "*I even started to believe that I am a liar*" suggest an 'internalisation' of the persecution and hostility they have experienced; a consequence predicted by Leudar et al (2008): "*the conditions for suffering a trauma- the presence of pervasive hostility and its 'internalisation' in oneself-seem to be satisfied*" (p.216).

These victim narratives of loss, suffering and poverty allow the women to be recognisable as, and mapped onto the category 'genuine asylum seeker', negating the culture of disbelief that is made relevant through the voice of the Home Office. However, the suffering they foreground is not suffering in their countries of origin, from which they are seeking asylum, it is suffering at the hands of the British Home Office. To some extent these narratives do not logically validate the women's claims for asylum under the GENEVA

convention as having suffered persecution in the country of origin, they do, however, work to construct a moral discrepancy (Clifton, 2002) between how the women, who are primarily victims, should be treated and the animosity and exclusion they experience here in the UK. It is this victim status, this welfare claim that renders their treatment immoral.

However, although the victim narrative is foregrounded, the narrative is not uni-dimensional. These are also women who have hope and who are strong. They seek out support, “*I came to WAST like you*” (line 19), they offer solidarity, “*please be strong my sister do not give up*” (line 21) and they comfort each other (line 9). Monica addresses the other women as “*my sisters*” (line 1) and that these women share hope is indexed through the collective voice in line 4 “*we shall overcome*”. The women stand together and find strength in this unity. The women are victims of great hardship but they stand united and are active agents in their own survival, establishing networks of community and support. In the next section, and in Section 3.4, I will explore how these complex narratives of suffering are negotiated.

In short hostile and exclusionary themes and practices are made relevant by the organisations, who then put the actions described by the hostiles under new descriptions. Asylum seekers are not lazy; they are excluded from working. They are not the source of social problems; they are subjects of political propaganda. In doing so, they (often implicitly) formulate the establishment (the press, politicians) as the source of hostility and asylum seekers/refugees as victims to this. These distributed arguments, which can be understood using the notion of dialogical network, often take place between the advocacy organisations and the (unnamed) hostiles. However, in some cases the voices of asylum seekers/refugees are included or form the basis of the text. In these cases, the asylum seeker/refugee biographies work to set up a contrast between what the hostiles say about them and indeed what their everyday experience of seeking asylum can reveal. In Chapter Five I will look more closely at how men and women at all stages of the asylum process narrate their lives. I analysed the extent to which hostility is relevant to the interview setting and with what consequence for how identity is managed.

3.3 Doing Being ‘Victim’

In Section 3.2 we saw how narratives of asylum seeking are formulated in order to negate the hostility that appears to permeate advocacy texts. I focused on two aspects of these narratives: how publicity materials orient towards hostilities permeating the social environment at large, and in doing so construct their own, migrants and hostiles' identities. In this section I look more closely at how the identities of asylum seekers/refugees are negotiated. Steimel summarised in her 2010 paper on refugee ‘human stories’ that: “*the victim story clearly dominates as the preferred narrative for refugees*” (Steimel, 2010, p. 226). The ‘victim’ category was implied in the materials in the previous section, often formulated in defence to a hostile aspersion of malignancy or criminality. Here, I will look more closely at how this category is mobilised in order to counter such hostility and to criticise the established treatment of asylum seekers/refugees. To map a person, or group of people, to the category ‘victim’ is a complex ‘accomplishment’; here I look more closely at how the organisations achieve this ‘victim’ status for migrants and people who are seeking asylum.

I start by looking at how the issue of ‘choice’ and ‘agency’ is managed and then move onto to look at how suffering plays a role in these texts. Again these activities map the incumbents onto the ‘victim’ category, negating the hostility, which as we have seen, frames, at least in part, these advocacy texts. It is important to note here that whilst locally the organisations manage the victim-hood of their clients to varying degrees, when the materials are viewed holistically this category is omni-relevant. This will be discussed more in Chapter Six.

a. No Choice

The following extracts are taken from the ‘case studies’ section of the *Immigration Legal Aid Manchester* website. The case studies are presented in isolation, with no introduction, however it is fair to assume that they have the two fold purpose of promoting the organisation’s work and highlighting

their clients situations.

Extract Eight: *AIC, March, 2010*

Josephine

1 Josephine was only 6 years old when both her parents were killed in Angola's civil
 2 war. She is from Cabinda, which is a part of Angola which is seeking independence
 3 and has been the scene of a long running conflict as a result. Josephine cannot
 4 remember exactly what happened to her parents, but she thinks they were shot by the
 5 police. She was taken in by an orphanage run by a priest after the death of her
 6 parents. When Josephine was 14 years old the priest asked her and the other orphans
 7 to help him deliver opposition political leaflets. She did this. Not long afterwards,
 8 the orphanage was attacked by the police and burnt down. Josephine and the other
 9 children escaped with the help of the priest. The priest realised that Josephine was in
 10 danger and made arrangements for her to be brought to the UK. The man who
 11 brought her abandoned her outside the Home Office in Liverpool.

On first reading of this text, it is clear that the ILAM sets Josephine up as a victim of horrendous circumstances, but how is this 'victim' status achieved? If we look again at how the participant categories are set up, we can see that relationally Josephine plays a fairly passive role in her story. How does Josephine's narrative (as presented by the organisation) map her onto the category victim? And with what effect for how we understand who Josephine is?

The primary category made available for Josephine here is 'child' and 'young girl'; she is just six years old when the problems begin and her juvenility is foregrounded at the start of her narrative: “*Josephine was just six years old when both her parents were killed in Angola's civil war*” (line 1). Her status as a child invokes the collection 'family' but this is quickly torn apart (line 1) and Josephine is no longer just a young girl, but an orphan and a victim of civil war (lines 1-3). The priest (line 5) is the next major player in the story. His role is ambiguous; he took her into his orphanage (line 5) and helped her to escape (line 9) in this sense he is a rescuer and ally of Josephine. Yet by asking her and the other children to deliver political leaflets he put their life in danger. The “*police*” (lines 5 and 8) are responsible for killing her

parents and for burning down the orphanage. They are the perpetrators of inconceivable violence. Relationally, Josephine is passive in this narrative. She is forced out of her family life in the most violent of circumstances and is “*taken*” to the orphanage where she becomes, (naively) involved in anti-government political activity – the priest is the principal in this activity (Goffman, 1981). The fact that she cannot remember how her parents are killed foregrounds her youth and also the trauma she must have experienced. The one sign of agency that is attributed to Josephine here is her escape, along with the other children in line 9. That they “*escaped with the help of the priest*” infers a degree of agency on the part of the children, however the major description here plays down Josephine's agency and plays up her innocence. Eventually she is “*brought*” to the UK by an unknown man and “*abandoned*” outside the Home Office (lines 10 and 11).

What action-orientation can this foregrounding of her innocence be seen to have? This downplaying of her agency makes her easily mappable onto the category “victim”; when understood in the broader socio-political context of asylum-seeking her incumbency of the “victim” category in turn makes her recognisable as a genuine asylum seeker. As Phillips and Hardy (1997) found “*media constructions often identify some asylum applicants as bogus claimants undeserving of protection, while granting others legitimate victim or 'genuine refugee' status*” (Phillips and Hardy, in Steimel, 2010). Josephine's lack of agency at the point of coming to the UK is a pattern that re-occurs in the materials (and will be looked at again in the following section and in the next chapter). It can be understood as a justification of why the person came: they did not choose to, they were forced. The seemingly consistent need to justify one's entry to the UK, which will be demonstrated particularly in Chapter Four, can be understood as an orientation to the thematic argument that asylum claimants are economic migrants or 'bogus'.

ILAM's positioning of Josephine as a 'victim' of numerous horrific circumstances also works to position and legitimate their work as her 'advocate'. Goffman's notion of 'footing' is useful here as it describes, “*an alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present*” (Goffman, 1981:

128). Indeed the purpose of the case study as presented on the website is to promote the necessary and ultimately successful work that the organisation does. Her victim-hood warrants their action and indeed their existence. Their positioning as advocate is explicated further in the following extract. One of the questions that I will take into the analysis in Chapter Five is whether asylum seekers/refugees cooperate in accomplishing this victim-hood (or partial victim-hood) state.

The organisation foregrounds Josephine's youth, and therefore her unquestionable innocence. Ruth Judge in her 2010 paper *Refugee advocacy and the biopolitics of asylum in Britain* problematised the over-infantilised representation of asylum seekers/refugees noting that advocacies:

reliance on the discourse of children's rights and its 'solutions' may have effects that place certain asylum seekers and refugees in the UK in challenging positions due to their age and gender (p.5).

Josephine's narrative can be analysed with this work in mind. Judge argues that: “*a powerful western ideal of childhood as a time of innocence and safety free from politics or responsibility... underpins children's rights thinking*” (Judge, 2010. p.9). The foregrounding of Josephine's youth constructs a moral discrepancy based on her primary identification as a (naïve and innocent) young girl and the activities she is narrated through (violence, persecution, abandonment). The downplaying of her agency in coming to the UK and in the political action that precedes it, makes it possible for her to be viewed as an innocent victim rather than a political activist, to whom the reader/audience may deem this experience/treatment more acceptable.

Josephine is an ordinary young girl in extra-ordinary circumstances. Her incumbency to the category 'victim' or 'genuine asylum seeker' is achieved via the contrast of her own innocence and naivety against the dangerous and uncertain conditions she is subjected to.

Extract Eight (continued)

10 When Josephine applied for asylum, the Home Office did not believe that she was
 11 only 14 years old. Social Services agreed with the Home Office, so Josephine was
 12 treated as an adult and put in a house with adult asylum seekers and nobody to
 13 look after her. Josephine came to ILAM for help, and we commissioned an
 14 independent assessment of her age. The doctor believed that she was only 14, and
 15 as a result Social Service agreed to look after her.

16 The Home Office granted Josephine permission to stay in the UK until she was 18
 17 years old, but they refused to recognise her as a refugee. They intended to send her
 18 back to Angola as soon as she turned 18. With our help, Josephine appealed
 19 against this decision. We represented her in court and managed to persuade the
 20 judge that to return Josephine to Angola with no family to look after her would
 21 leave her vulnerable to homelessness and sexual exploitation. The judge allowed
 22 the appeal and Josephine has been granted refugee status. She will now be able to
 23 stay in the UK permanently, and has a chance to rebuild her life.

Josephine's plight continues on her arrival in the UK, at which point the Home Office and Social Services, “*did not believe that she was only 14 years old*” (line 10). Here Social Services join the collection of 'authorities' who have let Josephine down. ILAM, on the other hand, position themselves as an 'advocate' for Josephine. Along with the doctor, they manage to convince Social Services and “*persuade the judge that to return Josephine ...would leave her vulnerable to homelessness and sexual exploitation*” (line 21). This level of granularity (Schegloff, 2000) 'zooms in' on the harm that Josephine might suffer. By detailing *just how vulnerable* Josephine is they flag her case as a welfare issue. She is a young girl whose life is in grave danger, who is vulnerable to sexual exploitation, who has no family and who is being let down by the authorities that exist to protect her. That is until ILAM stepped in and “*represented her in court*” (line 19). This relationship is described as one of assistance rather than rescue: “*With our help Josephine appealed against the decision*” (line 16-17). Josephine is agentive in the appeal; she makes the appeal *with the aid of* ILAM. Again the case study promotes the worthwhile and successful work that the organisation are involved in.

Josephine is attributed some agency at the end of the story; she “*came to GMIAU for help*” (line 13), at which point she is granted her appeal and “*has a chance to re-build her life*” (line 23). ILAM act on her behalf, although this to some extent displaces her agency to them, they are

providing an expert service, doing for her what she can't. Their action is contrasted to the interfering and inevitably disastrous interventions made *for* Josephine by the Priest and the Home Office. This shift in her agency as the story develops is interesting; she has little agency at the point of coming to the UK (an activity that is often attacked by hostiles) yet she is agentive in helping herself to win her case and move on. Why is it beneficial to downplay her choice in coming to the UK? The formulation of her coming as such is of course likely due to the actual circumstances of civil war and persecution but can be understood as an orientation to the “*culture of disbelief*” that questions people's reasons for coming (indeed this is pertinent here in the way that the Home Office and Social Services treat her with suspicion). The hostility theme that asylum seekers are 'liars' or 'bogus' is pertinent here; the disbelief around her age raises the question of whether Josephine is telling the truth, which in turn implies that she needs to lie. Is the basis of her appeal for help is then false? The denial of choice and the foregrounding of her youthfulness negate the disbelief and any allegations of criminality or malignancy and works as a justification for her being here (Van Dijk, 2000c; Rajaram, 2002; Judge, 2010).

This use of 'real life stories' works to “*personalise, dramatise and emotionalise*” (p.220) media stories which “*allow readers to develop a positive emotional connection to the story*” (Steimel, 2010, p.221). The following extract is taken from *Refugee Act Now's Mobs, Money, Mayhem* booklet (see Extracts 1-3) and again situates the ‘real life’ experiences of asylum seekers/refugees in the context of some hostility directed towards ‘them’. The section of the book that the following extract is taken from is titled *Most Asylum Seekers and Refugees are Criminals* (line 1). Here, again, we hear the voice of an asylum seeking woman, however as with Ikraam's story, it is framed by the organisation. The positioning of this narrative by the organisation contrasts allegations of criminality with the voice of Selima, a woman from Somalia, who presents a tragic narrative that plots her history of coming to the UK and her life since arriving here. Whereas the title implicates her criminality the narrative works to foreground her status as victim.

Extract Nine: *RAN, June, 2010*

1 *Most Asylum Seekers and Refugees are Criminals*

2 *Selima, Somalia*

3 “My family is from a minority ethnic group that is persecuted by another tribe in
4 Somalia’s civil war. My Father was taken away and murdered. I watched my
5 auntie being raped in our home. I lived in fear of being raped. My mum told me I
6 had to escape because I was a young woman. She said it was better for her to die
7 than me.”

8 “My uncle helped me flee to the UK. It was a difficult time. When I arrived here,
9 it was like being dropped in the ocean. I couldn’t bear to live without my children.
10 I got very depressed and tried to kill myself.”

How is this contrast managed and with what implication for how we view Selima and other members of the category asylum seekers/refugees? Like Josephine, Selima is a young woman whose family is torn apart by civil war. Their narratives share many themes: persecution of the family (lines 4-5), sexual violence (lines 5), assisted escape (line 8) and a sense of abandonment (line 7-8). Whereas Josephine's narrative ends with hope, Selima's ends with desperation, “*I got very depressed and tried to kill myself*” (line 8-9). Selima, then, like Josephine, is a victim of repeated persecution and trauma. She is victimised on the grounds of her race and her gender; her ethnicity is the reason that she is targeted and her body, and the bodies of her family, are the means by which she is victimised. In the UK, she is supposed to be safe. However the extent of the trauma and the separation from her loved ones means that she is living in hell: she is still not safe.

Unlike Josephine's story, which is told by the organisation, Selima constructs her own narrative. Although, again, it is positioned and edited by the organisation. Selima externalises her motivation for leaving Somalia and presents the process as difficult and negative (much in the same way that ILAM did for Josephine). Here, though, the victimisation is self-imposed. ILAM have chosen, and perhaps sourced, this particular narrative and indeed this particular section of the narrative; they present Selima as a victim, but in her own words. The analysis here then is co-concerned with

the 'facework' (Goffman 1955) that Selima does for the organisation when formulating her narrative for them and also, in turn, how the organisation manages its own self-presentation. This inevitably impacts on the form that Selima's contribution can take in the narrative that *Refugee Act Now* are constructing.

Whereas Josephine's narrative could be understood to be implicitly oriented against the exophoric argument that asylum seekers/refugees are 'bogus' (Phillips and Hardy, 1997, Lynn and Lea, 2003), Selima's identity is explicitly managed by the organisation in orientation to the notion that *Most Asylum Seekers and Refugees are Criminals* (line 1). The organisation reposition the category asylum seekers/refugees to the activity of criminality through Selima's single voice. Her victim-hood and particularly her lack of choice and agency (in the series of events described here) negate the accusations of criminality.

The formulation of refugees as passive except when they are engaged in criminal activities has been highlighted in other areas of the literature (see Van Dijk, 2000, Judge, 2010). Selima's lack of agency speaks to this theme. She is "persecuted" (line 3), her father is "taken away" (line 4), she "watched" (line 4) her Aunt being raped, she was "told" she "had" to "escape" (line 6) and was then "dropped in ocean" (line 9). Selima is subjected to things, things are *happening* to her. However, the issue of agency is complex and she is not entirely passive, and neither are her family. Her Mother made a choice that she should leave, as she was in danger as a young woman (line 5). This choice, although made in the restrictive context of a civil war, is still a choice that she then enacts with the help from her Uncle (line 7). Selima and her family demonstrate moments of agency but importantly these are choices made in un-liveable circumstances; they are choices, but they don't have much to choose from. These choices are forced upon her due to her persecution.

Rather than being an agent of criminal activity then, this "young woman" is a victim of the most horrific and unimaginable crimes, "*I watched my Auntie being raped in our home*" (line 4). That the persecution takes place in the

context of her family life, first with the murder of her father, then witnessing her aunts rape, her Mum's sacrifice and then the separation from her children, foregrounds the collection 'family' (Hester and Eglin, 1997) and values of family life. This provides a tearing contrast to the activities under description; rendering the actions even more shocking and deplorable.

The feeling of dysphoria described in lines 9-10; the separation from her children (line 9) and her eventual depression and attempted suicide (line 10), all map Selima onto the social category 'victim' in a way that goes beyond subjection to crime. The horrors she has faced permeate her psyche, she exists in a state of desperate isolation. Unlike the refugee narratives that Leudar et al. (2008) collected, so far there is no clear separation of life before and after arriving in the UK. Here, both are sources of persecution and depression. We are presented with a daughter who becomes orphaned in tragic circumstances (lines 4) who becomes a mother separated from her children and suicidal (line 9-10). By situating Selima as an ordinary woman, a mother who misses her children, she is easily mappable to the category 'victim' and subsequently 'genuine asylum seeker'. She is an ordinary woman in extraordinary circumstances. As I argued earlier, this precursor of ordinariness and innocence makes her treatment more shocking and reprehensible. Her suffering negates her alleged criminality and is in line with the sentiment in Extract Three: "*asylum seekers are more likely to be the victims of crime than the perpetrators*" (Extract Three, line 7-8). However here Selima is not just a victim of crime; her victimisation is multi-faceted and persistent.

The xenophobic statement in line one *Most asylum seekers and refugees are criminals* is challenged by the personal and inherently decent voice of a single asylum seeking woman. Again the agent-less hostility is met with, and usurped by, a human voice. Unlike ILAMs use of Josephine's story, *Refugee Act Now* do not use Selima's voice here explicitly to demonstrate how they have helped. Rather the narrative is positioned by the organisation in such a way as to foreground her victim-hood in contrast to the accusation of criminality. This contrast works specifically to undermine the un-founded logic that asylum seekers/refugees are criminals; the characteristics of this

human story render the likelihood of this asylum seeking woman's engagement in criminal activity as unlikely if not impossible. This single voice pierces the generalisation made by the hostiles.

The following extract is taken from *Refugee Act Now's End Destitution* campaign booklet. The booklet showcases the 'voices' of people who are made destitute during the asylum process using short narratives written in the first person. The following text provides the introduction to the booklet.

Extract Ten: *RAN, July, 2010.*

1 These are the voices of destitute asylum seekers in towns and cities across the UK.
 2 Hungry and homeless, they are living in a kind of limbo, banned from working yet
 3 unable to access benefits.
 4 Many do not know where they will be sleeping from one night to the next: in parks
 5 and bus stations, public toilets and phone boxes, abandoned buildings, or the floors
 6 of friends. For survival, they rely on food parcels and the charity of others.
 7 Many are from countries torn apart by conflict, or where persecution,
 8 imprisonment and torture are widespread- countries like Zimbabwe, Somalia, Iraq,
 9 and Sudan. Terrified at the prospect of returning, they are trapped in lives without
 10 hope or purpose or dignity.
 11 Some sections of the press would have us believe that asylum seekers are living in
 12 the UK in comfort, enjoying generous benefits. For tens of thousands of destitute
 13 people, such headlines carry a terrible irony.
 14 This is asylum's untold story.

Again, as in all of the materials so far, the text makes relevant, and can be heard to orienting to hostility, both explicitly (Extracts 1-3) and implicitly (Extracts 8-9). As we have also seen these hostile arguments tend to be organised around certain themes. Here, the hostility is formulated as “*asylum seekers are living in the UK in comfort, enjoying generous benefits*” (line 11-12) and is attributed to “*some sections of the press*” (line 11). *Refugee Act Now* immediately denies this accusation, situating the argument as incongruous, “*such headlines carry a terrible irony*” (line 13) and contrasting it to “*asylum's untold story*” (line 14). What then, according to *Refugee Act Now*, is asylum's untold story? What counter-identity does the organisation manage for asylum seekers?

The text in line 1-10 is identity implicative; the organisation constructs a biographical contrast between the 'bogus asylum seeker', made relevant in line 11-13, and the “*destitute asylum seekers*” (line 1) they introduce in the booklet. Unlike the greedy and conspiratorial tendencies implied by the hostiles, asylum seekers are in fact those who are living in the most dire of circumstances. The 'life of comfort' is contrasted with homelessness; sleeping in public toilets and existing “*in a kind of limbo*” (line 2). Rather than being in receipt of generous benefits they are “*banned from working*” and relying “*on food parcels and the charity of others*” (line 6). The very juxtaposition of these descriptions demonstrates the ‘terrible irony’ that the organisation speaks of. Asylum seekers are not people who have made plans to come to the UK in order to exploit the welfare system and 'kick back'. They are people who are “*from countries torn apart by conflict*” (line 7), who may have faced persecution, imprisonment and torture (line 8). Whereas the hostile argument indexed in lines 11-13 formulates asylum seekers as malignant, 'living it up' in the UK, *Refugee Act Now* in turn formulates asylum seekers as those who are “*trapped in lives without hope, purpose or dignity*” (line 9-10).

To be destitute is to be in complete deprivation, entirely without the means to sustain oneself. The organisation construct this destitution not just as a lack of food or shelter (a circumstantial phenomenon) but as a stripping of agency and self-determination. Not only do these people have limited access to food and shelter, they have also lost their purpose or dignity. Their condition of living is personalised, they are not just homeless but hopeless too. It is not the government who is called out for denying these people benefits, but 'asylum seekers' themselves, who are “*unable to access*” them (line 3). In this aspect of their lives they are entirely helpless. Again the hostile retort of malignancy is met with a resort to passivity.

This narrative is organised around the themes of precarity and survival. The formulation “*without hope or purpose or dignity*” (line 9-10), reduces the lives of 'asylum seekers' to lives of 'survival'. It has an almost de-humanising effect. Like animals, they are trapped (line 9). Although they do

formulate their clients as having voices, these are framed by the introduction, where they are presented as hopeless and trapped. These features make up part of the thematic field for understanding the voices that the organisation goes on to present.

Again this positioning of asylum seekers works to negate the hostility, the 'terrible irony,' that these people might be mistaken for 'bogus' asylum seekers. *Refugee Act Now* manages the narrative in such a way as to present the people they work with as genuine victims, genuine asylum seekers. Specifically, all of these texts can be understood in terms of orientations to accusations of criminality or illegitimacy. These are met with a downplaying of agency (as documented by Van Dijk, 2000), making it possible for their clients' innocence and victim-hood to be foregrounded. Relationally by negotiating for their clients the identity 'genuine victim', with limited agency, the organisations position themselves as advocates and their work is hearable as necessary and urgent.

b. Suffering Body

As we have seen in the materials analysed so far, suffering plays a central role in many asylum seeker/refugee narratives. The displacement of agency works to refute claims of criminality and cheating. This is organised around narratives of passivity and suffering which predicate the category 'genuine refugee' in orientation to the 'culture of disbelief' and hostility asylum claimants face (see Pupavac's 2008 discussion of the 'sick role', discussed further in Chapter Six). This form of testimony, this telling of the suffering and persecution that one has experienced, has been identified as 'useful' for gaining audience sympathy (see Hiojer, 2004; Steimel, 2010). Less cynically it is also a recognised therapeutic practice; empowering for those who have suffered (Williams et al, 2003).

On the other hand, the emphasis on welfare and bodily suffering in asylum seeker/refugee discourses has also been criticised for de-politicising the figure of the refugee (Maalki, 1996; Pupavac 2008); reducing the socio-political context of their situations to a performance of suffering and pity

(Agamben, 1998; Fassin, 2005). Pity, which, significantly, is reserved only for those deemed to be suffering *enough*. As Judge (2010) observed: “*those arguing for refugee rights focus on their suffering bodies, as opposed to the gendered and racialised body of asylum seekers conceived as morally deviant and threatening*” (p.8). This is where the notion of 'biopolitics' (Judge, 2010) is useful, asylum seekers/refugees are stripped of their agency (or cede this agency themselves) in order to negate accusations of criminality or other politicised behaviour. In doing so their claim becomes a welfare claim rather than a political one (Agamben, 1998). This problematic is taken up by the 'advocates' in Chapter Four, some of whom spontaneously challenge this romanticising of the suffering 'asylum seeker'. In Chapter Five I will demonstrate how suffering is re-negotiated by women and men who are seeking asylum to foreground their resourcefulness and determination. First, however I look at how 'suffering' is played out by the organisations in their publicity materials.

The extract presented below is taken from the script for *Refugee Act Now's End Destitution* campaign video. The video is located on the *End Destitution* campaign page of their website. The introductory text on the website contextualises the film; it is intended to “*tell politicians why the deliberate policy of forcing asylum seekers into destitution isn't working*”. At the end of the film the audience is asked to send the video to their local MP and to “*take action now to end destitution*”. This initial framing of the video sets up the participant categories as follows: politicians are the perpetrators, deliberately “*forcing asylum seekers into destitution*”; ‘asylum seekers’ are the victims of this policy, subjected to poverty; *Refugee Act Now* is an advocate for ‘asylum seekers’, highlighting their suffering and encouraging people to take action; the audience are invited to be advocates for ‘asylum seekers’. This positioning is further established in the video and is analysed below.

Extract Eleven: *RAN, July, 2010*

- 1 Voice Three: I’ve been living in this situation for five years now. I’ve been living
- 2 as a prostitute for five years.

3 Refugee Action: Every year Refugee Act Now sees thousands of asylum seekers
 4 coming to our doors in desperate circumstances. They're people that have applied
 5 for asylum in good faith and had that claim rejected. And they're on the horns of
 6 an awful dilemma. Which is either to return to their country of origin or live
 7 destitute on the streets of the U.K. Now for some people, they come from
 8 countries which are just dangerous at the moment places like Darfur in Sudan, or
 9 Zimbabwe where it's just not conscionable that you could return there and they're
 10 terrified at the idea of going back there. We think the solution is to give those
 11 people in that situation more temporary protection.
 12 Voice Three: At the moment I'm still trying to fight. I'm still crying for help to
 13 see if anyone can help me. It's not what I was expecting my life.
 14 Father: To see that there are some people who are prepared to accept that
 15 vulnerability- such desperate conditions of life, such a dreadful quality of life- I
 16 can only say why would they do that unless their reasons for being here were
 17 genuine? And if that is the case, simply for the government to wash its hands and
 18 say they are bogus asylum seekers seems utterly unacceptable.
 19 Voice One: you cry night, you cry day, you cry anytime. And I think God is not
 20 there.

The two women whose voices we hear in line 1 (Voice Three) and 19 (Voice One) are the suffering asylum seekers; they are women who have to work as prostitutes (line 1) who are, "*crying for help*" (line 12) and who are losing their faith, "*I think God is not there*" (line 19-20). These are desperate, pleading voices, "*you cry night, you cry day, you cry anytime*" (line 19) bringing home the dire situations women with failed asylum claims face. These voices are interspersed with the voice of *Refugee Act Now* and the Father, both of whom add further description to the women's plight; they are people in "*desperate circumstances*" (line 4) and with "*a dreadful quality of life*" (line 15). The women and the "*thousands of asylum seekers*" like them are victims of conflict; they come from "*countries that are just dangerous at the moment*" (line 8).

Their faces are blacked out, they are seen walking down dark streets with their bags, through long-angle camera shots. The images complement the identity work being done by the organisation via the text, as Hoijer (2004, p. 515) points out:

Photographic pictures are often perceived as truthful depictions of reality. As audience, the experience is that we are seeing the innocent victims of the violence with our own eyes, and the pictures become evidence of the suffering.

The innocence and naivety of the women is foregrounded; *“it’s not what I was expecting from my life”* (line 13) which, as discussed, allows them to be heard as genuine victims, as genuine asylum seekers. This assertion of naivety, of forced flight, counters the argument that they are bogus asylum seekers. They are not here ‘creaming off benefits’ (Extract 2, line 1) rather *“they’re on the horns of an awful dilemma”* as they were in Extract 10 (line 1-2) *“living in a kind of limbo”*. These women, whose experiences we can assume are intended to represent ‘asylum seekers’ experiences *per se*, are trapped. Without choices all they can do (here) is plead for help and cry. That the organisation provides a space in their publicity for these moments of testimony is promising, asylum seeker/refugee voices are often excluded from the debate on asylum-seeking (Leudar & Nekvapil, 2000) and as I discussed in Chapter One these moments of personal biography and narrative expression can pose a challenge to dominant understandings of asylum-seeking.

These women’s voices can be heard to be representing the voices of ‘destitute asylum seekers’ in general; the content and positioning of their short narratives is identity implicative and sets up the women as ‘victims’ of abuse and the organisation as their determined advocates. Voice One and Three are emotive voices that speak of desperation, suffering and exploitation, they contain no political claims or demands for change. There is a glimmer of agency in line 12, *“at the moment I am still trying to fight”* but this quickly turns into a cry for help, *“I am still crying for help...”* (line 12). On the other hand the turns by *Refugee Act Now* and the Father are characterised by facts and statistics, *“every year refugee action sees thousands of asylum seekers coming to our door”* (line 3), they are evaluative *“it’s just not conscionable”* (line 9), *“utterly unacceptable”* (line 14) and consist of demands, *“we think the solution is to give those people in*

that situation more temporary protection” (line 11). *Refugee Act Now* position themselves as campaigners or advocates for asylum seekers, making political demands for better policy. Their position is propped up morally by the Father, and accounted for by the absolute suffering of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are people with problems; *Refugee Act Now* has the solutions. They deliver their talk in extended monologues with political and ethical themes, whereas 'asylum seekers' are engaged in short, personal statements reduced to their physical and emotional suffering. They are mapped to the category victim, and the organisation and the Father are their advocates; they *speak for* asylum seekers, against the government who washes its hands and says they are bogus asylum seekers (line 13-14).

In lines 12-14 *Refugee Act Now* orient the talk explicitly against the hostility theme that all or most asylum seekers are bogus, they do this through the voice of the Father, “*I can only say why would they do that unless their reasons for being here were genuine?*”. The action-orientation of the text is clear, to disprove the hostility on the grounds of the suffering that 'asylum seekers' go through, “*To see that there are some people who are prepared to accept that vulnerability- such desperate conditions of life, such a dreadful quality of life- I can only say why would they do that unless their reasons for being here were genuine?*” (line 17-18). The challenge to this hostility is formulated through the ethical arguments and demands put forward by *Refugee Act Now* and the Father, organised around the negotiation of asylum seekers as genuine victims.

In the following extract suffering is dealt with with a further level of granularity (Zhang and Schwartz, 2011). So far, we have heard stories of murder, rape, sexual exploitation and prostitution. Morally unwarrantable crimes, that assert the true victim status of the subject and refute allegations of falseness and deception. However, as we have also seen, mapping the individual to the category 'victim' is a complex achievement, contingent (in part) on the person's innocence, their lack of agency with regards to political activity, and the degree of their suffering. These predicates work to negate claims that 'they' came here with the intent and purpose of claiming benefits

and having an easy life. In Lee's (1984) paper *Innocent Victims and Evil Doers* he makes the cynical yet accurate observation that:

Rape is routinely seeable as a bad experience and possibly a 'nightmare' for the raped and the term 'innocent victim' is frequently used in conjunction with such person. Thus a focus upon such a person's experience might always provide news-people with a way of slanting their story. However, should news-people wish to slant their story in that way then it might be necessary for them to characterize the victim as properly both innocent and a victim" he goes on to say "rape is seeable as a morally unjustified act but the victims of rape are always monitorable for their innocence and for the degree of that innocence. (Lee, 1984, p. 72)

The "culture of disbelief" that meets those who are seeking asylum with suspicion and a 'guilty until proven innocent' attitude systemically applies to those who are raped. This intersection of xenophobia and patriarchy arguably makes it particularly harder for women asylum seekers to be heard as victims, and subsequently puts more pressure on them to divulge the details of their attacks. As Hoijer observes:

that the ideal victim is a cultural construction becomes apparent if we consider historical and cultural variations in the victim status of women. Women who are assaulted by men are not always seen as victims, in some cultures not at all" they go on to note that "it is only recently that male soldiers' systematic rape of civilian women from the enemy side have been condemned. (Hoijer, 2004, p. 517).

So it seems that to be recognised as a victim of rape, a victim *per se*, and a genuine asylum seeker, is a complex achievement, contingent on the constructability of innocence. How is Sara's innocence negotiated? The following extract was downloaded from the opening page of the *Asylum Seeking Women Unite's* (ASWU) website in the news reel section. Here, Sara's story is presented in the third person, by 'ASWU', as publicity for her anti-deportation campaign.

Extract Twelve: ASWU, August, 2010

1 ASWU- Sara must stay

2 Sara's life all changed the day her pharmacy in Uganda was raided by soldiers.

3 She was taken to a 'safe house', where she was kept in a tiny cell and repeatedly

4 raped and tortured whilst facing interrogation. Although freed after several days

5 she was again to face the same ordeal when the soldiers came back to find her and

6 her husband. Forced to flee Uganda she came to England where despite this

7 continued persecution, her asylum case has been refused.

8 Even a medical report stating that 'the medical evidence gives strong support for

9 the history of repeated rapes leading to life threatening gynaecological

10 complications necessitating major surgery'. Moreover, Amnesty, Human Rights

11 Watch and the government themselves all attest to the use of rape against women

12 in Uganda as a means of coercion.

13 Sara claimed asylum in 2003 and was forced into destitution in December 2004

14 when her appeal was turned down. Sara lived rough for many months. She now

15 stays with an English woman and lives off Red Cross parcels, while she tries to

16 find a solicitor to take up her case and put in a fresh claim using new evidence that

17 she has been able to recently gather.

18 Sara also has had no news about her husband and children and prays they are safe.

19 PLEASE SUPPORT SARA'S CAMPAIGN TO STAY

The narrative begins with what is described as a pivotal moment in Sara's life, "*Sara's life all changed the day her pharmacy was raided...*" (line 1). The political history of the events are noticeably absent; we are not told why her pharmacy was raided. Rather, the events described in lines 2-4 are introduced as de-contextualised abuses (the socio-political context is only indexed by the fact that we know this happened in Uganda, see Maalki, 1996). This removal of the political context situates the abuse as unwarranted; as far as the reader knows Sara is an ordinary woman working in a pharmacy. Despite this innocence, she is subjected to horrific acts of violence; she is imprisoned, "*repeatedly raped*", tortured and interrogated (line 3-4). Her "*continued persecution*" (line 7) is foregrounded, and, as we see later on, in lines 13-15, continues into her life in the UK. At this point, she finds herself "*forced into destitution*" and living off Red Cross food

parcels (line 13). Again, her story is characterised by a lack of choice, she was “*forced*” (line 6) to flee Uganda and to come to the UK (in the most horrific circumstances) and then she is “*forced*” (line 13) into a life of poverty and isolation, “*Sara also has had no news about her husband and children and hopes they are safe*” (line 18). Sara is positioned as a victim of political corruption (line 2-6) who is then let down by the political situation in the UK, “*despite this repeated persecution her asylum claim has been refused*” (line 6-7). Like the asylum claimants in the previous extracts (see Extract Eight and Seven) her persecution is met with disbelief.

This foregrounding of her 'ordinariness', her lack of agency, and the degree of her suffering, intersect to make her hearable as 'victim'; challenging the disbelief that is voiced implicitly by the Home Office (who refuse her). In addition to this, in line 8 and 10, the voices of two 'authorities' are introduced: the physician, who provides the medical report and Amnesty. These recognisable and respected voices work to evidence Sara's story and the suffering she has experienced.

At this point the extent of Sara's trauma is 'zoomed in on' (see Schegloff, 2000; Zhang and Schwartz, 2011); due to her repeated rapes she has “*life threatening gynaecological complications necessitating major surgery*” (line 9). The truth behind her story is upheld by an authoritative voice and the nature of her suffering is exposed in the most personal and tragic way. Her most intimate scars, of these most invasive and violent attacks, are used to evidence her “*campaign to stay*” (line 16). The power of medicine and physically visible suffering are drawn on to legitimate her suffering. Whilst foregrounding Sara's victim-hood, ASWU also collude with the epistemic medical authority that demands physical signs of suffering over people's personal accounts and expressions (I will discuss the implications of this 'sick role' further in Chapter Six, see Pupavac, 2008). As Nussbaum (2001) states compassion is: “*a complex emotion including such cognitive beliefs as that suffering of the other is serious, and that the suffering person does not deserve the pain*” (Nussbaum in Hiojer, 2004). The action-orientation of this text is arguably to legitimate and foreground the seriousness of Sara's suffering and her innocence in the series of events that unfolded.

Much like the voices in Extract 11 (and to some extent Josephine's case study), the footing afforded to asylum seeker voices works to situate their suffering as the ground against which welfare claims are made by the organisations, on their behalf. This image of the suffering asylum seeker marks their legitimacy in line with the accepted understanding of refugee-hood, whilst negating the attributes that the hostiles attach to the category. As Pupavac (2008) argues: “*these sympathetic representations of refugees compete with hostile media scares over bogus asylum seeker scrounging of welfare benefits*” (p.270). They give publicity to 'human suffering'; thus these representations do a degree of 'facework' for the organisations, who speak to the public in the knowledge that, “*the audience is expected to respond as good citizens with compassion and rational commitment*” (Hiojer, 2004).

3.4 'In and Against' Suffering ¹

The organisations make relevant the voices, positions and arguments that work to exclude asylum seekers/refugees; to this extent the hostility permeates these advocacy texts. The hostility is 'internalised' by the organisations in the sense that they orient their talk towards hostility themes and other hostilities towards asylum seeker/refugees; the hostility frames their talk (Leudar et al 2008 argued that pervasive hostility is 'internalised' by 'asylum seekers/refugees', I will return to this in Chapter Three). The organisations counter the hostile accusations by constructing 'biographical contrasts' (Leudar et al, 2008) between the participant categories made available by the hostiles and the subject positions negotiated in the publicity materials. The major status offered by the hostiles (and introduced by the organisations) is 'bogus', and this is countered by foregrounding the 'victim' status of asylum seekers/refugees. Negotiating the status of 'victim' is a

¹ The use of 'in and against' is taken from John Holloway's work *Crack Capitalism* (Holloway, 2010) in which he makes the (negative) dialectical argument that our hope for change lies in living 'in and against' our current condition; as we suffer, we struggle beyond suffering.

complex achievement, as we have seen, and, in these materials, is commonly organised around themes of absence of choice, suffering and innocence.

Asylum seeking, and indeed 'asylum seekers', can be put under description in many ways (as the literature review in Chapter One demonstrated). These 'many selves' (Hermans, Kempen and Van Loon, 1992) are made relevant according to different interactions. As Stemplewska-Zakowicz, Walecka and Gabinska (2006) specify, in the title of their 2006 paper, there are *As many selves as interpersonal relations (or maybe even more)*. The major status, emerging from the particular context of advocacy publicity, is 'victim'. This speaks to allegations of malignancy, falseness and criminality. But there are other selves hearable in the materials that work to counter the hostility in other ways. We have already seen moments of agentive action and self-determination in these extracts that paint a more complex picture than 'pure victims' (Malkki, 1996). For example, in Extract 11, the unnamed woman is "*still trying to fight*" (line 12); in Extract 8, Josephine is formulated as agentive in her claim, she "*appealed against the decision*" (line 16-17) and in Extract Seven the cast members of the play echo in union "*we shall overcome*" (line 4), a demonstration of solidarity and strength.

It is worth noting again here that agency is also a complex matter, and that the men and women who provide these case studies for the organisations have demonstrated a great degree of agency in telling their stories and connecting with their trauma. Yet, what I am concerned with, is how *the organisations* construct asylum seekers/refugees, what features of the thematic field *they* make relevant to frame how the reader understands these voices. The analysis has demonstrated that advocates, in their publicity materials, downplay the agency of their clients and foreground their victimisation.

Below, I will analyse two extracts where the thematic field was noticeably broadened; advocates draw on the mutual aid that characterises some asylum-seeking networks and the contribution that refugees make to the UK economy. These examples are marginal, yet they are ethno-

methodologically interesting due to their noticeable divergence from the dominant identities and meanings that characterised the materials I collected.

The following extract is taken from the ‘*What is ASWU?*’ section of the ASWU website and outlines the aims and activities of the group. An orientation to the hostile circumstances of the text is formulated in lines 10-13, “*promote a positive image of ourselves and ensure our voice is heard*”. This aim, promote a positive image of themselves, indexes an environment in which this image is put into question. How do ASWU account for this image here? The positive attributes of the group are foregrounded. Orienting to this general hostility, the activities of the group, and its members, are described; mutual aid, education and campaigning now predicating the 'asylum seeker' category.

Case Study Thirteen: *ASWU, August, 2010*

- 1 AWSU provides a space from which women asylum seekers can:
- 2 Empower ourselves, help each other set up our own individual anti-deportation
- 3 campaigns
- 4 Build expertise on women's issues - rape, honour killing, domestic violence, etc. -
- 5 sharing info useful for campaigning, asylum and human rights claims amongst
- 6 ourselves
- 7 Link with other groups and organisations about support and services, or the lack of
- 8 them, to women asylum seekers
- 9 Collaborate on things like fund raising together which as individuals on our own
- 10 we wouldn't have the time, energy, resources or contacts to do.
- 11 Raise awareness in the community and through the media about asylum seekers
- 12 and in particular women asylum seekers, the issues that concern us and our
- 13 families, promote a positive image of ourselves and ensure our voice is heard.
- 14 Bring the wider community together with WAST women who may otherwise be
- 15 "invisible"
- 16 Hold meetings in a mixture of relevant languages and child-friendly environment.

What is the identity ASWU negotiates for itself and its members in the text? The “*ourselves*” in line 2 can be heard as referring to members of ASWU, specifically “*women asylum seekers*” who are part of the “*space*” that ASWU offers (line 1). This is an organisation that provides for the needs of women (“*child friendly environment*”, line 16) and specifically for the needs of asylum seeking women, “*a mixture of relevant languages*” (line 16). The relationship of the organisation to its membership is different than in the texts we have seen so far, here, the organisation is organised by and for asylum seeking women. These women “*hold meetings*” (line 16) together, “*give mutual support*” (line 17) and “*help each other*” (line 2). This is not to say there is no organisational hierarchy in ASWU, there is a management committee made up of asylum seeking women, and there are, of course, informal hierarchies based on experience, confidence, language and time spent with the group. Here, however, we are presented with ASWU and its members who “*empower ourselves*” (line 2), with the “*other groups*” (line 7) with whom they collaborate, and with the public whose “*awareness*” (line 11) needs raising. This relational positioning of asylum seekers to the public, and the reader, is novel when we consider the materials we have seen so far and the general consensus amongst researchers and practitioners that the voices of asylum seekers, and asylum seeker led groups, are few and far between. Or, as we have seen here, are framed by advocacy agendas (for an extensive review on ‘voice’ and women asylum seekers see ICAR, 2007).

The text is oriented against a presupposed ‘negative image’ of asylum seekers in the public consciousness (line 11-13). Whereas previously, this presupposed hostility has been met with assertions of passivity (Van Dijk, 2000), or trauma (Judge, 2010 etc.), here we see an emphasis on community “*collaborate on things like fundraising together*” (line 9); education “*build expertise*” (line 4); networking “*bring the wider community together*” (line 14) and access to resources “*support services, or lack of them*” (line 7-8). That isn’t to say that these women have not suffered, or to deny the importance of testimony, indeed the possibility that these are

women may have been subjected to “*rape, honour killing, domestic violence*” (line 4) is made relevant here. However, the activities that predicate the category (women) asylum seekers here are community building and self-empowerment; through testimony, campaigning and friendship.

The importance of togetherness is foregrounded, again bearing a stark contrast to the isolated asylum seeker voices we have seen thus far. The primacy of this ‘togetherness’ is indicated in the name of the group and in the work that they describe, “*collaborate on things like fundraising together which as individuals on our own we wouldn’t have the time, energy, resources or contacts to do*” (line 9). Here, the loneliness and helplessness that featured in the other materials I have looked at, is situated as a problem to be overcome rather than as a “*dilemma*”, “*without hope*” (Extract Ten). This lack of energy and resources, this ‘invisibility’ (line 15), the abuses women face (line 4) and the threat of deportation (line 2) are voiced by those who suffer it; the difficulties of their situations and the horrific persecutions they have faced are not absent, but provide the ground against which their resourcefulness and “friendship” is formed.

ASWU, and the women that make up its membership, both existing and potential, are politically engaged. Bloch, Galvin, & Harrell-Bond, (2000) highlight the specific gendered forms of persecution and challenges facing asylum seeking women in the UK, including dependence on their husbands and isolation. Here “*Rape, honour killing, domestic violence*” (line 4) are situated as women’s issues and human rights issues which they take it into their hands to ‘campaign’ on. This formulation situates the women as experts by default; they are the people who have experienced the abuses, who are putting forward the challenges, together they “*build expertise*” (line 4). The women are addressing the issues of dependency and isolation head on.

The organisation makes relevant a perceived negative image of ‘asylum

seekers' in the media (line 13); challenging this with a narrative of community, education and capability. The meanings associated with 'asylum-seekers' are re-worked; women asylum seekers are those who face specific problems but who have the skills and resources (both personal and social) to collaborate, form friendships, promote a positive image of themselves and fight for their rights, *despite* the hostile light in which the media places them.

The final extract presented here is also taken from the *Refugee Act Now Mobiles, Money, Mayhem* booklet, here, the identities of 'refugees' are mobilised to challenge the hostility implied in the title. The characteristics generated for incumbents of the category 'asylum seeker', in the title, are "lazy" and "work-shy" (line 1), and again a contrast is set up between this reported hostility and the themes along which the organisation negotiates asylum seeker/refugee identities.

Extract Fourteen: *RAN, June, 2010.*

- 1 "asylum seekers are all lazy, work-shy so-and-so's"
- 2 Whether they are doctors or mechanics, most refugees in the UK are skilled and
- 3 eager to work. Department for Work and Pensions research has found that there
- 4 is in fact a higher proportion of qualifications and skills among asylum seekers
- 5 and refugees than among the UK population. Sadly, they don't always end up
- 6 working in their chosen profession as their qualifications aren't transferable or
- 7 employers are wary of hiring them.
- 8 Once they've got themselves settled into life in the UK, refugees tend to do alright
- 9 for themselves- look at the Mini, fish & chips, Marks and Spencer, all brought to
- 10 you by UK refugees. In hard economic terms, 2001 government figures show
- 11 that the foreign-born population accounted for 10% of UK GDP. That's about five
- 12 times as much as North Sea oil.

Here, aptitude and economic productivity are pitted against inferences of inertia and apathy, "*whether they are doctors or mechanics, most refugees in the UK are skilled and eager to work*" (line 2-3). Again, this is evidenced by an authoritative voice, "*Department for Work and Pensions research has found...*" who introduce the argument that "*asylum seekers and refugees*"

have a “*higher proportion of qualifications and skills*” (line 4) than the “*UK population*” (line 5). The positioning of asylum seekers to the ‘UK population’ is again re-formulated; asylum seekers are not ‘creaming off the benefit system’ at the expense of the ‘poor Brits’ (see Extract One and Three), but are in fact better qualified to work, and making huge contributions proportionally to the UK economy (line 10-11). Similarly asylum seekers/refugees are not ‘playing the system’, in fact, they are unfairly excluded from work, “*employers are wary of hiring them*” (line 7), and yet when they do “*get themselves settled into life in the UK*” (line 8) they are the founders of some of the most successful and symbolically English enterprises, “*the Mini, fish & chips, Marks and Spencers...*” (line 9).

The organisation negotiates for asylum seekers/refugees incumbency of the collection ‘entrepreneurs’; they occupy the most prestigious professions (line 2), are highly qualified and make huge contributions to the UK economy. These achievements are made despite the ‘wariness’ they are met with by employers, the obstacles overcome and the personal calibre required to achieve such feats render the hostility laughable. However, as Pupavac (2008) argues, and as Judge demonstrated in her work on young asylum seeking men, this “*counter stereotype*” of the “*exceptionally talented and thus deserving*” refugee generates a discourse of the “*ideal refugee*” (Judge, 2008, p.8) to which many asylum claimants will fall foul. I will discuss this more in the conclusions to this thesis and in consideration of the narratives analysed in Chapters Four and Five.

3.5 Conclusions

That hostility towards asylum seekers/refugees frames the talk of those who advocate for their rights is clearly demonstrated in the materials analysed here. The organisations make these ‘hostility themes’, and the systemic hostility towards asylum seekers/refugees, relevant; formulating them as ‘outrageous’ and ‘whacky’ and negotiating asylum seeker/refugee identities in terms of biographical contrasts that make the hostility immoral, unwarrantable, or irrelevant to their client. The contrasts are made possible

via 'sympathetic representations' of refugees (Pupavac, 2008) that are organised around themes of restricted choice, agency and a foregrounding of innocence and victim-hood. In other words, the 'hostility themes' are met with socially resourced, 'sympathy themes'.

Chapter Three provides the ground, the partial discursive context, in which asylum advocates and their clients are situated. With reference to the literature, these formulations can be understood as situated expressions of the 'trauma' and 'talent' tropes that Judge (2010) critically highlighted. Using the notion of dialogical network, these tropes were analysed as situated activities in the context of hostility towards asylum seekers/refugees.

This resort to welfare claims based on the bodily suffering of refugees, has been called out for “*casting refugees in the sick role*” which “*questions their moral agency and legitimizes the inversion of their rights into the rights of the external advocate*” (Pupavac, 2008, p.281). However, amidst the polyphony of voices present in the materials that we have seen so far, there are glimmers of alternative participant categories and subject positions that asylum seekers/refugees may occupy in the advocacy discourse. In the next two chapters, I will explore how advocates, in the interviews I conducted with them, manage the hostility and the identities of asylum seekers/refugees. Do these patterns of identity representations map onto the interview setting? Pupavac concludes:

UK refugee advocates are less engaged in demands for freedom of movement and opposition to border controls, and relatively more occupied with refugee welfare and media representations of refugees. (Pupavac, 2008, p.283).

In the next chapter I will explore whether this sentiment stands for the practitioners and volunteers I interviewed.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I will look at how asylum seeker/refugee informants orient their talk to the opposing hostility and sympathy themes.

Are they complicit in this victimisation (or partial victimisation), or do they present themselves as something altogether different? Do their narratives provide the kinds of challenges that might pierce the hegemonic understanding of refugee-hood and refugee legitimacy, both in the mainstream and in advocacy work?

4 The Advocates

4.1 Introduction

Advocacy organisations in their publicity materials orient towards ‘hostility themes’ along which asylum seekers/refugee identities are organised. To this extent, their talk can be understood to be framed in part by the hostility, with consequences for how asylum seekers/refugee identities are managed locally. This analysis is not complete without the inclusion of the voices of the members of these organisations. As I introduce in Chapter One, this thesis is interested in how the distributed sequence hostility-defence (Leudar, 2008) permeates advocacy discourses, and how this framing influences how asylum seeker/refugee identities are negotiated by asylum seeker/refugee advocates, and asylum seekers/refugees themselves. In the following two chapters I will explore how these themes enter into the talk of advocates and asylum seekers/refugees in the interviews I conducted with them.

The publicity materials provide the public face of the organisations and as we saw they are bound by the social context in which they are produced (as I established in Chapter One, this is a context that is characteristically hostile and oriented towards promoting the work of the organisation). However, I am also interested in how these themes are dealt with 'on the ground'. Pragmatically, the denials formulated in the publicity materials were negations of a presupposed hostility towards asylum seekers/refugees. In this chapter I analyse how the hostility permeates the interview setting and what advocates do, in their talk, to counteract hostility. Particularly I explore the extent to which advocates follow the positions formulated in the publicity materials chapter and verse. Are they constrained by these frames or are their narratives creative and flexible? I am interested in how the talk of advocates compares to the narratives presented in the publicity materials. The staff, volunteers and students who make up these organisations have to bring the policies and positions outlined by the organisations into practice, how do they manage this?

I begin by demonstrating how the hostility is made relevant in these

narratives, particularly how the British state, public and media are formulated as the source of this hostility and how personal denials are used to extend the defences formulated by the organisations in their publicity materials. In section 4.3, I will present six extracts that deal with the victimhood of migrants/asylum-seekers/refugees; here advocates foreground the inadequacy of the establishment and the ordinariness of 'asylum seekers/refugees'. In Section 4.4, I introduce five extracts in which advocates manage the identities of asylum seekers/refugees as something altogether different. In these materials, advocates acknowledge some of the problematic tropes of refugee representation within advocacy discourses, orienting their talk and identity work against these limiting (and at times brutalising) frames.

4.2 Denying Hostility

Leudar et al. (2008) noted that hostility themes were sometimes general expressions, and at other times contingent on local activities. In Chapter Three the thematic argument that asylum seekers/refugees are 'bogus' or 'economic migrants', was repeatedly made relevant across the various texts. This may be in part contingent on the economic crisis and discourses of job shortages and competition that characterised British media (and continue to do so) at the time the data was collected. However, these defences were also constructed in orientation to themes that were in part contingent on the situated activities of the organisations. The priest foregrounded loss of faith as a consequence of systemic hostility from the Home Office, whereas the legal aid unit managed the identity of their client, Josephine, along the activity-occasioned pair (Watson, 2009) 'young victim/specialist helpers'. In the same way that expression of hostility are at times creative (Leudar et al., 2008), defences to the hostility are creative too. Members are not passive recipients of 'discourses'; they select and adapt thematically organised arguments about asylum seekers/refugees to do things in the present; whether that's making an ethical argument or promoting one's own work.

In this chapter I will demonstrate that advocates formulate the hostility as stemming from the media, government or public. These formulations are stated as personal denials of the grounds of the hostility. In constructing

these arguments as personal denials the informants begin to (at times tentatively) differentiate their positions from those provided by the organisations in the publicity materials. The personal denials at times result in more radical positions than those offered by the organisation as a whole. For example, hostility is situated as 'racist' and the hostiles are named, in contrast to the silent agents of the 'big fat fibs' in Chapter Two (Extract one, for example).

a. Hostility as State/Media Propaganda

One strategy informants used to counter hostility towards asylum seekers/refugees was to re-contextualise the hostility as government or media propaganda. Some of the materials in Chapter Three used this strategy. For example, the Against Border Controls 'Mayday' call-out, which called out anti-immigration arguments as party political scape-goating (Chapter Three, Extract Five). Additionally, ILAM accused the climate (in which people seek asylum) of being hostile and xenophobic. The organisations formulated their identities relationally; as allies with or advocates for asylum seekers/refugees, against this hostility. In the material that follows advocates construct fairly radical denials of the hostility; anti-immigrant sentiment is situated as the product of government and media coercion, stoking racist elements that exist in society.

The following extract is taken from a talk given by an asylum seeker rights theorist and activist at the Against Border Controls national gathering in May 2011. I wasn't able to attend the gathering so this extract of the talk is taken from an audio-recording of the day. The speaker's talk focuses primarily on language use and how the idea of the migrant is constructed in the public sphere; making it particularly relevant to the research questions at hand and demonstrating the relevancy of questions of representation to advocates on the ground. Here, the speaker formulates a denial to something that has been previously said or written. The author of the hostile argument oriented towards in line 1 is left unnamed, yet the argument is organised along the hostility theme that migrants are criminals (as we saw in Extract

Three, Chapter Three). The speaker manages a discursive re-contextualisation of the categories 'illegal immigrants' and 'criminals', removing the category 'illegal immigrants' from the collection 'criminals' (as in Leudar and Nekvapil, 2004) and going one step further by challenging the predicates a priori generated by the membership category device 'criminals'. She challenges not only the attribution of criminality to the category 'illegal immigrant', but also the very meaning of criminality. Incumbents of this collection are not “*morally weird or bad people*” (line 2) rather, they are victims of state “*force and coercion*” (line 5). In this sense she removes the negativity from the collection 'criminals' and in doing so from the category 'illegal immigrants'.

Extract One: *Bridget, May, 201.*

- 1 B: When we say illegal immigrants are not criminals what do we mean? We mean
- 2 illegal immigrants are not morally weird or bad people they're just human beings.
- 3 The same goes for criminals they're also- these are categories that are produced
- 4 by the state and are produced by the state and that enable states to exercise control
- 5 over people to exercise force and coercion over them.

Bridget, as a contributor to the dialogical network, presupposes the position that illegal immigrants *are* criminals and in turn that there exists a resistance to this, when she asks: “*When we say illegal immigrants are not criminals what do we mean?*” (line 1). Here she acknowledges that a counter-argument to the 'criminal' hostility themes exists in the network, and that it is shared by other members. This demonstrates that her position is shared. Bridget goes on to 'fill out' her counter argument, in doing so she foregrounds the category 'human being' over 'illegal immigrant' (line 2) and 'people' over 'criminal' (line 2-4).

The hostility is rejected on the grounds that it is a product of state manipulation. The categories 'illegal immigrant' and 'criminal' are “*produced by the state and that enable states to exercise control*” (line 4). They are not grounded in any real public concern, or any experience of criminality and malignancy; they are produced independently of immigrant experiences and actions. Of course, the hostility suggests that criminality is

a condition of being an 'illegal immigrant' (line 1) or an asylum seeker/refugee (as we saw in Extract Three, Chapter Three). That Bridget's is a shared position is, as I have said, indexed in the 'we' in line 1 and it also mirrors the formulation made by *Against Immigration Controls* in Chapter Three (Extract three) and in the next extract here (Extract two). Migrants (the collection is broader here) are victims of state coercion.

In negotiating 'illegal immigrants' and 'criminals' as 'human beings' who are subject to state 'force and coercion', the speaker manages the 'state' as a perpetrator of unjust and libellous acts. Bridget subsumes the issue of immigration and criminality into a new theme; social class and power. The 'state' are accused of manipulating these social categories (and consequently their incumbents); questioning their normality and morality in order to control and coerce. As we saw in Chapter Three some work is done to conflate the experiences of 'immigrants' (which as we have seen is often used to include asylum seekers/refugees) with other social groups *against* the authorities, the media and those in power.

By mapping 'immigrants' onto the collection 'human beings' and 'people', the speaker asserts the basic and shared humanity of the incumbents. This re-contextualisation foregrounds a new set of values and expectations of how these people should be treated; as fellow human beings and not as morally weird or bad people. As we saw in Chapter Three by managing people as incumbents of the category 'ordinary person' advocates are able to draw on the humanity of the reader and make a case for the recognition of their clients human rights. It also allows the person to be mapped onto the category 'genuine victim'. Here, the victimisation of these 'persons' is not laboured, but we are to understand them as the unwarranted subjects of state oppression. The activity-occasioned pairing (Watson, 2009) that has been documented as characteristic of the mainstream discourse on asylum seeking (Van Dijk 2000) is again reversed: the state is the perpetrator of malignant acts and 'immigrants' are ordinary persons who, like others, (in this case criminals) are subject to this coercion.

In the following extract Hayley, a supporter and ally of the *Against*

Immigration Controls network, and committee member of ILAM, formulates hostility towards immigrants as a form of racist scape-goating. The extract is taken from the end of the narrative interview that I conducted with Hayley. She begins to close the interview in line 1 with, “*I guess I'm coming to the end...*” and then makes an addition which is formulated as something important to her position on the matter, “*there is something I want to say which is something I've always argued very strongly*” (line 2). It is here that she subsumes the issue of 'immigration' as a race issue, “*part of the wider anti-racist struggle*” (line 4-5). Interestingly, this is the first time racism has been explicitly attached to hostility towards migrants or asylum seekers/refugees in the materials; although it is implied in many of the extracts we have seen (and will see). This works to put migrants into a collection with other categories of non-migrants, based on race. Again, it is not just 'immigrants' who are subject to hostility and scape-goating, but other marginalised members of the community. This works to shift the focus away from a unique condition of migrants to blanket oppression and marginalisation by the establishment/media.

Extract Two: *Hayley, June, 2010.*

1 H: I guess I'm coming to the end but there is something I want to say which is
 2 something I've always argued very strongly, well there's two things, first of all I
 4 think struggling against immigration controls and deportations is part of the wider
 5 anti-racist struggle I think we only have to look at the way that different sectors of
 6 the community get scape-goated in times of economic recession for that to be
 7 perfectly obvious and one of the campaigns that I have maintained my
 8 involvement in is xxxx Against Racism.

Whereas the 'state' were called out as the perpetrators of slander towards immigrants in the previous extract, here, the racist hostiles remain unspecified. Relationally, immigrants are those who are (along with other community members), “*scape-goated in times of economic recession*” (line 6). “*Immigration controls and deportations*” (and the agents of this, say the Home Office or security firms, line 4) are situated as the focus of anti-racist

struggle (and thus racist by implication). These agents are hearable as the perpetrators of the scape-goating that is also situated as racist. In summary, by situating immigration controls as racist the activity-occasioned pair (Leudar and Nekvapil, 2000) the 'racists' and the 'victims' of racism, the 'controllers' and the 'controlled', is achieved.

As Leudar and Nekvapil (2000) observed, one means of category change is to relocate the category into another, possibly ad hoc, collection. Here, people subjected to immigration controls are subsumed into the collection 'oppressed, scape-goated minority', much like in the previous extract. Here, again, the establishment, those who enforce immigration controls, are the perpetrators of (in this case racist) oppression of marginalised groups, to which the category 'immigrant' belongs. The hostility is formulated as stemming from those who control and scapegoat migrants; it is political and contingent on social conditions, in this case the economic crisis. The hostility does not stem from the immoral or bad nature of immigrants. Although the hostiles are unnamed, this racism is clearly situated as institutional.

The next extract is taken from an interview I conducted with Sally, a British volunteer with the organisation ASWU. Sally is in her mid-twenties and at the time of the interview had been a volunteer with the group for 2 years. Here, Sally is re-counting her experience of immigration, tracing it back to when she first started University (line 1) and the election campaigns that were running at the time. She situates her personal experience of immigration as tied up with the “stark” election campaign launched by the Conservative party in the early 2000’s.

Extract Three: *Sally, May, 2010.*

- 1 S: When I came to University (..) and um:: it became a really big thing I think um::
- 2 and probably about five or six years ago with um:: particular, um:: the labour
- 3 party making particular decision about the caps or the kind of language that
- 4 politicians were using changed um:: actually probably the Conservative party
- 5 election they had there were boards up, I think it was um:: early 2000’s um that

6 were really stark and were just saying we need to talk about immigration and they
7 tried to put immigration front and centre as an electoral issue

8 L: mm::

9 S: and even though it seemed that people didn't really want to (...) want to engage
10 with that as their main concern, you know people were more interested in the
11 economy and jobs and all this kind of things in a more general sense it, it did
12 seem to have a knock on effect that that the parting government thought 'oh well
13 be probably better- must be seen to be dealing with this or addressing this', so
14 started being very hard-line um:: and when and when um:: I guess activist in
15 Manchester in the Against Immigration Controls group were um:: becoming active
16 it was getting more coverage in a newspaper- er:: in a magazine that I worked for-
17 did writing for um:: called Red Pepper.

Although immigration is constructed here as “*a really big thing*” (line 1) and as something “*we need to talk about*” (line 6). Sally formulates this as constructed rather than a natural phenomenon, “*the kind of language the politicians were using changed*” (line 3-4), “*they tried to put immigration front and centre*” (line 6-7), whereby the government self-consciously manipulated the issue, “*must be seen to be dealing with this*” (line 13). In this sense Sally is not addressing a specific hostility theme, but providing a lay analysis of how the issue of migration is problematised, and how this problematisation is reproduced and maintained. This does not negate the notion of hostility theme, rather it puts it in its place; not all narrative on asylum seeking are constructed in orientation to specific hostility themes. Rather, Sally orients her talk to the seemingly unfounded importance of immigration as an issue (line 9-11), formulating this as an issue that was pushed forward by the Conservative party who then took a “*hard-line*” (line 14) approach to “*dealing with*” (line 13) immigration.

In this sense, anonymity towards migrants is the product of party political propaganda. It is the government who construct immigration as a “*a really big thing*” (line 1), and who aim to please the electorate by tackling this issue. The use of direct reported speech here works to undermine the sincerity with which this issue was singled out; the “*oh well*” in lines 9-10 formulates the decision as blasé, and, not only that, but geared solely

towards *being seen* to be competing with the other parties. The public, however, are constructed as not wanting to engage with immigration as a topic and as being “*more interested in the economy and jobs*” (line 10-11). Interestingly the ‘other things’ that she formulates as ‘main concerns’ (line 10) are issues that are commonly rhetorically attributed to immigration; for example job shortages, and economic scarcity as the result of competition from foreign workers. Although the foregrounding of immigration by the Conservative party is formulated as an arbitrary decision, tied to the parties self-image rather than as stemming from any real concern from the electorate, it must also be assumed that the political parties believed this is an issue that would win them votes if they promised to introduce harder legalisation. Sally constructs a discrepancy between these real concerns and the issue of immigration which, if it *is* a public concern, is being stoked by the government.

This formulation, of the government, or the hostiles more generally, as being ‘out of touch’ with the public/local communities is a strategy recognisable from the materials we have seen so far. It works to render the hostility (which in this case stems from government) as irrational and outrageous, and the organisation or advocate as ‘in touch’ with the real concerns of ordinary people. The idea in this extract that the issue of immigration needs to be ‘hard-lined’ comes solely from the government; the hostility is formulated as contingent on party-political goals. Sally acknowledges that the hostility exists, but denies that it is a focal concern for ordinary people; she subsumes the issue as inherently (party) political and manipulated.

Again in the next extract, taken from my interview with Rob, a British student and member of the *Against Immigration Controls* group, the hostility is formulated as existing in society and as stoked by the establishment, in this case the “*right wing press*” (line 1). The newspapers then use and cultivate this racism.

Extract Four: *Rob, May, 2010*

1 R: I mean all the kind of, all the mad sort of racist myths that circulate erm:: sort of

2 aided and abetted by the right wing press about- about often about labour and
 3 work erm:: and even about sort of culture and erm:: (pause) sort of and friendships
 4 and so on it seems sort of a lot of them will have presupposed like an
 5 understanding of erm::, this is a very complicated sentence

6 L: no it's alright

7 R: of erm:: race politics to the point where I think people blame everyday
 8 experiences of like unhappiness on, on people coming and taking jobs away from
 9 them, people coming and substituting themselves for like, them possibly, so sort of
 10 you see it on public transport you see bus drivers sort of being kind of abused by
 11 people who think they don't speak adequate English, I study in the University and
 12 you see it kind of in other people who teach erm:: sometimes their uh::
 13 understandings of what er: students from outside the UK are doing here seems to,
 14 they seem to assume that these are kind of displacing the home population so
 15 there's this kind of it seems like a deep insecurity that there's, there's erm:: that
 16 resources are being taken and and I guess that's probably erm:: that's probably
 17 something that's generic and that's probably been happening for a long time
 18 wherever there's been immigration and so on. But it's become I guess I've become
 19 more aware of it and more concerned by it because it's something that's so clearly,
 20 well so clearly kind of wrong and but at the same time so kind of popular as a as
 21 something to talk about

Whereas Sally denied the hostility on the grounds that it was merely an emergent and possibly transient political tactic, Rob situates the issue historically; suggesting that the hostility towards migrants has “*probably been happening for a long time wherever there's been immigration*” (line 17). Immigration is formulated as a (misguided) concern for the public, “*so clearly wrong and but at the same time so kind of popular as something to talk about*” (line 19-21). Rob provides a two-fold explanation of hostility: it is co-produced, by the public (as we see in lines 5 onwards) and by the reactionary media.

Rob goes on to present examples of hostility from his personal, localised experience and produces accounts of this hostility. In this sense Rob analyses practical accounts of hostility towards migrants in order to present the hostility as 'mad' (line 1) and 'wrong' (line 20). He orients to hostility

and denies it by psychologising it, “*it seems like a deep insecurity*” (line 15) and attributing it to social conditions, “*resources are being taken away*” (line 16) and political manipulation by the media. The combination of these factors instils in the people the false impression that migrants are “*kind of displacing the home population*” (line 14). The hostility then is not warranted. The examples Rob provides in lines 5-8: the bus driver who can't speak English, the student who is taking the place of a British student, are socially prevalent pathologies. By formulating these positions as such he undermines their credibility.

Again the category ‘migrants’ is subsumed into a new collection ‘ordinary people’; they are bus drivers and students. In this sense rights, duties and qualities are re-ascribed to people that were stripped from them under the description ‘migrants’. As we saw in Chapter Three the foregrounding of one's ordinariness, or the normality/mundanity of a person's experience, works to make morally abhorrent the hostility that they encounter.

The hostility here is denied on the grounds that it is morally unaccountable and logically questionable; it is essentially inexpedient as a moral/political belief. Rob carefully distances himself from the hostility, using language such as ‘it probably’, ‘it seems’, ‘I guess’. He positions himself as a kind of concerned analyst of this public opinion which is alien to him. The statement in the last line “*it's something that's so clearly, well so clearly kind of wrong*” (line 19-20) gives Rob the moral high ground and assumes that his position is shared, by others, and by myself, the interviewer. Importantly Rob puts forward a personal argument; he differentiates himself from the hostiles and aligns himself with the position of the organisation but in personal terms. He does not set himself up as a member of an organisation, but as individual, and in doing so credits his position (which is shared by the organisation) with a more general validity.

b. Personal Denials

So, as was the case for the materials analysed in Chapter Three, advocates formulate hostility as stemming from the media, government or the public.

At times this is implied, at times this position is made explicit (more so in the interviews than in the publicity materials, for example the term 'racist' does not exist anywhere in the publicity materials). By formulating their denials in personal terms ('I think'), advocates are able to differentiate their positions from those of the organisation as a whole (in Section 4.4c I will demonstrate how advocates explicitly orient their talk against some of the themes that characterised the publicity materials). With what consequence for how the hostility is managed and denied? In the following extract Lee, a volunteer with ILAM, argues (minimally, as we will see) that 'economic migrants' should qualify for additional support. ILAM provide legal aid for those with *asylum* and *immigration* matters so in this sense his position is in line with that of the organisation. However, in their publicity materials, ILAM only promotes the stories of 'asylum seekers'. Here, Lee, a social work student on placement with the organisation, tackles this problematic head on.

Extract Five: *Lee, March, 2010*

- 1 L: you almost find when I tell people personally what i'm doing it's er:: it's a very
- 2 divisive subject

- 3 La: right OK

- 4 L: sometimes

- 5 La: immigration?

- 6 L : Yeah immigration and particularly asylum

- 7 La: right

- 8 L: because the word asylum somehow has just been like so tagged on with like
- 9 bogus and or alien or all these different things have kind of like been attached to it

- 10 La: mm::

- 11 L: uh:: like in some aspects of the media and stuff the it really is kind of like lost

12 that they are actually seeking protection I think that's what is very much forgotten.
 13 The assumption is that all asylum seekers are economic migrants so:: personally,
 14 politically, it doesn't bother me if they are an economic migrant

15 La: right

16 L: I don't have that issue, which helps working somewhere like this I mean that I
 17 don't really, in terms of people finding additional support the solicitors do their 18
 bit I don't care if someone's an economic migrant if I can help, if they've got a
 19 genuine welfare issue

20 La: right yeah

In lines 8-9 Lee orients his talk to the hostile position that all asylum seekers are “bogus” or “alien”, instead he asserts the activity of “seeking protection” as a predicate of the category. In this senses, he underscores what is commonly understood to be an accepted marker of refugee legitimacy. However, he then makes relevant the media position that “*all asylum seekers are economic migrants*” (line 13) and denies this not on the grounds that it is false, but that being an economic migrant is an adequate qualifier of receiving help. Lee makes a minimal attempt at stripping the negative connotation associated with the category 'economic migrant', for him “*personally, politically, it doesn't bother me if they are an economic migrant*” (line 13-14).

This position can be taken, at face value, as more radical than the positions put forward by ILAM in their publicity materials. In both of the case studies they present the clients are asylum claimants who have been victims of civil war (for an example see Josephine, Extract Eight, Chapter Three). However, what qualifies a person for Lee's help is “*having a genuine welfare issue*” (lien 19). In one sense, this pushes the boundaries of the 'economic migrant' category, they are also people who have welfare issues qualifying them for help by the UK legal system (negating the grounds of the 'bogus' hostility theme), and in another it maintains 'welfare issues' as a condition for being received and supported as an immigrant in the UK.

It is in this sense that Lee's attempt at stripping the 'economic migrant' category of its negativity is minimal; he includes the category in the collection of those who have 'genuine welfare issues' but also possibly excludes many incumbents of this category who do not (or are generally not recognised as having) 'welfare' issues. In this sense he aligns himself with the trauma trope (Judge, 2010) that has been documented as characterising advocacy discourses and also with ILAM who extend their work to economic migrants (their remit covers both asylum and immigration issues) but continually foreground 'suffering' and 'welfare issues' as a condition for receiving help (see Extracts Four and Eight from Chapter Three for an example of their publicity).

The following extract is taken from a narrative interview I conducted with Mo, an member of the *Against Immigration Controls* group. Again, Mo denies the hostility in personal terms. Providing a personal account from his experience of immigration he argues that although the people he comes across may be lying (or in some cases clearly were) this does not bother him.

Extract Six: *Mo, June, 2010*

- 1 M: she was talking about erm:: if I have problems, like if I think someone's lying
- 2 or whatever
- 3 L: mm::
- 4 M: and I said well to be honest I'll extend to people the benefit of the doubt, and
- 5 actually I don't think whether they're telling you the truth is all that relevant, you
- 6 know the point is, what if it was the truth?
- 7 L: right ok::
- 8 M: and I'll kind of respond to that and, I don't know, even if they are lying, I
- 9 probably don't have a problem with them wanting to be here (pause) I don't know.
- 10 She's had different experiences to what I have though, she's been working in Syria
- 11 and you get all of these Iraqi refugees coming in, some of them with bag loads of
- 12 money and god knows what they've done

Here, Mo is talking about a conversation he had with his friend who works for the European Union. In line 4 Mo orients his talk towards the hostility theme that asylum seekers/refugees are liars, made relevant by the recounted voice of his friend in line 1. He challenges the 'culture of disbelief' that is expressed through his friend's query, stating that he'd, "*extend to people the benefit of the doubt*" (line 4). He plays down the significance of lying "*I don't think whether they're telling the truth is all that relevant*" (line 3-4) and grounds this in the assertion that it would not be worth the risk should the person be telling the truth (line 5-6). In this sense, he denies the established order by which the truthfulness of an asylum claimant's story is to be tested before anything else. In line 8, however, Mo to some extent accepts the grounds of the hostility, some people may be lying, a fact that he indexes with his account of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in line 7-8 (accepting that they may be treated with reasonable suspicion). He argues, "*even if they are lying, I probably don't have a problem with them wanting to be here*" (line 6), so although he accepts that some people may lie, he negates the negativity attributed to lying; hence denying the hostility.

Mo's denial of the hostility goes one step further than the arguments we saw in the publicity materials; he does not refute the grounds that it is based on, rather he refutes the negativity ascribed to the activity of lying. The legitimacy of one's claim to be in the UK is, then, not contingent on their 'telling the truth' (presumably about some persecution they have suffered) but on some other marker.

In the following extract, taken from the same interview with Mo, he talks about a 'guy' he saw sleeping rough near a factory in the Northern Quarter in Manchester City Centre.

Extract Seven: *Mo, June, 2010*

- 1 M: and it was only years later that I suddenly realised that what had definitely
- 2 happened is that this guy was coming in, he was seeking asylum
- 3 L: mm:: hmm::

- 4 M: he didn't need asylum in the sense that he needed to be protected physically but
5 he just wanted to work here
- 6 L: mm:: hmm::
- 7 M: no I think he has got granted it now, yeah I think
- 8 L: OK
- 9 M: or something but I don't know if he was on the run then or didn't have any
10 other place to stay or what? But even then it was obvious that, you know, if you
11 were looking at it a certain way, in a legalistic way, this guy is lying
- 12 L: yeah
- 13 M: but it didn't bother me
- 14 L: yeah
- 15 M: I don't know
- 16 L: why didn't it bother you?
- 17 M: sorry?
- 18 L: why didn't it bother you?
- 19 M: well he'd come here to work, I don't know, I don't know any:: getting a job in
20 Pakistan is ridiculous
- 21 L: right

Again here, Mo denies the significance and negativity attributed to lying. Importantly he asserts coming to work and the difficulties of getting a job in Pakistan as marker of the 'guy's' legitimacy. Similarly to Lee then, Mo relocates the category 'bogus asylum seeker' (Extract Seven) and 'economic migrant' (Extract Eight) into the collection 'those who have valid grounds to be in the UK'.

Mo is aligned with the campaigning organisation *Against Immigration Controls* who, as we saw in Chapter Three, maintain a comparatively more open definition of the category of people to whom harsh immigration controls are unfair (i.e. not just asylum seekers). In this sense Mo's position, although going against the grain of the general tendencies we saw in the publicity materials in Chapter Three, and in the literature (who assert genuine victim-hood and welfare issues as a marker of legitimacy), is in alignment with the organisation and the work that they carry out (campaigning and solidarity work with all migrants). However, in their publicity materials *Against Immigration Controls* foregrounds an argument for freedom of movement as a right for all and situates immigration controls as coercive and a mechanism for control (see Extract Five, Chapter Three). Broadening the issue to this extent it does not challenge the basis of the 'genuine vs. bogus' dichotomy. Mo then takes a radical position by taking to task the routinely upheld position that migrants who lie are morally deplorable (a position that is reinforced by advocates insistence that their clients do not lie and are therefore worthy of our support). Lying, here, is valid. It would be difficult to uphold this position to an unsympathetic audience (Mo knows that I am an ally of the organisation), the fact that advocacy organisations invest so much into proving the credibility of their clients and asylum seekers/refugees in general speaks to this.

Advocate informants formulate the British state, public and media as the source of hostility. Personal denials are used to extend the defences formulated by the organisations in their publicity materials. However, as we have seen, these re-contextualisations are not a straightforward matter for advocates and at times they resort to representing asylum seekers/refugees along more established markers of refugee legitimacy.

4.3 Doing Being Victim?

Advocates, in their interviews, demonstrate a degree of flexibility and creativity in denying the hostility, which was at times general (Sally) and at times specific (Mo). They formulated the hostility as racist and coercive, attributing these characteristics to the state, the media or the public.

Expressing these denials in personal terms allowed the informants to go beyond the rhetorical boundaries imposed by the contexts in which the publicity materials are situated (and which they work to co-produce).

The membership categories: migrants, economic migrants, criminals, asylum seekers and bogus asylum seekers, were discursively re-contextualised as belonging to the collection of those who should be granted the right to stay in the UK. In this section, I will demonstrate how advocates manage the identities of asylum seekers/refugees relationally to the government/media/public. I will argue that the victim-hood of asylum seekers/refugees is foregrounded primarily through activity occasioned descriptions of asylum seekers/refugees as subject to unjust bureaucracy/public attitudes, rather than via detailed accounts of suffering (as demonstrated in the publicity materials in Chapter Three). Indeed, advocates employ a number of strategies to deny the hostility and to promote the worthiness of their clients, as we will see in Section 4.4.

a. Victims of Bureaucracy

As I demonstrated at the start of this chapter, advocates, in their interview talk, have a degree of flexibility with which to differentiate themselves from, or extend the arguments made by, the organisations (to which they are members) in their publicity materials. In section 4.2 of this chapter I demonstrated that a common means of denying the hostility is to situate it as stemming from government and media propaganda. In the materials that follow, informants continue to reverse the hostile notion that asylum seekers/refugees are the perpetrators of criminal or malignant activity (see Extract One) instead formulating the government/media/public as the perpetrators of oppressive and racist actions. Unlike the publicity materials asylum seekers/refugees are not presented as somehow malfunctioning (i.e. with mental health problems, or without hope or dignity) rather the inadequacies of the asylum system are foregrounded.

The following extract is taken from a narrative interview with Jane, a group co-ordinator at *Refugee Act Now*. Again, as in all of the narrative interviews,

I begin by asking the interviewee to talk about their experience of immigration, focusing on advocacy. Jane formulates her narrative here as a challenge “*to not feel compassionate towards people*” (line 4-5) qualifying this by the fact that “*the system's so shit and so bloody unfair*” (line 5). The certainty with which she formulates this challenge dictates the accepted moral response, to feel compassion, to not do so would be formulated as dis-preferred.

Extract Eight: *Jane, May, 2010*

- 1 J: I challenge anyone to do this- to work in this sector and not- you know you
- 2 might come into this work with perceptions of people “why’s this person here and
- 3 surely they’d have been better off staying in their own country and doing this and
- 4 doing that you know and but- I challenge anyone to not feel compassionate
- 5 towards people because the system’s so shit and so bloody unfair
- 6 L: right ok yeah::
- 7 J: there’s no, it’s really hard for people to get their heads around volunteers,
- 8 students, staff whoever you know when someone comes along and there’s actually
- 9 nothing you can do for them it doesn’t make any sense and we live in a bloody,
- 10 you know, it’s supposed to be democratic, it’s supposed to be, you know,
- 11 progressive country when people are allowed to be treated like that it doesn’t make
- 12 any sense
- 13 L: right yeah::

Using reported speech she distances herself from the reported cynical and xenophobic sentiment “*why's this person here surely they'd have been better off staying in their own country*” (line 2-3), contrasting her compassion, which has come about through experience, to the brutality of our society. Her position, grounded in her actual experience of this group of people, is set against the unfounded scepticism of the public and the establishment. Jane sets herself up as a struggling ally (along with the other volunteers, students and staff, line 7-9) to the 'people' she works for, against a hostile public and an unjust and inadequate asylum system, “*it's supposed to be democratic, it's supposed to be, you know progressive country*” (line 10).

It is not the individual identities of asylum seekers/refugees that are in question here (as was common in the denials in chapter three) but the

switching of the activity occasioned pair 'victim-perpetrator'. Here the public are hostile and the system is 'shit' and 'unfair'; 'asylum seekers/refugees' are the implied victims of this brutality. The nature of the problematic action then is changed, and the incumbents are switched between the poles of the category pair. The public and the establishment are the source of negativity, rather than asylum seekers/refugees, who, as we have seen, the hostiles would have it are mollycoddled by the state (see Extract One, Chapter Three) and 'creaming off benefits' (see Extract Two, Chapter Three).

Jane does not challenge the hostility that 'asylum seekers/refugees' should stay "*in their own country*" (line 3), rather she stresses the injustice they receive on arriving and the challenge of addressing their needs, "*you know when someone comes along and there's actually nothing you can do for them it doesn't make any sense*" (line 8-9). Similarly to Mo, she does not challenge the hostility rather she does the activity of coming to the UK as a grounds for hostility (as Czechs did not deny that Roma are petty criminals, rather they denied this as a grounds for their exclusion, Leudar and Nekvapil, 2001). People deserve to be treated with compassion because the system is unfair.

Asylum seekers/refugees are the victims of an unjust asylum system and public cynicism; they are treated unfairly and undemocratically and rendered un-helpable, "*there's actually nothing you can do for them*" (line 8-9). But it is not their identities as victims that are foregrounded, rather it is their relational victim-hood to the outright ignorance of the public and reactionary nature of the asylum system.

The victim-hood of asylum seekers/refugees is not stressed but implied. The crux of the argument is an outright challenge to the hostiles. This goes beyond the organisations framing of the issues in their publicity materials, where the hostiles were unspecified and asylum seekers/refugees were those 'without dignity and hope' (Extract Ten, Chapter Three).

In the following extract we hear the voice of Helen, a British volunteer with

the groups ASWU and AIC. In line 1 I focus Helen on a previous section of talk where she had attributed her interest in immigration to her barrister friend. Following the Narrative Interview format, as outlined by Wengraff (2001), I used questions in the second half of the interview that drew on formulations made by the interviewee in the first half. Here, in line 1, I ask Helen to expand on the question of why she became involved in immigration matters, using the same formulation that she made (attributing it to her barrister friend) and asking her to expand on this point.

Extract Nine: *Helen, July, 2010*

- 1 L: So you talked about your barrister friend, and that was maybe, but maybe not
- 2 one of your first exposures to immigration things that really motivated you to get
- 3 involved in that. So what was it about that, or what was the motivation to start like
- 4 dedicating a significant amount of your time to this area?
- 5 H: I think it was just becoming aware of the injustices that were just daily, the
- 6 injustices that are being metered out to people who come here supposedly to get
- 7 protection and it was obvious from what they were telling me that they were being
- 8 treated really unfairly
- 9 L: ok
- 10 H: I just started to get a real sense of what was meant by all these different terms
- 11 like asylum seeker, refugee. I became aware that um: well I probably already
- 12 knew that there was there's a strong anti-immigration feel in this country
- 13 politically but I started to see it from the other side
- 14 L: ok yeah

Again the hostility, which is formulated as “*daily*” “*injustices that are being metered out to people who come here supposedly to get protection*” (line 5-6), is situated as general and persistent. It is constructed in line 12-13 as a default characteristic of the British public and political system, “*there's a strong anti-immigration feel in this country politically*”. Similarly to Jane, Helen contrasts her compassion, which is again grounded in her experience, “*it was obvious from what they were telling me that they were being treated really unfairly*” (line 7-8) to the ignorance that she has experienced and that continues on in society generally. Perhaps implicitly orienting her talk against the ignorance that exists in society (see Lynn and Lea, 2003) around the correct categorisation of those who are seeking asylum or have had their claim accepted, “*I just started to get a real sense of what was meant by all*

these different terms like asylum seeker, refugee” (line 10-11).

Asylum seekers/refugees are subject to daily injustices, unfair treatment and xenophobia; predicates which map 'them' to the collection 'victims of hostility'. They are people who came here “*supposedly to get protection*” (line 6-7); they need protecting and yet they are subject to hostility again from the public and the system. A moral discrepancy is constructed between how those who seek protection should be treated, and the daily injustices they are facing. Again the activity occasioned pair 'perpetrator/victim' is reversed; the British people and the British system are hostile and 'asylum seekers/refugees' are the victims of this hostility. As in the previous extract, it is not the victim identity of 'asylum seekers/refugees' that is foregrounded but Britain's pervasive hostility and systemic injustices.

Interestingly most advocates attribute their reason for working with asylum seekers/refugees to the overwhelming injustices they have seen 'metered out' to people (see also Extract Two, Three, Four and Seven). These injustices, this hostility towards asylum seekers/refugees, is pertinent to all of the informant's narratives.

In the next extract, Rick, a solicitor at ILAM, formulates the British asylum system as “*such as false system*” (line 2) that knowingly sends people to their death through lack of adequate care and foresight, “*essentially the Home Office the case owners when they make a decision on those article three cases...they know that they are sending somebody back to their country to die*” (line 6-10).

Extract Ten: *Rick, March, 2010*

- 1 R: so it's frustrating because even when you-you get the extensions, it's such a
- 2 false system uh and I was thinking on the tram today because uh in relation to
- 3 HIV cases
- 4 L: right
- 5 R: uh medical cases under article three that it's very difficult to win that case uh
- 6 on the medical grounds and essentially the Home Office, the case owners when
- 7 they make a decision on those article three cases know that, because we've got
- 8 medical reports, say that when they return them back to their country of origin

- 9 whether that's Nigeria, whether that's Kenya uh (..) they know that they are
 10 sending somebody back to their country to die within two years
 11 L: mm::hmm:
 12 R: because they although medical provisions, HIV treatments and combinations
 13 are available in those countries the stigma attached with HIV means that it's
 14 difficult for you to get a job which means it's difficult for you to afford the
 15 medication which means within two years, or less, you will- you'll (.) be dead and
 16 it will be an awful death and it frustrates me that as a legal representative I have
 17 very little power to change that all I can do is do my best, put forward my legal
 18 representation but I know that the Home Office case owner will make a negative
 19 decision and I know that uh: a lot of the time people are going to be sent back to
 20 die when they don't need to die. When th- that's one of the things that really
 21 frustrates me
 22 L: Ok yeah::
 23 R: so the restrictions of the job, one of the restrictions I would say is knowing that
 24 a course of events is going to happen and knowing that there's very little you
 25 can do
 26 L: ok yeah
 27 R: uh to stop that course of events, knowing that all you can really do is just guide
 28 the client through to the inevitable sort of decision and hope that the Home Office
 29 mess up and don't remove the client and then seven years later the client's still in
 30 the country uh and the Home Office set up a new legacy and everybody gets status
 32 L: right OK yeah (laughs)

The Home Office case owners are formulated as routinely failing those who seek protection; they are predictable in their failures, “*all I can do is do my best, put forward my legal representation, but I know that the Home Office case owner is going to make a negative decision*” (line 18-19). Rick, as an advocate who understands the consequences of the Home Office action is helpless, “*knowing that a course of events is going to happen and that there's very little you can do*” (line 24-25), the Home Offices decision is “*inevitable*” (line 28). Rick positions himself as 'in touch' with the needs of his clients and knowledgeable about the social and cultural conditions in Nigeria, Kenya etc. In contrast to this, the case owners make decisions based on their partial, and fatally flawed, knowledge of these countries, “*the stigma attached with HIV means that it's difficult for you to get a job which means it's difficult for you to afford the medication which means within two years, or less, you will- you'll (.) be dead*” (line 12-15). The blasé and bureaucratic predictability by which the Home Office operates bears a stark

contrast to the emotively described fate of those who are “*sent back*” to Nigeria, Kenya etc. to “*an awful death*” (line 16). The extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) is common in humanitarian discourses, (Pupavac, 2008) and in this context is a provocation to the case owners who put people in such desperate situations, and as an assertion of the need of these clients.

The hostility, in this instance, is extreme and the agent behind it is specified; the Home office case owners are formulated as knowingly making negative decisions, based on HIV positive clients medical reports, that will result in their failure to access adequate medical care in their countries of origin. In membership category terms, the case owners are constructed as perpetrators; sending people to their deaths. Refugees are the helpless victims of their actions, dying “*when they don't need to die*” (line 20) and Rick, the advocate, is a helpless witness to the hostile action.

Again the activity-occasioned pair perpetrator/victim is switched and the inadequacies of the establishment, named specifically in this case, are foregrounded. Relationally asylum seekers/refugees are constructed as victims of these actions, more so here than in the previous extracts in this chapter, yet the description of their victim-hood is not laboured.

I will return here to Hayley's interview, supporter of the *Against Immigration Controls* network and committee member of ILAM, which I looked at in the first section of this chapter .

Extract Eleven: *Hayley, June, 2010*

7 H: I do think you sometimes within the wider anti-racist struggle have to make
8 that case quite vehemently that a- particularly when people are talking about the
9 deportation of people who aren't brown or black

10 L: OK

11 H: you know um I think- I mean you know for example some of the constraints on
12 ESOL were introduced 11because of um migration from the accession countries of

13 the EU

14 L: OK

15 H: Meant there was far greater demand on ESOL so- so that's that's one of the
 16 things and and the fact that you know within that people talk about economic
 17 migrants as though they're the contemporary pirates or you know grave-robbers
 18 well actually, I can remember my Mum who you know isn't particularly political
 19 she said "but they come here because we went there" and I said well "yes::"

18 L: right yeah

19 H: and I think you know trying to make that the- that why people need to be
 20 economic migrants is usually because their countries were pillaged by the
 21 countries to which quite often they want to economically migrate

22 L: mm:: hmm::

23 H: I think needs to, I think all that needs to be brought as part of the anti-racist
 24 struggle. So I think although I say I think it's a basic human right I think we need
 25 to locate it as part of the anti-racist struggle

Hayley denies the negativity attached to the category 'economic migrants', distancing herself from the caricatured social hostility which position migrants as "*contemporary pirates*" and "*grave robbers*" (line 17). She warrants this position by documenting it in her Mum, "*I can remember my Mum who you know isn't particularly political she said "but they come here because we went there" and I said well "yes::"*" (line 18-19). The framing of this, she is elderly, she isn't "*particularly political*" (line 18) in a sense gives authority to the voice. This orientation to 'being political' suggests that to be 'political' in this instance is dis-preferred; it would undermine to some extent the genuineness of the position (it could be viewed as political posturing etc.)? Hayley's Mum is introduced as not particularly engaged; she is an ordinary person and yet she still holds this view, it is commonsensical.

Again Hayley re-contextualises the category 'economic migrants', she acknowledges their positioning in the collection 'criminals' by the (unspecified) hostiles and subsumes the category into the collection

'victims'. They are subject to racism and their countries have been pillaged by British colonialism. Again the thematic field is broadened and economic migration becomes something historically comprehensible and reasonable, "*their countries were pillaged by the countries to which quite often they want to economically migrate*" (line 20). 'Economic migrants' are victims of British colonialism, Hayley is a concerned advocate situating this treatment of migrants as racist (line 7, 23 & 25).

Colonial exploitation is formulated then as a marker of legitimacy. Her argument resonates with the narratives produced by Bridget in Extract One and Mo in Extract Six, who are also allied with the *Against Immigration Controls* network. Economic migrancy is re-formulated as a legitimate act. In some ways it also resonates with the argument Lee tentatively made in Extract Five, although there, legitimacy was contingent on 'welfare issues', which remain unspecified.

b. "They're like us, but not quite like us". Claiming a Shared Humanity.

In Chapter Three I demonstrated how advocates relocated incumbents of the category 'asylum seeker/refugee' into the collection 'ordinary people'; condemning their treatment by the establishment, the media and locals (often these agents were implied) and foregrounding the inequity of their suffering. This ordinariness; Josephine was just a young girl, Sara was a pharmacist, they are a community just like ours, etc., was contrasted with the extraordinary activities and life situations through which their stories were narrated. This 'ordinariness' acts as a pre-requisite for being established as a 'genuine victim', an ordinary person caught up in a political or bureaucratic situation for which they are not responsible. This also counters some of the established hostility themes that entered these narratives. For example, asylum seekers/refugees are 'living it up' in the UK (Extract One and Two, Chapter Three) or engaged in deviant or criminal activity (Extract Three, Chapter Three; Extract One, Chapter Four).

The following extract is taken from an interview I conducted with Nicola, a volunteer with *Refugee Act Now*. Here, Nicola is talking about her

experience of working with 'asylum seekers/refugees', particularly about the need to raise awareness of who the incumbents of these categories actually are. In line 1-3, she introduces the importance of “*making people realise that these are just nor-people like themselves*” (line 3-4).

Extract Twelve: *Nicola, June, 2010.*

- 1 N: I suppose- I suppose that's why there still needs to be more overt um::
- 2 representation, campaigning, around (...) people's awareness of refugee and asylum
- 3 seekers and this- making people- making people realise that these are just nor-
- 4 people like themselves
- 5 L: mm::
- 6 N: they could find themselves in this situation it's not a far flung idea you know
- 7 L: ok yeah
- 8 N: but also that they're like us, but not quite like us and people need (...) help with
- 9 what seem like day to day normal things but just- and they need more sensitivity to
- 10 things they're being asked to produce, or talk about straight away 'cos sort of you
- 11 know it's ironic in a society where in-in Britain for example you don't air your
- 12 dirty laundry for example, but then you make people, you force people to uh:: to
- 13 give you information or tell you things that you ordinarily might not be so
- 14 forthcoming with the British population I think is an interesting – interesting
- 15 comparison
- 16 L: yeah I see what you're saying

Here, Nicola makes the claim that asylum seekers/refugees are “*nor-people like themselves*” (line 3-4), in doing so she orients her talk against the presupposition by “*people*” (line 2-3-) (British/non-asylum seeking people?) that asylum seekers/refugees are strange or weird (as we saw in Extract One). Instead she makes the argument that “*refugees and asylum seekers*” are “*just nor-people like themselves*”; she makes a repair downgrading 'normal people' to 'people like themselves'. Asylum seekers are ordinary people (just like 'us'), but in extraordinary circumstances; circumstances which are out of the ordinary but that it is reasonable that 'people' “*could find themselves in*”, “*it's not a far flung idea you know*” (line 6).

The position of refugees is different from that of other 'people'. For example, they are people who need extra help. They “*need help with what seem like day to day normal things*” (line 8-9) and who are forced to publicise their private matters, “*you force people to uh:: to give you*

information or tell you things that you ordinarily might not be so forthcoming with the British population” (line 12-14). In this sense, asylum seekers/refugees are like us, but in very different circumstances. Their situations are strange, but *they* are not. Importantly, these circumstances could happen to anyone of us. This makes *social* the condition of refugee-hood, which is so often personalised and naturalised (see Malkki, 2006). Asylum seekers/refugees are aligned with 'normal people' together in the collection of those who could face these forms of persecution.

Asylum seekers/refugees then are subject to unfair demands by the British authorities and are misunderstood by the British public. Again the victim-perpetrator activity-occasioned pair is switched, and it is only through this re-contextualisation that their victim-hood is implied. Rather, Nicola negotiates a narrative of ordinariness for her clients which this works to make extraordinary (and thus immoral) their treatment and ordinary (and thus familiar) their person-hood. This achieves a reversal of the normalising of violence, persecution and isolation for incumbents of the 'strange' and often 'othered' (Malkki, 2006) 'asylum seeker/refugee' membership category. They are normal people, whose treatment is strange and outrageously deplorable, rather than strange people whose treatment is normal and mundanely acceptable.

The following extract is taken from an audio recording of the talks given by participants at the *Against Immigration Controls* national gathering. Although this represents quite a different occasion to that of the Narrative Biographical Interview, I have included it amongst the materials in this chapter; the occasion is different to that of the publicity materials in that the talk is directed towards other existing members of the No Border network not towards an unspecified public audience. Again, in line 1, Ann begins by “*addressing the question of who is a migrant*”, similarly to Nicola, she manages a discursive re-contextualisation. This time of the category 'migrant'; they are just like us, “*in many ways all of us are migrants*” (line 6) and yet they are “*blamed for their vulnerability*” and victimisation (line 13-14).

Extract Thirteen: *Ann, May, 2011.*

1 A: I want to start my talk by addressing the question of who is a migrant because
 2 when we're looking at borders the whole thing about border is somehow about
 3 controlling the movements of people defined as migrants and basically I worry
 4 although my professional life involves teaching students, undergraduate and post-
 5 graduate students about migration and migration policy I worry sometimes that we
 6 use this term migrant as a short-hand for describing a whole human being. And
 7 who is a- a migrant? Being a migrant is only one aspect of somebody's life and in
 8 many ways all of us are migrants it depends how recently you want to describe
 9 migration as being one aspect of your lives, so everybody in this room has a
 10 migrant background, everybody living in the United Kingdom has a migrant
 11 background and generations ago our ancestors didn't come from this part of the
 12 world so we need to be careful about that terminology and so in a way who is a
 13 migrant means it's all of us.

14 So we're all human beings, and when we enter into the political debate about
 15 migration in some ways we're subscribing to this sort of bogey man image set up
 16 by the media and using the term migrant throws into people's heads a racialised
 17 notion of somebody who may be vulnerable but are blamed for their vulnerability,
 18 may be victimised and blamed for being a victim and all those things about- that
 19 we used to talk about the welfare state benefit scroungers it mirrors all of those
 20 kinds of definitions and people try to say "oh well we don't mind this kind of
 21 migrant but we don't like that kind of migrant" and it's like the respectable poor
 22 and the criminal classes, how the poor used to be described, and now all that
 23 discourse is coming back again. Um the bogey man image sells papers and also
 24 gets the governments elected, gets the parties elected into government so this
 25 image is used up or conjured up for all those commercial or political purposes.

Ann's management of the identities of migrants differs subtly from the work done by Nicola. More than re-categorising the incumbents of the category 'migrants' into 'human beings' or 'ordinary people', she altogether tries to abolish the special status of the category 'migrant'. Ann does this by situating the notion of the migrant, of migration, historically, "*everyone living in the UK has a migrant background and generations ago our ancestors didn't come from this part of the world*" (line 10-11) arguing that

“in a way who is a migrant means it's all of us” (line 12-13). The extent of this generality almost renders the category redundant. Migrant, or migration, can be understood as a category bound activity (Sacks, 1995), *“migration”* is *“one aspect of our lives”* (line 9), but not an omni-relevant dominant membership category, *“I worry sometimes that we use this term migrant as a short-hand for describing a whole human being”* (line 5-6); she orients her talk against this presupposition.

The issue of migration is subsumed into an entirely new context, it is an issue of class, not of race or identity, *“it's like the respectable poor and the criminal classes, how the poor used to be described, and now all that discourse is coming back again”* (line 21-23). This shifts the focus away from the identities of 'migrants' and towards the hostiles: the media and the government, who *“set up”* the *“bogey man image”* for *“commercial and political purposes”* (lines 23-24). The establishment are the perpetrators of libellous and slanderous propaganda, and migrants (that is all of us, as in Nicola's talk) are the victims of this hostility.

Ann positions herself against the distinction of different classes of migrants, *“oh well we don't mind this kind of migrant but we don't like that kind of migrant”* (line 20-21), equating it to the narrative of the deserving and undeserving poor (line 21-22). As I introduced in Chapter One, others have criticised advocacy and humanitarian organisations for encouraging and formalising these distinctions (Pupavac, 2008, Judge, 2010); arguing that they adopt an exclusionary logic in their attempt to demonstrate the worthiness (usually victim-hood) of their clients. As we have seen in this chapter, advocates, in their interview talk, navigate the framing by the organisations with a degree of flexibility and autonomy. *Against Immigration Controls*, as an organisation, adopts this critical position and in doing so differentiates itself from many NGOs in the refugee sector. At the same time, this radical positioning often excluded the group's publicity from mainstream media channels who routinely failed to publish their press releases or report their actions. In section 4.4c, at the end of this chapter, I will look at other instances in which advocates orient their talk against some of the common tropes of advocacy and humanitarian discourses (many of

which were exemplified in Chapter Three).

4.4 Something Altogether Different?

As I have demonstrated, advocates manage their clients (or migrants/asylum seekers/refugees generally), as victims in the victim-perpetrator activity-occasioned pair. But they do not embellish this 'victim' category in the same manner as the publicity materials did. Whereas the major status emerging from the materials in Chapter Three was 'victim', formulated as a defence to accusations of malignancy, falseness and criminality (with some exceptions as outlined in 3.4), the identity work done by advocates here foregrounds the inadequacy of the establishment over the suffering or victimisation of migrants/asylum seekers/refugees.

In this section I will look at the participant categories advocates make available for asylum seekers/refugees. We have seen so far that one common formulation is that asylum seekers/refugees are ordinary people, just like us, who are subject to systemic injustice. Or to generalise the markers of legitimacy to the extent that economic migration becomes valid (extracts 5-7), or indeed, so that 'we are all migrants' (extracts 12-13). This bears a contrast to the work done by the organisations in the publicity materials, where accusations of economic migrancy or illegality were vehemently denied (see extracts 6, 7, 10, 11, Chapter Three).

I begin by looking at a recording I made in a volunteer session with Jayne, a member of staff at *Refugee Act Now*, in which she posits the positive economic contribution their clients can make to the British economy. Following this are two extracts, both from an interview I conducted with Sally, a volunteer with the organisation *Asylum Seeking Women Unite*, where she formulates her clients as active women with something to say. Finally, I will analyse two instances in which advocates explicitly orient their talk against the victimisation of asylum seekers/refugees/migrants in advocacy/humanitarian talk.

a. Economic strain vs. Economic gain?

As we saw in the literature introduced in Chapter One, and in the materials in Chapter Three, one common method of excluding asylum seekers/refugees, or questioning their legitimacy or rights, is to claim that they are in fact economic migrants (Extract Eleven). Often with the implication that 'they' 'come here' to cream off the benefit system (Extract Two, Chapter Three), ultimately taking resources away from British people (Extract Four). In defence to these accusations advocates routinely assert the legitimacy of their clients, often along the lines of suffering and victimisation, or as we saw in Extract 22 in Chapter Three (*Refugee Act Now*) by formulating asylum-seekers/refugees as benefiting the economy. In the extract that follows the informant, Jane, orients her talk to the necessity of promoting the economic value of her clients, at the same formulating this as a cold and hard way of representing asylum seekers/refugees.

The following extract is taken from a volunteer training session at *Refugee Act Now*. Jane, the group co-ordinator, is introducing the 'Listen, Value, Invest' strategy, whereby projects promote their clients and the “*financial benefits to the economy for working with that person*” (line 4-5).

Extract Fourteen: *Jane, June, 2010.*

- 1 J: One of the reasons for doing this as well is there's um:: there's a really good
- 2 strategy called 'Listen, Value, Invest' which um:: volunteering North West was
- 3 it? Um:: basically um:: put together sort of postcards like this for various projects
- 4 across the North West which take a person from the project and tell their story and
- 5 show how it's benefited them but it also talks about like the financial benefits to
- 6 the economy for working with that person as well which might sound like a kind
- 7 of cold hard way of looking at things but in the current climate, in looking at re-
- 8 funding, it's something that we have to consider, we need to try to put our clients
- 9 in the context of- in the context of national statistics and sort of national things that
- 10 are going on as well so hopefully this might be something we have a look at off
- 11 the back of some of these that you do.

Here, then, Jane stipulates that “*in the current climate*” (line 7) and when “*looking at re-funding*” (line 7-8) the volunteers have to consider the financial value that working with their clients holds and to promote this in

order to, “*put our clients in the contest of- in the context of national statistics*” (line 8-9). The manner in which Jane, and her volunteers, have to work with, and represent, their clients is formulated as contingent on the 'current climate' and on securing future funding for the project. In a climate of financial instability and insecurity there is a necessity placed on advocates to present their clients in economically favourable terms. In this sense, Jane's formulation of who her clients are, speaks to the requirements of her organisations funders; their frames and expectations.

Jane makes an interesting repair (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977) in line 9; replacing 'contest' with 'context'. This downgrading, to the less loaded noun 'context', is possibly an indicator of her belief that it is “*cold*” and “*hard*” (line 7) to value their clients in terms of their economic competitiveness. Jane acknowledges a contradiction between representing their clients warmly and sensitively, and promoting their economic worth.

In effect, the strategy Jane uses here is not to combat the hostility by denying the truth of allegations (asylum seekers/refugees are bogus), or negative constructions (they are economic parasites), but to construct positive images of refugees. There are financial benefits of working with this group of people. However, these positive images still orient to hostilities (a fact that Jayne as lay person appears to be aware of, line 7). In this instant asylum seekers/refugees are not formulated as an economic drain but an economic gain.

b. Mute Victims?

The following two extracts are taken from my interview with Sally, a volunteer with ASWU. Sally is a freelance film-maker who made a film following members of the group as they prepared for, and performed, the play that I mentioned previously in Chapter Three (Extract seven). Here, she talks about the ways in which the filming allowed her to “*show a more gentle portrayal of people's lives*” (line 1-2).

Extract Sixteen: *Sally, June, 2010.*

1 S: But I think the films stands alone outside of anthropology even to show a more
 2 gentle portrayal of people's lives and um:: at the film screening um:: a visiting
 3 commentator asked me why I hadn't included any of um:: any kind of politicians
 4 remarks or any archive material about to- to contextualise it more or to- rather than
 5 just saying these people are in the system, to say they, this systems awful and to
 6 make all these statements um: and I guess what my response to that was basically
 7 we get that all the time and if I had if I had- the ability to make a film then who I
 8 was going to worry about interviewing wouldn't be the people who get
 9 interviewed all the time and state their cases quite clearly um:: I think that that's
 10 what- what I felt was important about the uh:: the work that we- that I've done
 11 with um:: with Asylum Seeking Women Unite really and some other groups
 12 subsequently; was this idea that people have something to say about lots of things
 13 they're people who- you know who have something to say about life, um::
 14 about their children about their families they're not just there to talk about
 15 themselves as asylum seekers or migrants or Diaspora they've got lives that
 16 they're living now that they want to talk to you about. They want to talk to you
 17 about the price of food, anyway, not just because they're restricted to what they
 18 buy but because that's how- that's a conversation so I think that's really im-
 19 important that that's emphasised. So I was very happy to keep working with
 20 Asylum Seeking Women Unite after I finished the film on the play project.

In line 2-3 Sally reports a criticism of her work from a “*visiting commentator*” who challenges her decision not to include politician's voices or archive material in her film. Through this account, Sally differentiates herself from what she locates as particular practices of refugee representation. In line 5 it is unclear whether Sally is defending her position of “*just saying these people are in the system, to say they, this systems awful*” or whether she is distancing herself “*from all these statements*” (line 6) because “*we get that all the time*” (line 7). Is she defending her right to criticise the system without evidencing this through 'archive materials', or is she arguing that attacking the system (which we have seen is a major feature of advocates' narratives in this chapter) is over-done? What is clear, is that she positions herself against representations that draw on the voices of authoritative others to contextualise asylum seekers/refugee struggle and criticise the system. Instead, she states in line 7, “*if I had- the ability to make a film then who I was going to worry about interviewing wouldn't be the people who get interviewed all the time and state their cases quite*

clearly". This is clarified from line 12, where Sally takes the position that the women that she works with have something to say, and not just as "asylum seekers or migrants or Diaspora". In this sense, she foregrounds the legitimacy and importance of these women's voices over politicians and other authoritative figures; she prioritises their ordinary stories over polemical systemic critique.

ASWU women then are "*people [who] have something to say about lots of things*" (line 12). This position is significant if we consider the lack of (variety of) refugee voices in advocacy (and other) media. However, Sally goes further than making an argument for the inclusion of asylum seekers/refugee voices, she also challenges the way that these voices are framed: "*they're not just there to talk about themselves as asylum seekers or migrants or Diaspora they've got lives that they're living now that they want to talk to you about*" (line 14-16). As Jary and Jary warned:

Assigning the 'status' refugee, asylum-seeker or 'illegal', however, ensures that those so regarded become locked into a cyclic, stereotypical 'logic' as: '...all subsequent interpretation of their actions is in terms of the status to which they have been assigned' (cited in Lynn and Lea, 2003, p.428).

Sally organises her narrative and her representation of the women she works with against this cyclical logic. These are not the 'mute victims' that have been documented as characteristic of the advocacy discourse (Malkki, 1996) and present in the materials in Chapter Three) rather they are women with "*something to say about life*" (line 9-10). Sally makes the women she works with ordinary; they are women with children and families, who have mundane everyday concerns about the price of food, "*They want to talk to you about the price of food, anyway, not just because they're restricted to what they buy but because that's how- that's a conversation*" (line 16-18). These activities and concerns predicate the category 'ordinary women'; they are Mums with domestic concerns. Sally manages a discursive re-contextualisation of the women she works with; in doing so she orients her talk against some of the common tropes of refugee representation. In this sense, Sally's project is not just to present the voices of women asylum

seekers, but to foreground their agency and lives inclusive of and yet *beyond* asylum seeking.

In the following extract, Sally continues to talk about her work with ASWU during the play. She talks about the challenges the women face living on vouchers and the space that the play allowed for the women to (temporally) free themselves of these restrictions.

Extract Seventeen: *Sally, June, 2010.*

- 1 S: I mean sometimes it's funny you know people- there'd been delays on stage
- 2 'cos people were changing costumes so many times and a lot of people wore
- 3 traditional clothing and there was a real pride in that which is something that they
- 4 don't- when I've been speaking to some of the women before they were saying
- 5 you know it's a real pain to have to get clothes from ASDA or from charity shops
- 6 because it's not their style
- 7 L: yeah sure::
- 8 S: yeah um:: or how do you get a hair cut if you can only spend money at ASDA
- 9 L: yeah:
- 10 S: or like xxxx's black and she was saying "the hair care that I do is not buyable at
- 11 ASDA you"
- 12 L: sure
- 13 S: "they do not have the products that I need" "not having the food I need is one
- 14 thing but I need to be presentable"
- 15 L: yeah
- 16 S: yeah so re-contextualising people so they can say "I'm acting now, I can dress
- 17 how I want to dress", you know there's a wardrobe department here so "I can
- 18 say what I want to wear"
- 19 L: yeah OK
- 20 S: so that kind of thing was very empowering I think.

Noticeably Sally formulates much of her narrative here through 'direct reported speech' (Holt, 2000), reporting second hand the problems the women formulate for themselves (rather than problems ascribed to them by concerned advocates), "*They were saying you know it's a real pain to have to get clothes from ASDA or from charity shops because it's not their style*" (line 4-6). Again, they are ordinary women, with ordinary needs, desires and problems. Their needs go beyond the basic need for food and shelter (a need that forms the basis of many humanitarian discourses,

Pupavac, 2008), as Sally quotes; “*not having the food I need is one thing but I need to be presentable*” (line 13-14). These are women with specific cultural and practical needs that they are proud of (line 2) and that cannot be met by ASDAs clothing and beauty range, “*the hair care that I do is not buyable at ASDA*” (line 10-11). Although they have specific requirements that are limited by their restriction to using vouchers (both factors that could work to categorise the women as 'others') their desires; to be presentable, wear clothes appropriate to their culture and to have a choice about where to shop and what to buy are recognisable, ordinary desires.

Sally formulates the play as offering a “*re-contextualisation*” for the women who, when acting, have access to the choices that are taken away from them in their everyday lives. She directly reports “*there's a wardrobe department here so I can say what I want to wear*” (line 17-18). Sally presents the women as ordinary women with ordinary needs, the vouchers take this away from them by limiting their spending, and the play offers the women a chance to make choices and decisions, a process which she describes as “*empowering*” (line 20).

c. Orienting Against the ‘Victim’ Theme in Advocacy Talk

The thesis so far has been concerned with how the talk of advocates (in their publicity materials and interviews) orients towards hostility themes, or instances of hostility aimed at asylum seekers/refugees; specifically how the hostility is managed and with what consequence for how the identities of 'asylum seekers/refugees' are negotiated. In the previous extract, Sally oriented her talk against some of the established practices of refugee representation by advocates; she challenged the request to include politicians voices and archive footage, arguing instead that the voices of the women in ASWU should be prioritised, “[the politicians] *get interviewed all the time and state their cases quite clearly*” (line 7). Similarly in Extract Thirteen, Ann, a member of the *Against Immigration Controls* network, criticises the prioritising of certain kinds of migrants over others, “*oh well we don't mind this kind of migrant but we don't like that kind of migrant*” (line 20-21). In both instances, these formulations can be read as orienting

against some of the common tropes of refugee representation in advocacy and humanitarian discourses. However it is also unclear in both cases whether these criticisms are aimed at advocacy discourses *per se* or mainstream representations of asylum seeker/refugees in general.

In the following two extracts the informants, Hayley and Margaret, two campaigners with the group *Against Immigration Controls*, specifically take to task the roles that advocates play in producing 'similarly reified accounts of refugees' which as Jary and Jary (1995) argue lock people “*into a cyclic, stereotypical 'logic'*” (cited in Lynn and Lea, 2003, p.428).

The following extract is also taken from the interview I conducted with Hayley, a campaigner with the organisation AIC. Hayley is describing the “*first anti-deportation campaign I'd say I was centrally involved in*” (line 1).

Extract Eighteen: *Hayley, June, 2010.*

1 H: So the first- the first anti-deportation campaign I'd say I was centrally involved
2 in in a political sense rather than as a supporter would be the xxx family
3 defence campaign, I've given you lots of materials about that, and if you want to
4 ask me any more than I say then that's fine. In a way that- that was a really good
5 example of why you never win an anti-deportation campaign even if the people
6 are given, as they were, ultimately, um:: right to remain because it's just so
7 disgusting that you have to have it to start off with and one of the tensions in that
8 and many other campaigns is the tension about how much you assert that people
9 are entitled to stay here because it's a basic human right and how much you
10 campaign on the particular vulnerabilities of [that

11 L: ok]

12 H: that- person or that group of people. Um m- my late friend xxxx said that he
13 realised how completely brutalised he'd been by the system, he was a barrister,
14 when somebody once told him she'd been raped and his first response was 'oh
15 good I can use that"

16 L: right ok

17 H: and i- i- that isn't meant any disrespect to him or her but it's just that that's
 18 how awful it was

Through her account of this campaign, she formulates the issue of how to represent people, and on what terms, as a '*tension*' for supporters. This tension exists between "*how much you assert that people are entitled to stay here because it's a basic human right and how much you campaign on the particular vulnerabilities of that person*" (line 7-10). In this sense, Hayley evaluates the same phenomenon problematised in the refuge literature (Pupavac, 2008; Judge, 2010 and Tyler, 2010, amongst others). That a political argument for the right to safety, economic opportunities, free movement etc. is often usurped by a welfare claim based on a limited (and exclusionary) notion of victim-hood.

Hayley is critical of this type of advocacy, it as a lose-lose situation, "*you never win an anti-deportation campaign*" (line 5). As she states in line 10, through an anecdote concerning her barrister friend, "*he realised how complete;y brutalised he'd been by the system...when somebody once told him she'd been raped and his first response was 'oh good I can use that'*" (line 12-13). Hayley formulates this contingency on suffering (particularly rape) as marker of legitimacy as 'brutal'. It is not only the client who is brutalised by being raped, but also the advocate, in this case her barrister friend, who is stripped of their humanity or empathy by the system; seeing rape simply in terms of its legalistic value. Again, the establishment is positioned as the perpetrator of brutality and asylum seekers/refugees (and in this case the advocate too) are the victims of these activities.

Hayley is not only critical of the 'system' which brutalises people, but also the victimisation of asylum seekers/refugees by advocates; she is calling out this tendency in advocacy discourses and practices. Hayley, as a kind of lay analyst, is acknowledging and criticising the extent to which systemic hostility and mainstream policy towards asylum seekers/refugees frames and necessitates certain (dis-empowering) responses from advocates.

The following extract is taken from an interview I conducted with Mel,

another supporter of the *Against Immigration Controls* network. Again Mel is critical of some advocacy practices, she has “*a problem with NCADC*” (line 1), the *National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns*, a leading UK organisation that represents people in their anti-deportation campaigns.

Extract Nineteen: *Mel, August, 2010.*

- 1 M: but then you know I find I have a problem with NCADC because um they're
2 all for, you know, somebody pouring their heart out and giving all [the story
- 3 L: mm:: yeah]
- 4 M: and I actually don't believe that somebody should have to do that, and in many
5 cases it isn't appropriate that they do, nor do they want the whole story told
- 6 L: yep
- 7 M: you know there are lots of reasons you know there are people who have got
8 HIV and they don't want that they don't want to have to put that on the leaflet
- 9 L: yeah sure yeah::
- 10 M: you know they've got children they've got y- you know other members of the
11 community lots of reasons why they don't want to be open about that
- 12 L: yeah sure
- 13 M: and yet NCADC can be quite um forceful that you put more detail [laughs
- 14 L: yeah]
- 15 M: in the leaflet

Mel orients her talk against the campaign strategy used by 'NCADC', who are “*all for, you know, somebody pouring their heart out and giving all [the story*” (line 2). She formulates this as something that NCADC pushes onto to people, as she states in line 13, they “*can be quite forceful*”. Mel

questions the appropriateness of NCADCs actions, and of people having to divulge that much information at all. This mirrors the criticism made by Nicola in Extract Twelve, of the requirement for asylum seekers/refugees to have to 'air their dirty laundry' in a way that British people are not expected to.

Mel sets herself aside from this form of campaigning, providing an account of why it is inappropriate, "*there are people who have got HIV*", "*they've got children...lots of reasons why they don't want to be open about that*" (line 7-11). The implications of foregrounding one's victim status, through a campaign, are not just that it is patronising and dis-empowering, it can also unsettle families and prevent community integration.

Again, as we saw in Hayley's interview, the extent to which a person's vulnerabilities are played out (rape or HIV in this case) is acknowledged as a tension for those involved in anti-deportation campaigns. Importantly here, the criticism isn't simply her own but is grounded in the everyday realities of asylum claimants; *they* do not want to divulge this information. Whereas Hayley traces this problem back to the brutality of the system, Mel directly challenges the forcefulness with which other advocacy organisations implement this brutality (although she softens this accusation with the laugh in line 13).

Both interviewees acknowledge a tendency in advocacy work to rely on victimised images of asylum seekers/refugees to win legal challenges or campaigns. As we have seen so far, the narratives provided through the interviews and recordings in this chapter at times contradict, or at least extend the messaging and forms of representation established by the organisations in their publicity materials.

4.5 Conclusions

Advocate informants orient their talk against hostility themes and other systemic hostilities towards asylum seekers/refugees (hostility is not always organised thematically). Interestingly their refusals of this hostility are often more vehement (calling out case workers and making accusations of racism)

and work to foreground the British state, public and media as the source of the hostility. By formulating these denials in personal terms the individuals can differentiate themselves from (or extend) the defences offered by the organisations in their publicity materials. In contrast to the way that the identities of asylum seekers/refugees were managed in the publicity materials in Chapter Three, where people were 'put under description' (as having no choice, as having suffered) in such a way that we could hear them as incumbents of the category victim, here advocate informants establish asylum seekers/refugees, but also 'migrants', 'economic migrants' and ordinary people, as subjects of state/media/public brutality. They often become victims only through this activity-occasioned description; reversing the standard activity occasioned pairing 'asylum seekers/refugees' as perpetrators of crime and the 'British' authorities and 'public' as the victims. Advocates demonstrated a degree of flexibility in their framing of asylum and 'asylum seekers' compared to the standard tropes (Judge, 2010) we saw replicated in many of the publicity materials. In fact advocates often manage the identities of asylum seekers/refugees as something altogether different; they are ordinary people with ordinary needs and with something to say.

Interestingly advocate informants also conflated the terms 'asylum seeker', 'refugee', 'immigrant' and 'economic migrant', whereas these distinctions were left mostly unchallenged in the publicity materials. This worked to subsume global immigration, asylum seeking and controls into the context of class struggle.

Importantly, in several of the interviews and recordings, advocate informants oriented their talk explicitly against some of the common tropes of refugee representation within advocacy discourses (see Pupavac, 2008). As we have just seen in Extracts Eighteen and Nineteen, where the women challenge the victimising of asylum seekers by those who advocate for them. Rather informants re-negotiated the identities of asylum seekers/refugees and problematised and challenged these limiting (and at times brutalising) frames.

An implication of this observation is that refugee advocates restrict their

texts and communications to a humanitarian message, characterised by limited markers of refugee legitimacy primarily based on suffering. They do this even though in other contexts they acknowledge the inherently exclusionary logics which are being left un-interrogated by their efforts.

In the next chapter I will look at how the hostility is managed in the narratives of asylum seeker/refugee informants who I interviewed using the methods outlined in Chapter Two. These voices play a vital and critical role in understanding how mainstream and advocacy discourses work to reproduce accepted notions of refugee-hood. Without these voices the analysis would be incomplete.

5 The Asylum Claimants and Refugees

5.1 Introduction

As I have demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, advocates (both in the publicity materials and in their interviews), organised their talk in orientation to certain ‘hostility themes’ but also to instances of systemic hostility towards ‘asylum seekers/refugees’. This discursive and systemic (i.e. institutional/legislative) hostility was at times contingent on local happenings at others more general, in all cases the hostility was acknowledged as something that works to exclude asylum seekers/refugees (see Leudar et al, 2008) and was *made* relevant by the editor or the narrator through reference to exophoric events and arguments (see Leudar, Sharrock, Hayes and Truckle, 2008b).

The advocates employed a number of strategies to deny or counter these hostile arguments and to make immoral and unacceptable (and intentionally unworkable) the hostility that they acknowledged as part of asylum seekers/refugee lives. Membership category predicates (Watson, 2009) such as ‘helplessness’, ‘passivity’ and ‘suffering’ mapped asylum seekers/refugees onto the category ‘innocent victim’. Accomplishing a reversal of the standard ‘activity-occasioned’ pairing; asylum seekers/refugees as perpetrators of criminal and malignant activity and the native population as the victims of ‘influxes’ of ‘bogus’ refugees (Lynn and Lea, 2003).

Noticeably, in the interviews in Chapter Four, advocates tended to structure their talk in orientation to the malpractice and failures of the state and media who institutionally exclude and oppress their clients. Asylum seekers/refugees were formulated incidentally as ordinary people who fall victim to state/media oppression or public ignorance; their victim-hood was activity-occasioned, in contrast to the ‘pure victims’ under description in Chapter Three (characterised by long narrative descriptions of suffering).

Indeed, at the end of Chapter Four I demonstrated instances of advocates orienting their talk against the ‘victimising’ tendency of some advocacy practices.

In this chapter I will look at the interview data that I collected from people who were at the time claiming asylum, or who had recently obtained their ‘refugee status’, and who were accessing one or several of the organisations (for further details about the interviewees see section 2.3d in Chapter Two). It is apparent in the data here, as well as in reference to the existing body of literature embracing dialogical approaches to refugee identities (see Hitchcock 2008 for an overview), that asylum seeker/refugee (self)representations are framed by a plethora of hostile arguments, as well as discourses of human rights, charity and multi-culturalism/cosmopolitanism (for example see the ‘trauma’ or ‘talent’ tropes outlined by Judge, 2010).

Indeed, the work by Leudar et al (2008), from which this work takes some inspiration, came to the following conclusion:

We also found that all our refugee and asylum seeker informants constructed their identities around hostilities expressed towards them in the media and by the local inhabitants”, they go on to say, “In particular, their identities were constructed in terms of biographical contrasts that made the grounds of contemporary hostile rejections false and irrelevant to themselves. (Leudar et al, 2008, p.187).

In this chapter I will demonstrate that ‘contemporary hostile rejections’ frame asylum seeker/refugee narratives and the biographical identity work done in situ. These hostilities take thematically recognisable forms. The ‘biographical contrasts’ to these hostilities are also multi-various; with interviewees negotiating for themselves incumbency of the categories ‘genuine asylum seeker’, ‘victim’ of oppression, but also ‘complainant’, ‘active member of society’ and ‘helper’.

As with all of the interviews collected and analysed for this thesis, it is

difficult to draw out themes. The content, and the self-representations, are vast, intricate, inconsistent and contradictory; as with all instances of dialogical interaction (Hermans et al. 1992). However, whilst respecting the ultimately idiosyncratic nature of each of the interviews, it is possible to demonstrate how some of these self-presentation are organised ‘thematically’ and in orientation to exophoric circumstances that can also be said to be thematically organised.

5.2 Hostility in ‘Asylum Seeker/Refugee’ Narratives

In this chapter I will demonstrate that the informants narratives are organised in orientation to ‘hostility themes’, as well as to instances of systemic hostility that occur outside of the local interview setting. I will demonstrate that these arguments and events are made relevant by the interviewees and frame certain fragments of their talk, including instances of self-representation. The ‘hostility themes’ are recognisable, demonstrating to some extent their general nature, and feature across several of the narratives featured here. Interviewees orient to notions of asylum seekers/refugees as ‘not human’, as having ‘nothing to offer’, and as anti-social. However, interviewees are not passive recipients of this discursive frame; although they orient their self-representations to these arguments they are agentive and creative in their biographical contrasts: asserting their humanity and equality in universal terms, or as incumbents of the category ‘asylum seeker’, and denying the generalising tendency of the hostility.

a. Asylum Seekers as ‘Not Human’

The following extract is taken from a narrative interview that I conducted with Jasmine, a female volunteer at ILAM who, after receiving legal aid from the centre, had been granted her Leave to Remain (refugee status) just prior to the time of the interview. This section of talk follows on from her description of the poor economic situation in Jamaica and the benefits of living in the UK, both economically and culturally. Here she makes relevant

what she names as a “*confusion*” (line 2) that exists about people from other cultures and other parts of the world.

Extract One: *Jasmine, March, 2010.*

- 1 J: so yeah its really and I hope erm as I said that in England you get good and bad
- 2 and I think mostly where the confusion come about people don't know other
- 3 people like culture and some people are ignorant to it and don't want to know and
- 4 fail to try to understand other people way of life and you know just to know what
- 5 we all are human beings we come from different parts of the world but we you
- 6 know [are human beings]
- 7 L: [mmm right yeah]

Here, Jasmine provides an account of the hostility she has experienced in the UK; spontaneously orienting to a ‘confusion’ that people have about people from other countries and cultures (line 2). In doing so, Jasmine formulates possible reasons behind the ignorance that “*some people*” (line 2) display, downgrading the hostility to ‘badness’ and ‘confusion’. In this sense, Jasmine orients to the hostility but downgrades it and presents it as remediable, it only applies to ‘some’ people and could be resolved if they were to “*understand other people way of life*” (line 4). However, in the final line the hostility is amplified when she implies that the hostiles do not see asylum seekers are human beings, “*just to know what we all are human beings*” (line 5).

The hostility then is formulated around the categories “*people*” (line 2), who we can hear as British/native as she is talking about her experience “*in England*” (line 1) and “*people... from different parts of the world*” (lines 5). The former are the source of the ‘badness’ and are ignorant to the “*culture*” (line 2) and “*way of life*” (line 3) of the latter. She formulates this ignorance as a failure to see that people from ‘different parts of the world’ are also ‘human beings’. The hostility is at once de-humanising yet potentially remediable. The de-humanising tendency of hostile, and indeed advocacy, discourses on asylum seekers (see Malkki, 1996) is thus acknowledged by Jasmine and situated as a source of confusion and ignorance; it is a real life

problem for her that results in bad experiences in the UK.

As a counter-narrative to this hostility, Jasmine's account asserts and re-claims for her-self a common humanity, "*we are all human beings, we come from different parts of the world but we, you know, are human beings*" (line 5-6). The assumption that people are inherently different, or unable to understand each other's way of life because they come from different parts of the world (which is a recognisable feature of nationalistic/race-essentialist discourses, see Rushton, 1995), is reduced to 'confusion' and 'ignorance'; shifting the focus from the personal/cultural features of people from 'other parts of the world' (a category to which she negotiates her incumbency), to the ignorance of the hostiles. Whilst acknowledging that 'culture' and 'way of life' may be areas where differences abound, her argument is for reasoned acceptance of a universal humanity; a stark contrast to the ignorance of the hostiles.

Jasmine presents herself as someone who recognises the shared humanity between people. She takes a position of understanding towards the hostiles by attempting to comprehend and account for their confusion. Here, she formulates herself as a mature and insightful woman, whilst diminishing the pervasiveness of the 'cultural barriers' that the un-named hostiles assert.

Jasmine formulates the hostility in such a way as to re-work the characteristics of the accusers and the accused. Jasmine, as a refugee woman, is understanding, cultured and liberal in her views; whereas the hostiles, some British people, are ignorant and confused. Her gentle treatment of the hostility, and indeed the hostiles, constructs a contrast between her decency and their brutality. In doing so, she manages a downgrading of the hostility whilst maintaining her own dignity and assertiveness.

What follows is a similar narrative, this time taken from an interview I conducted with two female members of the self-advocacy group *Asylum Seeking Women Unite*. Both women are members of the groups management committee. At the time of the interview, both women were in

the process of appealing negative decisions on their asylum claims; Dorothy had her refugee status granted one week after the interview and Lisa had hers granted approximately one year later. In this part of the interview the women are talking about the play they were involved with, (written by Lisa) which, they argue, was a huge achievement for women in their position. They go on to argue that if they were given the treatment that normal human beings are given, they could do even better (Extract Three).

This extract is framed by the formulation I make in line 5, “*it really is about telling people...what it’s really like*”. I am following the lead of the informants here who had previously stated that the play is about ‘awareness raising’; hence I am echoing their descriptions.

Extract Two: *Lisa and Dorothy, June, 2010.*

- 1 L: it definitely is starting to get that message across to people anyway (..) and I
- 2 guess that is that one of the aims of ASWU as well really ‘cos you know like you
- 3 said there’s not just been the play but books and poems and workshops
- 4 Li: yeah
- 5 L: and (...) it really is about telling people (..) what it- what it’s really like
- 6 D: yeah, just to tell people who asylum seekers really are, because we are human
- 7 like anybody else
- 7 L: sure
- 8 D: we feel pain and you kn; ow as she’s saying we were (..) people before we
- 9 came to this country where they always say “Oh (---) so so so” we, so we just
- 10 want to tell people that we are we, we- are still human ,we are who we are, no
- 11 matter what they say we still remain what we know we are
- 12 L: yeah
- 13 (pause)
- 14 Li: and we are strong, we are strong, because people just listening to it (..) they are
- 15 depressed
- 16 L: hmm::
- 17 Li: then imagine this is our really life this is what [we are going through
- 18 D: mm:: what we are going through

In line 9-10 Dorothy, who states “*we just need to tell people who asylum seekers really are, because we are human like anybody else*”, presupposes a hostility; that people hold a contrary position, refugees are not human. She

orients to this hostility spontaneously. The talk is implicitly oriented against the presupposition that asylum seekers are not human, Lisa and Dorothy want to tell people “*who asylum seekers really are*” (line 6). Importantly they formulate a contrast, between the way they are treated, as not human, and the very human account of their everyday experiences. Leudar et al. (2008) noted in their interviews with asylum seeker/refugee informants that people drew on their pasts to construct biographical contrasts with their situations in the present and to deny the hostility aimed at them. Here, the women draw on their previous lives (before seeking asylum) in order to construct a biographical contrast between their lives then and now “*we were people before we came to this country...*” (line 8-9). Their de-humanisation then is formulated as a result of being in the UK, this foregrounds the temporality of their condition. In contrast to this presupposed hostile de-humanising, the women assert their humanity, “*we are we, we- are still human*” (line 19). By asserting this humanity, through reference to the play, the women make this claim not just for themselves but for all asylum seeking women; again then their position can be heard as an appeal to a common humanity.

The women stress their (shared) humanity by foregrounding their very human responses to the dire situations they live in; they are people who feel pain (line 8), and who are going through terrible experiences that would trigger depression in any person (line 14-15). They are human “*like anybody else*” but they also differentiate themselves from other ‘people’ who they challenge to imagine that “*this is our really life [sic]*” (line 17). They are human, and this humanity predicates the particular suffering they experience as asylum-seeking women. The poor treatment they receive is justified by the hostiles through their de-humanisation; in response to this they assert their humanity- they are human and this is why they suffer- and why the treatment is unacceptable. By asserting their particular vulnerabilities and partial victim-hood status they construct an alternative reality of “*what it’s really like*” (line 5) to be an ‘asylum seeker’.

However, these women are not the ‘pure victims’ that characterise the advocacy discourse both here, in Chapter Three, and elsewhere in the

refugee literature (Malkki, 1996). The women suffer, they feel pain, and they live lives that people may find it hard to imagine (line 16-17) and they make this suffering relevant to their narratives. Yet, this orientation to suffering works to foreground their strength as women, *despite* the pain and depression they experience they are strong; “*we are strong, we are strong*” (line 14). As I will demonstrate in Section 5.3, this assertion of strength and agency, despite (and often paired with a complaint against) the condition of asylum-seeking in the UK, are common in the asylum seeker/refugee stories I collected for this chapter.

The women assert their strength, an image of the female asylum seeker which is uncommon in both hostile and advocacy discourse (Judge, 2010). They also orient their talk directly against the (unnamed) hostiles (indexed here as, “*they*”, line 10), who silence or manipulate the voices/identities of asylum seekers “*we are who we are, no matter what they say, we still remain what we know we are*” (lines 10-11). This formulation bears a stark contrast to the usual treatment of asylum seeker/refugee voices, they are often missing (Leudar et al, 2008), or delivered through the frames of advocates (Judge, 2010). Here, the women counter the hostility with their own voice, treating it as authoritative and powerful.

b. Asylum Seekers as Incompetent

The following extract is taken from the same interview, again Lisa and Dorothy are talking about the ASWU play. Here, they introduce their motivation for doing the play (line 1) and go on to outline the specific ‘hostility’ they intended to challenge (line 5-6).

Extract Three: Lisa and Dorothy, June, 2010

- 1 Li: One of the reasons of the play was to reduce the stress, to raise awareness,
- 2 even it was to make a bit of money for the group also because we are- we don’t
- 3 have any-
- 4 L: right ok sure
- 5 Li: funds. One of the reasons I did the play was because there is this negative
- 6 presentation of asylum seekers by the media, they know they are living on the
- 7 benefit, they don’t have (.) they are so:: they don’t have anything to offer
- 8 L: right

- 9 Li: so I wanted to portray to society that asylum seekers are not empty vessels
 10 L: right sure
 11 Li: we have skills amongst us, if we are given the chance we can do better
 12 L: sure
 13 Li: so you see these women actors they are just amateur in the field, beginners, but
 14 you see the way they are acting, they act as if they are professionals
 15 L: yeah:: totally yeah
 16 Li: even myself if I am given the opportunity I can write better, if we can write in
 17 this stress, if we can act in this stress,
 18 L: right
 19 Li: and this hunger and this vouchers we are going (----) then if we are given the
 20 normal life of a human being
 21 L: right
 22 Li: I think we can really have much to offer

The hostility is formulated as stemming from the “*media*” (line 6), who present asylum seekers in a negative light. In response to this, the aim of the play is “*to portray to society a that asylum seekers are not empty vessels*” (line 9). The women orient their talk against this presupposed representation of refugees as ‘empty vessels’ who live off benefits (line 6-7) and have nothing to offer and no skills. Lisa acknowledges the hostile accusation that asylum seekers live off benefits, and the implications that the hostiles attach to this: that asylum seekers and have nothing to give to society.

The hostility, at least partially, frames the talk. The women deny the hostility by asserting their capability and potential as asylum seeking women, through their self-presentations, specifically the play they have taken part in. This denial is not only done in personal terms (“*even myself if I am given the opportunity I can do better*”, line 16) but also in general terms; by asserting a counter-representation of all incumbents of the category ‘asylum seekers’; “*asylum seekers are not empty vessels, we have skills amongst us*” (line 9-11). In this sense, the women make a statement on behalf of all asylum seeking women; re-working the negative attributes attached to the category by the hostiles and replacing them with assertiveness, agency and determination.

The women negotiate for themselves, and other ‘asylum seekers’,

incumbents of the collection 'skilled artists'; outperforming people's expectations of them in their role as volunteer actors. If they do not "*do better*" (line 11) it is because they are not given the chance to. In contrast to the hostility theme that asylum seekers are lazy/inactive (see Leudar et al., 2008) here, any failure to achieve is due to the restrictions put on them by the establishment. Specifically, the "*vouchers*" (which we will see are a constant source of complaint) and the "*hunger*" (line 19) that is forced on to them through their restriction from work and benefits. These are capable women, held back by circumstances. Yet, they are performing *despite* these enforced conditions; their suffering, again, foregrounds their strength "*if we write in this stress, if we can act in this stress*" (line 16-17).

The identities they negotiate for themselves are coupled with a complaint about the dire situations they are forced to live in, "*this hunger this vouchers*" (line 19). Formulated as a complaint, these restrictions foreground their resilience and determination rather than their victim-hood. Despite the dire situation in which they live; hungry, living off vouchers, in great stress, they are strong, "*we can write in this stress*" (line 16). Through their complaint they formulate a (gentle) demand for better living situations, they ask to be "*given the chance*" (line 11) and "*given the opportunity*" (line 16). To whom they make this appeal is not specified, although the play was geared towards the general public and practitioners and policy makers were invited to after-show workshops and discussions with the women.

The passivising of asylum seekers, and the foregrounding of their victim-hood, that I demonstrated in some of the materials in Chapter Three (and has been documented in the literature, Van dijk, 2000; Pupavac, 2008; Jude, 2010, Tyler, 2010) provides an account, and a denial of the accusations made by the hostiles. For example, lack of choice is mobilised to counter allegations of malignancy, and victim-hood to counter generalisations of criminal behaviour. Here, the hostility, and their suffering, is situated in such a way as to foreground their strength. The stress they live under is re-figured positively. Unlike the reports of trauma and ill health that we saw in Chapter Three the women here are finding creative means to relieve the stress in their lives and promote their struggle.

In the next extract, taken from the same interview, Lisa talks about her friend's grandchild who, she states, will always be labelled as the child of a "refugee" (line 1-2). She provides an account of why this will be problematic for the child by making relevant again the hostility that exists towards 'refugees', "*the day...he will not play well...they will say she's [sic]...the son of a refugee.*" (line 4-6). She formulates the hostility as something that is tied to the category 'refugee', that cannot be removed "*It doesn't get off from you...it stays with you*" (line 6).

Extract Four: *Lisa, June, 2010.*

- 1 Li: because even this grandchild she's talking of, if she grow up tomorrow, let me
- 2 say like a boy is maybe playing football, they always say he is the son of a refugee.
- 3 The day she has a British passport, the day she will do well, the day they will say
- 4 oh you are British, black English, but the day maybe she goes to the, he goes to
- 5 the field he will not play well, they will say she's the daughter- the son of a
- 6 refugee. It doesn't get off from you you see, it stays with you

- 7 L: it's attached

- 8 Li: even if like this child it has nothing to do with what happened to the Grand-
- 9 mum or the Mum. This thing of not going to school, you see they push her, so
- 10 know she has a baby. Some of us may be pushed to do other things, if not going to
- 11 have a baby, because at that time at your youth you are supposed to work because
- 12 then you are working for yourself, going to school, better your life for the future,
- 13 one of my favourite authors says this 'the child is the father of the man' the child
- 14 today what will they be when they are grown up an adult tomorrow. So now like
- 15 the children who are not allowed to work, who are not allowed to go to school,
- 16 what will they look like? Are they helping to create a future society that will be
- 17 responsible or vagabonds on the street and so on

As a layperson, Lisa notes the omni-relevance of the refugee category in their lives. Here, the child starts off as a "*grandchild*" and a "*boy*" (line 1-2), foregrounding his youth, innocence and 'ordinariness'. He is quickly re-contextualised (by an un-named "*they*", line 2) as the "*son of a refugee*" (line 2) in accordance with the negative predicates we come to see the category entails.

Lisa formulates this labelling as contingent on the activities the person is engaged in. As we see in lines 1-6, when the boy is successful, he is labelled as “*British*” or “*black British*” and the day he fails he is “*the son of a refugee*”. The category-bound predicates, in this case failure, elicit the participant category ‘refugee’. The refugee category then is formulated as triggered by negativity.

‘Refugees’, then, are unfairly judged and persecuted; Lisa formulates a complaint in line 8-11 about the exclusion of Dorothy’s daughter from school. The category “*child*” is contrasted with the treatment that ‘asylum seeker’ children get; she is excluded from school, has a baby and the possibility for her to “*better your life for the future*” (line 12) is jeopardised. Her daughter, and other ‘refugees’, are formulated as excluded and victimised. However, the identity Lisa negotiates for herself is of an articulate woman with her own opinions on how young people and children should be treated by society, and how they should be raised towards a career and social responsibility. “*because at that time at your youth you are supposed to work because then you are working for yourself, going to school, better your life for the future*” (line 11-12). What we see here, on the other hand, is people being “*pushed to do other things*” (line 10), for Dorothy’s daughter this is having a baby. A moral discrepancy is constructed between her own ethics, which she communicates via a literary reference “*the child is the father of the man*” (line 13), and the actions of the British authorities who push young people out of education and into teenage pregnancy. Lisa’s concern for young people and “*future society*” (line 16) is juxtaposed with the British authorities lack of social responsibility.

Although this is a narrative of discrimination and systemic exclusion, Lisa formulates this as a complaint grounded in firm moral and ethical principles and reflections on society and on how British asylum system conducts itself. This bears a stark contrast to the asylum seeker voices we heard in *Refugee Act Now’s* ‘Destitution Campaign’ video in Chapter Three, where the organisation voiced the moral and ethical positions and ‘asylum seeker’ voices were included to evidence the suffering (Extract Eleven, Chapter Three). Lisa’s complaint is grounded in her morals regarding how children

should be treated and what makes a good future society. Lisa negotiates for herself incumbency of the collection 'liberal/educated woman' (the Wordsworth quote indexing her formal cultural knowledge); she is a woman with a complaint to make about how the system impacts on her friends children and grandchildren.

Despite the reported persecution and exclusion the narrative does not foreground the 'victim' status for either of the women (which as we have seen is characteristic of refugee representation and is predicated by passivity, suffering etc.). They are mothers, active members of society, cultural, political, opinionated women; they acknowledge the hostility formulating a moral challenge to it.

The following extract is taken from an interview with Janet, another female interviewee who I met through the organisation *Refugee Act Now*. At the time of the interview she was claiming asylum and was waiting for a decision on her case. Janet orients her talk towards a misunderstanding about "*black people*", this time, however, the fault does not lie with the ignorance of the hostiles but with the behaviour of "*some people like my side my people black people you know...*" (line 5).

Extract Five: *Janet, June, 2010.*

- 1 J: Then I just even the people, some people not like us even that one because they
- 2 don't know why I come what happened to us and they just see you like this
- 3 L: mm::
- 4 J: but you know some people who some people they are very even I know that
- 5 sometime some people like my side my people black people you know
- 6 L: yeah
- 7 J: sometime I feel like you know because sometime if it's someone you know
- 8 even if you know they're experience if you go to somewhere like inside bus you
- 9 know so many people is in the bus
- 10 L: yeah
- 11 J: when they speak to phone you speak slowly, when you speak slowly people go
- 12 no the one who's speaking can hear you
- 13 L: right
- 14 J: you too you can feel people feel happy for you but you can see some people in
- 15 the bus they're speaking to phone you can not like them even me I can not like

- 16 them
 17 L: right
 18 J: you know some people go inside the bus when they speaking in the phone
 19 L: mm:: hm::
 20 J: you gone hate them, they speak loud (raises voice) loud, loud, loud aloud voice
 21 you know the you people don' know any language just English, you know, they
 22 can speak their language very very badly, high you know, someone give you your
 23 country freedom so they have to respect each other you know, even me
 24 sometimes I feel bad you know

Unlike the previous interviewees Janet provides an account for the hostility, attributing the blame to 'her people' rather than the hostiles. Her narrative explains how people on her "*side*", "*black people*" (line 5) talk loudly on the phone in "*their*" language (i.e. not English) when they are on the bus. She formulates this as an account of why people dislike and even hate them, "*they're speaking on the phone you cannot like them, even me I cannot like them*" (line 15-16). She formulates this as disrespectful; England has given them freedom and they should be more respectful, "*someone give you your country freedom so they have to respect each other you know*" (line 22-23).

Janet's narrative does not challenge the premise, or consequence, of the hostility. Rather she accounts for it, even justifying it in some cases, "*you gone hate them*" (line 20). Her account bears a striking resemblance to the common 'complaints' about foreigners that are made in tabloids such as the Daily Mail, and draws on themes of foreigners as 'strangers', 'rude' and 'anti-social' (see Lynn and Lea, 2003, Leudar et al 2008).

Although Janet does not deny the grounds of the hostility, she does distance herself from it. She denies the hostility in personal terms, "*they have to respect each other you know*" (line 23), distancing herself the collection, "*they*", who do not respect each other, and aligning herself with the hostiles who evaluate their behaviour.

5.3 Self-presentations: From ‘genuine asylum seekers’ to ‘complainants’; ‘active participators in society’ and ‘helpers’.

In this section I will look at some of the ways in which asylum seeker/refugees negotiate their identities in the context of the interview setting. I start by analysing the opening sections of the interviews, where the interviewees provide spontaneous accounts of *why* they came, and of the negative decisions on their asylum cases. The thematic arguments around ‘passivity’ and ‘no choice’ are mobilised. I will demonstrate how they map the interviewees onto the category ‘genuine asylum seeker’, specifically how they do this in orientation to the dis-preferred category ‘bogus asylum seeker’, or ‘economic migrant’.

The self-presentations conform to the contemporary image of the ‘refugee’ that was documented in the publicity materials in Chapter Three. However, as I will demonstrate later on in this chapter, there is also more to these narratives; they are characterised by complaints, demands, agency, community activity and self and other advocacy. Whereas it has been argued that there is no space in advocacy for political demands (see Pupavac, 2008), and that the contemporary figure of the refugee is devoid from political rights or claims (Agamben, 1995, Pupavac, 2008), it seems that although this may be true of some advocacy organisations (as we saw in Chapter Three), this is not always so ‘on the ground’ nor is it true of all asylum seeker/refugee narratives. It is possible then that a-political narratives are reflective of the contemporary condition of *advocacy*, rather than as characteristic of refugees.

As the literature has already demonstrated it is common for asylum seekers/refugees to be presented as passive, unless they are engaged in criminal activity (i.e. the ‘hostiles’ formulate them as criminals, ‘sympathetics’ formulate them as passive victims, Van dijk 2000; Pupavac 2008; Judge, 2010). The narratives analysed here go beyond the passive/active dichotomy. Informants formulate themselves as agentive; a characteristic that we have seen is often diminished in the face of hostility.

Yet they do so whilst mapping themselves on to the category genuine asylum seeker. Similarly to the advocates' narratives in Chapter Four the informants here formulate their suffering as a complaint; which necessitates action.

The openings of the interviews are interesting as to some extent they represent what it is that the interviewees chose to prioritise and foreground in their narratives. However, there is a certain degree of framing provided by the interviewer (myself, LW), that shapes the responses. To what extent this framing is procedurally consequential will be accounted for in the analysis.

a. Accounting for Coming

I chose my interview openings carefully; I asked people to tell me about their experiences of 'immigration' to remove any obligation to talk specifically about why they came. As discussed in Chapter Two (Section 2.4) I did not feel like it was appropriate to ask people to recount the story of 'why they came', or to re-live any trauma they may have experienced, as I am interested primarily in how informants construct their identities in the context of hostility and advocacy in the UK. However, the analysis revealed that 'why I came' is integral (for most interviewees) to their narratives and was often prioritised at the start of the interview.

Reflecting on the literature (for example Tyler, 2010), and my personal experience of refugee advocacy, these accounts, of *why they came*, can be understood as a need to assert one's legitimacy. In this sense, informants are arguably performing a degree of 'facework' to me, as interviewer; affirming their role 'asylum seeker' (Goffman, 1955.) This format of storytelling also mirrors the way in which asylum-claimants are required to deliver their story to institutions in the UK, particularly at the initial Home Office interview, but also in anti-deportation campaigns, and, as we have seen, to advocacy audiences via publicity materials. As I have demonstrated in the analysis so far, this assertion of legitimacy can be understood as an orientation to 'hostility themes' or general hostility towards asylum

seeker/refugees. Particularly that they are 'bogus' or 'criminal'. In this section, I will analyse these formulations, of why I came, to establish how they are framed by the exophoric circumstances of the talk.

The following extract is from an interview I conducted with Mrs Belba, a female client at ILAM, who had recently been granted Leave to Remain (refugee status). In response to my framing of the interview in line 1-3, in which I ask her to tell me about her experience of coming to the UK, with a particular focus on advocacy, Mrs Belba chooses to start with an account of how and why she came to the UK.

Extract Six: *Mrs Belba, March, 2010.*

- 1 L: OK thanks for coming today Mrs Belba it's really great that you've come
- 2 along. Erm:: so I just wanted to ask you a broad question, if you could tell me
- 3 about your experience of coming to the UK and particularly of the different
- 4 advocacy services you've erm:: you know had a- had involvement with. So, over
- 5 to you yeah::
- 6 MB: I came to this er:: England in 1999, then the person that bought me in tell me
- 7 he just give me money, work then pay me. During that they brought me into
- 8 doing the prostitute,
- 9 L: right ok
- 10 MB: but from Nigeria I don't know, then I was pregnant (seven months done??)
- 11 L: right ok
- 12 MB: so I told the guy I was pregnant he did not realise (believe?) I was pregnant.
- 13 I just run away. But unfortunately for me I lost the pregnancy in London 2000.
- 14 L: sorry
- 15 MB: so since then the life has turned upside down for me. I didn't know where to
- 16 go to, no help, no this and that no one to help. I saw a man he said just working, I
- 17 have been working since then 'til 2008 when they catch me at work
- 18 L: right ok
- 19 MB: they say it's illegal, I'm working without proper paper. Since then I've been, I
- 20 don't know where to run to, where to go to. Went to court, twice, up and down
- 21 then I just came back there's a church that is helping me, gave me a little bit of
- 22 money for me and my daughter
- 23 L: right ok
- 24 MB: and I went to the school to tell them the problem I'm facing, then luckily for
- 25 me the school assisted me
- 26 L: right
- 27 MB: they got me lawyer, that's when they got me Rob here.

Mrs Belba begins with an account of how she ended up in the UK. She tells of how she was tricked into coming here under the guise of a job opportunity, which turned out to be a horrific experience of sex-trafficking, “*they brought me into doing the prostitute*” (line 7-8). She describes the experience of coming to the UK as having her 'life turned upside down' (line 15). She shares a tragic turn of events, in which her life was changed dramatically; she started out as a woman trying to find employment overseas and ended up working as a prostitute, 'brought' to the country by a person who said they would find her work and a wage, “*the person who brought me in tell me he just give me money, work then pay me*” (line 6-7). Through these experiences she formulates herself as innocent and naïve woman, a woman to whom terrible things have repeatedly happened. She reports being tricked into working as a prostitute, becoming pregnant and losing the child, and then again working illegally without knowing “*they say it's illegal. I'm working without proper paper*” (line 19). She distances herself from these criminal activities, and downplays her agency in this string of horrific events.

Mrs Belba provides us with a part of her life history in which she is a multiple victim: of her trafficker and of her employers in the UK. She structures her biography with the help of a collection of membership categories: herself, her abusers, and eventually her helpers; the church, the school and then the lawyers at ILAM. In this collection (as was the case with Josephine, Ikraam and Selima in Chapter Three) Mrs Belba plays a relatively passive role, she is brought here under false premises and naively works without papers. Eventually she finds help, and is “assisted” (line 25) to start fighting the legal battle. She formulates coming to the UK as being “*bought [sic] here*”, reducing her agency, at this vital point.

As I have discussed in relation to other materials in this thesis, this relative passivity helps to negate any assertion of criminality or malignancy, and predicates the category ‘genuine victim’. As we have already seen, innocence is a recognisable and preferred pre-requisite for ‘victimhood’ (see also Judge, 2010). In line 21 we see a transition from 'victim' to 'helped

person'; the church gave her financial support and the school helped her to find a lawyer. This transition opens up the possibility of Mrs Belba getting on with her life, and as we see later in her narrative, she establishes for herself the identity 'ordinary woman', predicated by ordinary activities such as looking after her daughter and visiting her Mother (see Extract Twenty Five). 'Victim-hood', then, is not the only participant category she makes available for herself, however, it is this passivity and lack of agency that she chooses to foreground in relation to the activity of 'coming to the UK'.

Similarly, the following interviewee, Janet, a woman I met through the organisation *Refugee Act Now*, who was awaiting a decision on her asylum claim, begins her narrative with an emotive description of how she came to be in the UK.

Extract Seven: *Janet, June, 2010.*

- 1 L: OK so thanks Janet for coming today for the interview,
- 2 J: you're welcome
- 3 L: yeah and so like I just said my:: my interest is in hearing your experience of
- 4 coming erm: of the UK and of being in England over how many years I'm not sure
- 5 it is you've been here and then specifically about your involvement with different
- 6 organisations that provide support or advocacy. Yeah so over to you
- 7 J: thank you. My story for coming UK I'd been getting lot lot lot difficulty home,
- 8 back home, for party, for sake of party my husband been thrown in party, until they
- 9 just I follow my husband support another party, until they arrest my husband they
- 10 come and break my house, arrest cut me, my hand, my breast, remove my teeth
- 11 L: yeah::
- 12 J: put me prison, right now I don't know if my husband is alive or not. I've been in
- 13 prison after that the party people, help, help, help, help give someone police
- 14 money, is one white man bring me come this country,
- 15 L: right

Janet, like Mrs Belba, organises her narrative around a collection of participant categories; herself and her husband, as victim to political crimes against her family and torture, and the agent "*one white man*" (line 14) who "*bring me come this country*" (also line 14). Again, Janet formulates herself as fairly passive in this collection; she gets difficulty back home due to her husband's activity and then a bribe is organised on her behalf, by a white

man, who brings her to this country. Janet may have been instrumental in this bribe but this is not indicated here. Janet negotiates for herself the identity 'loyal wife' or 'innocent woman' in the context of this political persecution; she is not a political activist but an innocent bystander.

The level of granularity in line 8 exemplifies the extent of the brutality she has faced; she describes the un-named “*they*” as ‘breaking her house’ (line 9-10), juxtaposing ethics of home and domestic life with the violence we are to hear. She follows this with a graphic description of her wounds, cuts to her breasts and the removal of her teeth. As we spoke Janet pulled up her trouser leg and showed me scars from the attack. Janet doesn’t know whether her husband is alive; she is an innocent woman, victimised by the political situation in her country and concerned about her husband’s welfare. These concerns predicate the category 'ordinary family woman'; she is an innocent woman yet she has experienced extra-ordinary violence. She is an ordinary woman in extra-ordinary circumstances. These circumstances mark her legitimacy as an exile; her innocence affirms her need for refuge.

Again, the relative downplaying of her role in coming to the UK, and in the political activity indexed, works to negate any notion that her persecution is warranted, i.e. that she is engaged in political activity and should therefore expect to be attacked in such a way (see Judge, 2010). Rather the necessity on her to flee that situation and come to the UK is foregrounded. Interestingly (in all such narratives), despite the solid human rights grounds on which she flees her country of origin, she still cedes any agency in the decision to come to the UK and formulates this as the action of a 'white man' who brought her here. As was the case for Mrs Belba, this foregrounding of suffering, and lack of agency, can be understood as an orientation to the hostility that they are 'bogus' asylum seekers (i.e. they have not suffered persecution) and that they come knowingly to exploit our benefit system (they conspired to come here).

Extract Eight: *Janet, June, 2010.*

- 13 J: when meet in the airport she just give me one paper. I don't know if it's passport
14 she gives me, “you have to hold this with me, I'm coming

- 15 L: mm:::
- 16 J: then we'll go to my house", I just, she says "I'm going to toilet" and then I never
17 see her again
- 18 L: right
- 19 J: and then I just see myself crying that I don't know white people,
- 20 L: right::
- 21 J: I'm scared I don't know white people you know, I just see so many white people
22 coming, coming, coming
- 23 L: was this in London?
- 24 J: yeah:: yes in London the big airport in London, until now then someone asks
25 me, someone, police come, I'm scared police. Then they come on ask me and they
26 take me to immigration and then I claim asylum even at that time I don't know
27 what asylum because I just wait for this man that I never seen until they take me
28 now out from there
- 26 L: yeah::

Janet continues to establish her identity as a naïve participant in the string of events she is describing. Her naivety is foregrounded in line 13-14, '*I don't know if it's passport she gives me*'. This formulation can be heard as an orientation to the hostile position that asylum seekers are criminals, knowingly coming to the UK with false documents. Again, although her suffering should mark her as a genuine refugee (who are legally granted to travel on false documents as this is their only means of getting here) she denies any knowledge of this act. Janet is lied to and abandoned by the person who brought her here; she formulates herself as a scared and traumatised woman, crying in a sea of strangers "*I just see so many white people coming, coming, coming...*" (line 21-22). Rhetorically the repetition in line 22 demonstrates the persistence of the flow of strangers she is immersed by. Janet narrates herself, on arrival in the UK, as lost and scared woman, naively brought into a strange place. She doesn't know where she is "*the big airport in London*" (line 24) and she is taken by the police to claim asylum.

Janet is relatively passive with regards to the activity of claiming asylum, "*even at that time I don't know what asylum because I just wait for that man*" (line 26-27). At this point in her narrative, Janet formulates herself as someone to whom dreadful things have happened; who has no control, who

doesn't understand what is going on, and who is confused and scared and on her own. The passage works to formulate her innocence, naivety and her relative lack of agency, from leaving her country of origin, to arriving in the UK, right through to claiming asylum (apart from the fact that she was "helped" to come, which suggests she played some role in it). This has the effect of mapping Janet onto the category 'genuine asylum seeker'; she has suffered persecution and torture, she has been brought to the UK and taken by the authorities to claim asylum. Importantly, she was not engaged in political activity, she did not chose to come (negating any aspersion that she might have had ulterior motives) and at first, she did not want to be here. Although the specific hostility, that asylum seekers are bogus, is not expressed here, Janet's self-presentation at this point can be understood in relation to these presuppositions which, as we have seen, permeate the interview setting.

The following extract is taken from my interview with Elizabeth, a woman I met through ASWU and *Refugee Act Now*. Elizabeth was still fighting to have her refugee status recognised. She makes explicit, in the opening of her interview, that she did not want to come to the UK, and provides an account of her reason for coming. As with the previous interviewees, Elizabeth foregrounds the fact that she did not chose to or want to come here, but that she has a valid reason for being here. Unlike the previous two narratives, she presents herself in a more agentive light. Intrinsic to her denial that she chose to come to the UK is an assertion of her wants, "*it's not because I wanted to be here*" (line 12), and she actively foregrounds her reason for being here, "*there is a reason, why I'm here*" (line 12-13). Elizabeth's narrative then begins with an account of why she came that is organised around her wants; she states her reason for coming and in doing so treats her voice with authority. In the previous extracts the reader is led to assume this by the almost total lack of agency the women ascribe to themselves.

Extract Nine: *Elizabeth, July, 2010.*

- 1 L: ok that's recording now, should be picking both of us up. Ok so thanks for
- 2 coming today Elizabeth. So what I'm interested in, as I've just said, is your
- 3 experience of being in the UK, erm:: and then focusing on the support, advocacy,

- 4 campaigning groups that you've been involved with and 'cos like you said earlier,
 5 you've been involved in quite a few different organisations since you've been
 6 here
 7 (pause)
 8 E: well thank you Lauren. My name is Elizabeth, I am Congolese I am from
 9 xxxxx, I came UK, here since August 2005. I can say my experience in the UK
 10 can be bad or good. It's been different ways. What can I say, bad? First of all, I'm a
 11 person who received more torture in their country. If I am in UK, it is not because
 12 I wanted to be here, but there is a reason, why I'm here.
 13 L: mm: hmm::
 14 E: You know I am African lady, and do you know African people, we have our
 15 way to live, and for me the UK give me (...) excuse me for the term, sometimes I
 16 miss the word, my English is not good [at all,
 17 L: no it's OK]
 18 E: I miss some word, I can't explain myself very well. I'm getting more, more
 19 tortured than when I used to be in my country
 20 L: Ok
 21 E: so as I said before, when I came here there is a reason. What is the reason? I am
 22 in the UK because of my political matter. I had a husband, and he was a
 23 photographer, and in Africa, especially in the Congo, you cannot tell the truth, if
 24 you tell the truth you face prison
 25 L: right
 26 E: you're gonna face detention and they're gonna maybe kill you, put you- if you
 27 just try to loud/use your voice. You can't say anything against your government,
 28 and my husband he used to, he was one of [----] against the Congolese
 29 government and they put him in prison. Myself I faced prison, detention, torture.
 30 Lauren, you know something, when I'm talking about these things it can make me
 31 feel very sad (crying?)
 32 L: yeah I understand
 33 E: sometimes, anyway
 34 L: well you talk about what you feel comfortable talking about
 35 E: anyway

Elizabeth frames her talk around the 'good things' and 'bad things' about the UK. This is not a straight-forward narrative. In response to my opening question Mrs Belba offers an account of why she came to the UK. Similarly to Janet and Mrs Belba, her being in the UK is formulated as dis-preferred. However, Elizabeth states that she came to the UK because of her “*political matter*” (line 22); “*if I am in UK, it is not because I wanted to be here, but there is a reason, why I’m here*” (line 11-12).

Elizabeth made a choice to come to the UK in constrained circumstances. She does not deny her agency in coming, but she formulates her situation as one in which she had little choice but to leave. So being in the UK is dis-preferred, but this is narrated through her difficult circumstances; she does not passivise herself. Although the political matter is her husband's she aligns herself with this; speaking out against the *government*, "*you cannot tell the truth*" (line 23), "*you can't say anything against your government*" (line 27). Unlike Janet who 'follows her husband', Elizabeth negotiates for herself the identity 'politically active woman', both here and elsewhere in her narrative (see Extract 23). Elizabeth's narrative is not entirely personal, there is a political dimension to it. She details the persecution you can face in the Congo and formulates this as a general truth, "*you cannot tell the truth, if you tell the truth you face prison*" (line 23). Elizabeth treats her voice, and her opinion on the Congolese government, with authority.

Like Janet, Elizabeth formulates the UK as culturally strange and unwelcoming. She gets "*more more tortured here*" (line 18-19) as an "*African lady*" (line 14). She is not living an easy life in the UK, as the hostiles would have it. Her self-categorisation as an 'African woman' accounts for the difficulties she's facing in the UK; African people have 'their way to live', and these cultural differences are problematic for her, but they also provide her with an identity equal to that of British people, she has her own way of life, history and culture.

Many of the informants began their stories with accounts not just of when, or how they came to the UK, but *why*. The three extracts analysed here demonstrate the primacy of this need to account for one's being here. This need can be understood as an orientation to the plethora of negative and hostile positions held towards asylum seekers; such as, they are 'bogus' or 'economic migrants'. They speak to the 'culture of disbelief' surrounding asylum-seeking and 'urgency' of staking a claim to refugee legitimacy (Tyler, 2010). Evidently though, there are different solutions to accounting for one's being here; one is to to downplay one's agency in the matter altogether, the other is to present being here as a legitimate solution to life

events. This is what Elizabeth does. Her life was made un-liveable in the Congo, so she came to the UK.

In stark contrast to the accounts analysed above, Jasmine presented me with her own, very personal, reasons for wanting to come to the UK. It is important to note that at the time of the interview Jasmine had recently been granted her refugee status and so the need to affirm one's legitimacy as a genuine refugee was arguably less important. Whereas Elizabeth formulated coming to the UK as a legitimate solution to dangerous and violent life events, thus asserting her legitimacy as a refugee, Jasmine focuses her narrative on the lifestyle benefits of being in the UK for her as an individual, *"I've learned so much (clears throat) I'm total like different person"* (line 1-2).

Extract Ten: *Jasmine, March, 2010.*

- 1 J: and it's like a university i've learned so much (clears throat) i'm total like
- 2 different person, you know there's a lot to lean here as well you know a lot, p-
- 3 people have a lot of chances here

- 4 L: right yeah

- 5 J: than you know than back home in my country where it's only limited you can't
- 6 have a good education cos you've got no money and you can't have anything,
- 7 whereas here you know the government you can school you can get your books
- 8 paid for

- 9 L: right yeah

- 10 J: you can go to uni and get grants and all that nothing like that in my country so
- 11 these are the reasons why you know it's a better lifestyle

- 12 L: yeah yeah

- 13 J: as well as when I was in, this might sounds really funny or strange but when I
- 14 was growing up, I wanted to go, I didn't know I was going to England or
- 15 America, but I really wanted to go, leave Jamaica for just (laughs) the main reason
- 16 was erm I used to like fantasise about eating a whole chicken by myself

- 17 L: right ok (laughs)

18 J: not having to share a tin of baked beans

Jasmine's narrative marks a departure from some of the features of the 'no choice' narratives we have seen above. Although she states in line 11 that she didn't know she was going to England or America (suggesting she did not plan to be in the UK), she is agentive in her decision to leave Jamaica, "*I really wanted to go, leave Jamaica*" (line 15). She was not forced to leave, she wanted to go, and this choice is not formulated as one made in restrictive circumstances (i.e. civil war or political persecution) rather she constructs this choice as contingent on the better chances she would have in the UK, "*p-people have a lot of chances here*" (line 2-3).

It is what Jasmine formulates as her reasons for coming then that is most striking. As we have seen, one method of excluding asylum seekers/refugees is to re-categorise them as 'bogus' or 'economic' migrants. In response to this many advocates, and indeed asylum claimants themselves, fiercely deny this claim by asserting the validity of their clients (or their own) refuge-hood (often via their victimisation). Indeed Leudar et al. (2008) concluded that, "*first, all informants implicitly oriented against characterisations of refugees as economic opportunists*". This reformulation works to render the hostility 'ironic' (Extract 10, Chapter 3). More rarely, they question economic migration as an illegitimate grounds for being in the UK (Extract 11/13, Chapter 4). The latter strategy, so far, has been demonstrated primarily by *Against Immigration Controls* advocates in their publicity materials, or by other advocates in their more private interview talk.

Clearly, this is not the case here. Jasmine formulates coming to the UK as a way of improving her economic circumstances. What conditions might allow Jasmine to tell her story in this relatively unique way? It could be argued that the interview was a 'safe' environment where Jasmine was able to speak openly about her motivations for coming to the UK (she knows me to be an advocate for refugee rights). However the same can be said for the research conducted by Leudar et al. (2008) where the interviewees were also positioned as potential allies and advocates. For example, their informant,

'M', *"positions the interviewers not as researchers, but in the category of English people who could help him, a refugee, to change his situation"* (Leudar et al, 2008, p.206). Still, in contrast to the conclusions made by Leudar et al., Jasmine, a single female refugee, asserts seeking a better lifestyle as her reason for wanting to leave Jamaica and for coming to the UK, *"back home in my country where it's only limited you can't have a good education cos you've got no money and you can't have anything, whereas here you know the government you can school you can get your books paid for"* (line 5-6).

Jasmine formulates the availability of free schooling and government funded provisions as legitimate pull factors for people from less advantaged countries to come to the UK. The hostiles of course use this argument to deny the legitimacy of all asylum seekers, arguing that 'they' come to 'cream off benefits'. However, Jasmine makes no attempt to deny the hostility theme that people come here for economic reasons, other than to say that it is legitimate to do so. The resources aren't available *"back home"* (line 5) but they are in the UK. This formulation, of economic migration as legitimate, resembles that made by Lee, in Chapter Four (Extract Five), however he downgraded this claim by adding, *"if they've got a genuine welfare issue"*.

If Jasmine makes any claim to having welfare issues here it is subtle, rather she provides us with an anecdote that further reinforces lifestyle as a reason for coming to the UK. The anecdote she offered stopped me in my tracks and is notable for its similarity to the hyperbole of the hostile accusations, *"I used to like fantasise about eating a whole chicken by myself...not having to share a tin of beans"* (line 16-18). This formulation mirrors the overstated (and oversimplified) hostile accusations of greed etc., yet Jasmine offers this as an entirely valid motivation for wanting to come to the UK. In this sense, she does not attempt to undermine the hostility, or to construct a counter-identity. Rather, she situates economic migrancy as valid, for herself (and for others later in her narrative).

This interview, when compared to the other materials collected for this

thesis, (and in the context of the wider literature on refugee representation) demonstrates that there are several ways that the 'economic hostility theme' can be challenged: one is to assert that one's motives for migration are genuinely not economic (as we have seen so far), the other is to assert that economic motives are valid reasons for migration- this is what Jasmine does. She acknowledges the hostility and, extraordinarily and noticeably, negates the basic moral premise and negativity on which it is based and mobilised.

b. Accounting for Negative Decisions

The following extract is taken from an interview I conducted with Omah, at ILAM. At the time, Omah was seeking asylum and receiving legal aid from the organisation. In this instant Omah opens the interview, and sets up the occasion as “*an appointment to talk about my experiences with Lauren*” (line 1-2). I re-formulate this in line 3, to focus on advocacy and the organisations he has been involved with, as well as his experience of coming to the UK.

Extract Eleven: Omah, March, 2010.

- 1 O: Hello my name is Omah I come here today as I have an appointment to talk
- 2 about my experience with Lauren
- 3 L: OK great, so what I'll ask you to do if that's OK, is just talk openly about your
- 4 experiences of advocacy work, for example like the xxx and you mentioned
- 5 before that you've been to lots of different organisations, refugee action, and so if
- 6 you can just talk about your experience of coming to the UK and then being
- 7 involved in this advocacy and how that's been for you
- 8 O: Yeah I came this country in 2002, when I came this country I- the:: (...) Home
- 9 Office asked me about something some information about myself and uh:: about
- 10 religion and about other things at that time they ask me about names about the
- 11 father name they ask be about the religion. At that time I say I'm Muslim
- 12 L: m:: hm::
- 13 O: that's why I uh:: told them I'm Muslim
- 14 L: right
- 15 O: 'cos my old documents passports everything writing say the religion is Muslim
- 16 L: right yeah
- 17 O: but the next time when I go to interview 2 years later, they I- booked me an
- 18 appointment for interview at that time I told it to the Home Office I don't have a
- 19 religion I can't believe any religion

- 20 L: right
- 21 O: but he refused me about my case he said when I first sign you to come to this
- 22 country you told me you're Muslim now you want to change your mind. I told
- 23 him, because my old documents is for ID this is no- this is not your choice, you
- 24 know when you are born, they follow your family they write it in the book
- 25 L: yep
- 26 O: like father name, your name, your religion. It's not your choice.
- 27 L: yep
- 28 O: but at that time they told me they refused my case, I don't know what the
- 29 reason. Then they gave me the chance for appeal again.

Omah chooses to prioritise an account of his Home Office refusal in the order of his narrative. This can be read as partly chronological and partly spontaneous. He begins his description in line 7 with an account of what the Home Office asked him in his initial interview, “*Home Office asked me about something some information about myself and uh:: about religion and about other things at that time they ask me about names about the father name they ask be about the religion. At that time I say I'm Muslim*”. We go on to see, from line 10, that ‘religion’ and his being ‘Muslim’ is the crux issue here, although in line 8 it is introduced as part of a list of several other questions. This has the effect of reducing the significance of the ‘religion’ issue at this stage in the narrative. His disclosure of his religion here is given the same weight as his “*father name*” (line 26), they are both identifying features assigned to him pre-dating his adult life.

He formulates the significance of this disclosure in the interview as minimal, setting up the account he gives from line 10, “*That's why I told them I'm Muslim*” (line 13). He formulates this as an explanation, presupposing that his action has been questioned, or is questionable by myself, the interviewer. Omah, then, is narrating this part of his experience in orientation to an assumed suspicion towards his actions. Omah goes on to state that he “*can't believe any religion*” (line 19); the information was written in his documents when he was born. Oman formulates himself as an innocent party; the dispute over religion was a bureaucratic error and although he states that “*they refused my case I don't know what the reason*” (line 28-29) he prioritises an account of his religion in his narrative

orienting against a presupposed disbelief about his religious status.

As in the previous extracts, this opening narrative can be understood in the context of the ‘culture of disbelief’ that many asylum seekers face (Lynn and Lea, 2003, ICAR, 2012 etc.). Although I do not ask for an explanation of why his asylum claim was refused, he prioritises this in his interview. The negative decision on his case could map him onto the category ‘bogus asylum seeker’, without solid grounds for a claim. Here, however, he pre-empts this, and maps himself onto the category ‘innocent’ and ‘genuine’; the mistakes were not his own but the consequence of bureaucratic practices.

The following is another extract from my interview with Dorothy and Lisa (two members of the group ASWU). Here, as in the previous opening, Lisa provides an account for the initial negative decision on her claim. In this instance, my formulation can be heard to shape Lisa's response. I introduce advocacy as “*so support, legal, well-being, umm::*” (line 3) and she follows this with an account her problems with solicitors.

Extract Twelve

- 1 L: Ok so thanks for doing the interview and:: yeah like I just said I'd be interested
- 2 to hear about your- both of your experiences of being in the UK for, how ever
- 3 many years I'm not sure? An::d and then but focusing on your experiences of the
- 4 different like advocacy using that quite loosely so support, legal, well-being,
- 5 umm:: anything you've been involved in either doing yourself for other people or
- 6 receiving some support from another person. Have you got any questions?
- 7 (long pause)
- 8 (clears throat)
- 9 Li: Myself I've been in the UK since 2006, I think er:: (tut) to begin with I think
- 10 I've been in, for one year I was on free legal aid
- 11 L: right OK yeah
- 12 Li: I had a solicitor, but after one year when my asylum claim was turned down
- 13 my solicitor couldn't hold me any longer, but I don't know if the system here, the
- 14 way they did it I didn't like it
- 15 L: OK
- 16 A: When I receive a refusal I went to them they said no, I know I have 5 days to
- 17 appeal, so I was like I don't want those 5 days to expire, but I went there and
- 18 they told me yeah we'll get back to you, but we can't tell you a decision until after

19 5 days, so when I left there I went to another solicitors to see if they can do
 20 anything they said no until they have a letter from the other solicitor who is no
 21 longer interested in me. So after the 5 days have expired they didn't see- contact
 22 me, I had to call them and they said "oh we have sent your file to our head office
 23 in London and they have said there is nothing they can do there's no (----) there's
 24 nothing we can do we are sorry about that.
 25 L: right OK

Similarly to Omah, Lisa provides an account of how she is let down, this time by solicitors, in the UK. Through this account, she formulates herself as a person who is clued up about the asylum system and who has fought for proper legal representation; being repeatedly let down by solicitors and immigration judges. She formulates her narrative here as a complaint, about the decisions made on her case but also about the 'system' in general, "*but I don't know if the system here, the way they did it I didn't like it*" (line 13-14).

Lisa is a woman who understands the immigration system and pro-actively sought adequate legal representation. She is on top of her asylum claim, "*I know I have 5 days to appeal, so I was like I don't want those 5 days to expire (line 16-17)*"; she is pro-active, "*I had to call them*" (line 22), and fair "*my solicitor I don't know if I should say he was nice or he wasn't nice of course*" (line 28, below). On the other hand, the legal advocates and representatives that she has to deal with are unreliable, "*couldn't hold me any longer*" (line 13); ineffective, "*there's nothing we can do*" (line 23) and unfair, "*just a little that went against me. The immigration, immigration judge based it all this*" (line 39, below).

Extract Twelve (continued)

26 A: But now the fact is I have to appeal the expire so I kept on going from solicitor
 27 to solicitor they couldn't do anything and what really caused the problem also was
 28 that um:: my solicitor I don't know if I should say he was nice or he wasn't nice
 29 of course, be:: the refusal from the court the immigration judge based all his
 30 attention on the document that the solicitor put in my file
 31 L: right
 32 A: and I didn't see that document. I know there was an extra report during the
 33 research on my case but I didn't see the extra(?) report, he didn't show me the
 34 solicitor didn't show me, so he put it in, so I don't know if he wasn't nice to me

- 35 or maybe he didn't know the impact the report would have on me
 36 L: right OK
 37 A: cos the report was actually about 80/90 percent was in support of what I said
 38 L: mm hmm
 39 A: but just a little that went against me. The immigration, immigration judge based
 40 it all this,
 41 L: right OK and you never get to see that
 42 A: yeah and everywhere I go "oh:: the judge was so harsh on you oh the judge was
 43 so harsh" "why did your solicitor do this?" That is the only solicitor I go to to
 44 look for help. So I went on my own for two years I was fighting the
 45 immigration on my own

Through this complaint, Lisa sets herself up as a knowledgeable and determined woman, at the same time as rendering the legal system, and the representatives she has encountered, as inadequate and unfair. Lisa draws on the voices of others to support her claim, "*oh the judge was so harsh on you oh the judge was so harsh*", *'why did your solicitor do this?'*" (line 42-43). This reported speech aligns her account with the opinions of others, validating her innocence and the injustice she is facing. Again, as in Omah's narrative, the negative decision is formulated as the result of bureaucratic mishaps, rather than reflecting the legitimacy of her claims. Lisa foregrounds the inadequacies of the legal system, to which she falls prey. She responds to this ineptitude with a fight, "*so I went on my own for two years I was fighting the immigration on my own*" (line 44-45). In doing so, Lisa gives fervour to her claim and pre-empts any doubt that the refusal renders her claim illegitimate.

c. Not a Fake Asylum Seeker

The narratives above, in which the informants provide accounts of why they came to the UK, and why their claims have been refused, are hearable as orientations to the hostility that most asylum seekers and refugees are bogus and come to the UK with ulterior motives, either to 'cream off benefits' or to commit crimes. Below, I analyse three narratives in which the informants makes this orientation explicit. I demonstrate how informants deal with the issue of 'fake' asylum seekers or the pre-suppositions that they are lying; focusing on how this dichotomy is negotiated so as to establish for the

speaker incumbency of the category 'genuine' rather than 'fake' asylum seeker. I start with Lisa and Dorothy, who discuss their confusion about what one must do to be recognised as a genuine asylum seeker, identifying others who are 'fake'. An extract from Omah's narrative follows, in which he negotiates for himself the identity 'true' asylum seeker, against those who have lied about their reasons for coming to the UK. Finally, I include an extract from my interview with Janet in which she provides an account of why the Home Office concluded that she was lying about her asylum claim.

By constructing these biographical contrasts to accusations of malignancy, the informants assert their legitimacy (and in doing so consolidate the established order of what it means to be 'genuine'), but they also highlight the problem of recognition: although they attempt to map themselves to the category 'genuine asylum seeker', they are not always recognised as such.

The following extract is taken from my interview with Dorothy and Lisa. Here, they are talking about signing at Dallas Court, Manchester's Immigration Reporting Centre. They construct a contrast between themselves, who are "*compliant*" (line 14) and yet are still "*persecuted*" (line 28) and "*bogus asylum seeker, fake asylum seeker*" (line 15).

Extract Thirteen: *Lisa and Dorothy, June, 2010.*

1 D: and the other thing which I've noticed you know is about signing, which we
2 always do. I've been signing for 8 years now,

3 L: OK, at Dallas court?

4 D: At Dallas Court. And there are some people who are signing like weekly, my
5 daughter is signing every::: Tuesday

6 L: right OK

7 D: no matter what, rain or sunshine or whatever, she has to sign weekly, there are
8 some other people who are signing like maybe after every six months,

9 Li: yeah

10 D: or three months

11 L: right OK

12 D: and sometimes you wonder what criteria does really the Home Office follow?

13 L: OK

14 D: because there are some other people who are being compliant in there and this
 15 issue of bogus asylum seeker, fake asylum seeker, you don't know really who is
 16 genuine asylum seekers and who:- you know because we know there are some
 17 people who come in the country and they are living underground, maybe they
 18 came on a visitors visa and they are underground. But for us, you are being
 19 compliant with them for all eight years

20 Li: hmm::

21 D: and you are still everyday going to sign, everyday going to sign, everyday and
 22 you wonder what really, you know, make them to know that this person is telling
 23 the truth

24 L: right::

25 D: this person has been signing. Because some people they just stop signing,
 26 because they are afraid if we go there maybe they will deport us.

27 L: right ok:

28 D: so they go underground. And for you- you are being persecuted for being
 29 innocent for, for, obeying...

By narrating their compliance the women put into question the criteria that the Home Office follows; formulating their decision making as arbitrary, “*what criteria does the Home Office really follow?*” (line 12). On what grounds do they question this decision making? The women organise their narrative around the membership categories, 'genuine asylum seekers' and 'bogus' or 'fake' asylum seekers.

The women formulate themselves as belonging to the category 'genuine

asylum seeker'. They comply by Home Office procedure, signing at Dallas Court every week "*no matter what rain or sunshine*" (line 7). Indeed in line 28-29 they explicitly assert their innocence. In contrast to this, they identify the category 'fake asylum seekers'; those who came into the country on visitors visa's and are living underground. Lisa and Dorothy reproduce these hegemonic markers of refugee legitimacy through their narrative; their claim to innocence is constructed in way of a contrast to those who are not. They accept the hostility theme that some asylum seekers are bogus, but they manage their exclusion from this category. Although this works to deny the generality of the theme, it reproduces the logic on which it is based: some asylum seekers are genuine, others are fake, and that these categories should elicit different treatment under the immigration system.

Again, the women encounter problems with being recognised as genuine, despite their efforts to map themselves to this category, both discursively (we are innocent) and through their actions (being compliant). In this sense, 'genuine asylum seeker' is an un-liveable category. Although their activities should map them onto the category 'genuine asylum seeker' (eliciting the appropriate responses, i.e. more flexible signing conditions), they do not. They are continually denied and asked to sign. Conforming to the expectations of the Home Office does not confer on these women the treatment that it should. Their self-ascription to the 'genuine asylum seeker' category is not recognised by the establishment. They formulate 'fake asylum seekers' as part of this problem; how are the Home Office supposed to know who is telling the truth? Lisa and Dorothy then are victims of their treatment by the authorities and of the 'fake asylum seekers' who put into question their legitimacy. The notion of 'fake asylum seekers' is not treated as a product of hostility but as a reality that contributes to their own exclusion.

Ironically, whilst the women struggle to be recognised as genuine asylum seekers, the Home Office inadequacy, and the issue of 'bogus asylum seekers', prevents them from being recognised (and treated) as such. 'Genuine asylum seeker' is presented here as an un-performable category, they can act as one should but this performance is not recognised.

In the following extract Omah develops his account of why his asylum claim was rejected. It is through his specific experiences with the Home Office that he is confronted with suspicion about his legitimacy as an asylum seeker. He negotiates his identity relationally to those whose cases are untrue, who “*come to this country...but maybe fifty per cent is true, fifty per cent is not true*” (line 1-2).

Extract Fourteen: *Omah, March, 2010.*

- 1 O: But when I hear the people they come to this country they, you know, they
- 2 make- they have a stay but there case maybe fifty per cent is true, fifty per cent is
- 3 not true,
- 4 L: mm:: hmm::
- 5 O: but they have a stay. I said everything's true I know a- I don't understand about
- 6 the case now experienced what I say
- 7 L: mm:: hmm::
- 8 O: then I hear the people they say you're true you know everything's, no body
- 9 believe you.. and then they say to you 'liar',
- 10 L: right yeah
- 11 O: I don't know (sigh) I don't know why some people, if you sit and talk to them
- 12 for about half an hour ask them about their case what they say they maybe five
- 13 percent some people they true, ninety five percent is not true, but they have a stay
- 14 L: why do you think that is?
- 15 O: I don't know. You know there's, they say like (---) if you go to the interview
- 16 and you say like this like this, they know the law
- 17 L: right yeah
- 18 O: when you know the law, you say the truth it's my life it's my it's my work it's
- 19 this, they say 'refused'. You do say the truth, but some truths they not believe

Again, Omah's complaint about the decision made on his case is formulated around the following participant collections; those who tell the truth, to which he is incumbent, and those who don't. Omah sets up a moral discrepancy between himself, for whom "*everything's true*" (line 5) and the people for whom "*fifty per cent is not true*" (line 2). Omah distances himself from the people who "*come to this country*" (line 1) and "*have a stay*" even though their stories are "*fifty per cent... not true*" (line 1). On the other hand, he asserts the truthfulness of his story (line 5) and evidences this through the voices of others who, "*say you're true*" (line 8). But still, no-one believes him, and he is labelled a liar, "*no body believes you, and then they say to you liar*" (line 8-9). Again, despite his attempts to manage his incumbency of the collection 'those who tell the truth', "*they*" (line 19) (who through their activities are hearable as the Home Office), do not recognise this.

Similarly to Dorothy and Lisa, Omah narrates a struggle over being recognised as a 'genuine asylum seeker' - ultimately this is a decision the Home Office makes. As categories codified in law their incumbency is contingent on bureaucratic decisions, the contested nature of their identities is at the same time contingent on and has implications for their acceptance or refusal by the state. Again the impossibility of being recognised as 'genuine' is played out.

Again, the Home Office decision is formulated as arbitrary, and further confused by those who claim asylum and do not tell the truth. Omah puts into question the logic that the Home Office uses to make decisions about someone's asylum claim, "*they have a stay but there case maybe fifty per cent is true*" (line 2), "*I don't understand*" (line 5). He formulates them as unreliable in their judgement "*you do say the truths, but some truths they not believe*" (line 19). Omah saves his face in a sense; although his claim is refused, which could map him onto the hostile category 'bogus asylum seeker', by pointing out the fallibilities of the Home Office and the malignancy of some asylum claimants, he is able to negotiate for himself the identity 'innocent victim'. He tells the truth yet he is denied refuge.

The informants demonstrate a struggle to re-work their participant categories. As Suchman outlines, in her review of category change, using Sack's Hot Rodders paper as an example, "*systems of categorization are ordering devices, used to organize the persons, settings, events or activities by whom they are employed*" (Suchman, 1994, p.182). The hostiles then, and, particularly in these examples the Home Office, dictate the categories. The challenge for the informants is to manage their incumbency of a new category: genuine asylum seeker. However as Suchman points out, "*membership categorization is appropriable as a technology of control by some parties over others, acts of resistance involve a taking back of systems of naming and assessment into indigenous categorization schemes developed by the "others" themselves. Or to which they refer*" (p. 182).

Here, the informants attempt to 'take back this system of naming', but their efforts fall on deaf ears. Additionally, through their attempts to negotiate for themselves a credible identity, they further reinforce the bogus/genuine dichotomy and the moral framework on which this separation is contingent.

In the following interview, Janet talks about her experience at her Home Office interview where they didn't believe her reason for coming to the country. Again, Janet provides an account of why the Home Office refused her case, specifically, why they thought she was lying in her interview. By doing so Janet manages her identity as naïve innocent rather than manipulative liar.

Extract Fifteen: Janet, June, 2010.

- 1 J: sometimes when I'm thinking what happened to me home, I'm thinking, when I
- 2 come here what happened to me before the beginning (..) Home Office doesn't
- 3 believe me I don't know for which reason because you know my country, the
- 4 country I come from when you speak to someone with respect you're not
- 5 supposed to look the one eye
- 6 L: mm:: right
- 7 J: you have to make like this speaking [looks down] I use that I grow like that
- 8 L: right yeah [that's what you're used to
- 9 J: you have to] you have to bend your eyes down
- 10 L: ok

- 11 J: but sometimes you don't use that you know when someone is speak to me like
 12 the Home Office I cannot this is big person I cannot look in the face like this
 13 Home Office say "why do you not watch my eye, [maybe you lying]"
 14 L: right ok]
 15 J: it's not like that , I grow, the way I grow and I speak to my elder I have to put
 16 my head down
 17 L: right OK
 18 J: but when I come here it's different, it's different

Janet states in line 2 that, "*Home Office doesn't believe me I don't know for which reason*" and goes on to provide an account of why they might have accused her of lying. Their decision not to believe her case is not attributed to the quality, or content, of her story, but to inter-personal features of the Home Office interview setting. She formulates the disbelief as contingent on cultural misunderstandings, rather than on the questionable nature of her story. The particular cultural mis-understanding she narrates has the dual effect of presenting her as childlike and obeying; a contrast to the character implications made by the accusation of lying. She puts the activity of being disbelieved under description in such a way as to foreground her innocence.

In contrast to the category 'bogus asylum seeker', which is implied by the Home Offices accusation of lying, "*why do you not watch my eye, maybe you lying*" (line 13) she negotiates for herself the identity of a submissive and almost child-like person. She is someone who has been brought up with strict rules about how to engage with her elders and who abides by this etiquette, "*the country I come from when you speak to someone with respect you're not supposed to look the one eye*" (lines 4-5). Her account negotiates for her the identity respectful submissive rather than lying cheat. Again, she stresses her compliance, describing the Home Office official as a "*big person*" (line 12) who she has to respect, but this is not recognised by the Home Office (as in Elizabeth, Lisa and Omah's narratives).

Each of these narratives is constructed in orientation to a presupposition that the narrators are liars. In each case the Home Office is the specific source of this hostility. However the informants do not simply deny the allegation of lying, they formulate their denial in orientation to the position that some

asylum seekers are bogus. In doing so, they acknowledge this generalised hostility and negate their incumbency of the category 'bogus asylum seeker'. They do this by constructing a biographical contrast that stresses their compliance, innocence and truthfulness. In all cases, the difficulty lies in having this category change recognised by the authorities, in this sense their narratives also work to position the Home Office as a body which makes arbitrary decisions, gives people 'a stay' even though they have lied, and misunderstands cultural difference in communication. This position works to diminish the credibility of the institution, and the category work it manages for the informants.

d. Suffering as *complaint*: Victims of the System and Precarious Lives?

Part of managing one's incumbency of the category 'genuine asylum seeker', in response to the hostile accusation that many asylum seekers are bogus, is to diminish one's agency and to assert one's status as a victim of Home Office malpractice. In Chapter Three, in particular, we saw that advocates foregrounded the victim-hood of their clients in order to dispute aspersion of illegitimacy or criminality. In Chapter Four, the advocates tended to negotiate a switching of the victim-perpetrator activity-occasioned pairing; with the media, government or public positioned as the perpetrators of hostility and asylum seekers/refugees the receivers of this brutality. The latter, then, focused their narratives around the inadequacies of the Home Office, rather than the suffering of refugees. In this section I will explore the extent to which asylum-seeking informants comply with this victim (and partial victim) status.

Similarly to the data I analysed in Chapter Four, the 'victim narratives' that featured in the asylum seeker/refugee narratives were commonly framed as complaints about the immigration system and the Home Office. Interviewees negotiated for themselves the identities 'victims of injustice/exclusion', particularly in relation to 'support' and 'vouchers'. However this incumbency was not managed on the basis of detailed descriptions of suffering and passivity (as in Chapter Three). Rather the interviewees commonly formulated themselves as active people trying to

change their lives *despite* the injustice they face; asserting themselves as active, intelligent and skilled people who want to work and participate normally in society, but who are prevented from doing so.

In Chapter Three *Refugee Act Now* described their clients as “*Hungry and homeless, they are living in a kind of limbo, banned from working yet unable to access benefits*” (Extract Ten). Whilst this accurately represents many of the experiences that the informants shared with me in the interviews (many of the women and men report exclusion from work and benefits as problems in their lives), the image of asylum seekers/refugees that is negotiated in the *Refugee Act Now* text is of the suffering, helpless victim. They are “in limbo”, “hungry and homeless”. The analysis that follows demonstrates that, through their narratives, the informants formulate themselves as much more than the 'mute victims' that characterise some of the publicity materials.

The following extract is taken from my interview with Dorothy and Lisa, and is constructed explicitly as a complaint about the situation Lisa has found herself in in the UK. The focus of the narrative is on the lack of financial and welfare support she receives. The perpetrator of the offences is left un-named, however “*they*” (line 10) are readable as the UKBA (they are the body of people who are responsible for support, detention and housing). This narrative is at once an explicit complaint and a description of her suffering.

Extract Sixteen

- 1 A: Even if you say no to my refusal letter you keep me in the house, I need to have
- 2 shelter over me even if I need to do another fresh claim. I need to have a certain
- 3 place where I can have to go to do something else
- 4 L: right yeah
- 5 A: keep me there, support me, maybe when you want to take me you come and
- 6 take me to the detention house. Is the aim of doing it,
- 7 L: mm hmm::
- 8 A: than pushing me onto the streets
- 9 L: [so in the time being

- 10 A: they push me onto the street,] the support they're stopping they push me on the
 11 street, I need a roof, maybe I meet someone who pretend "oh I will give you- I
 12 will shelter you" and I go there and the next day you find 11 me dead.
- 13 L: Right ok
- 14 A: What will you do?
- 15 L: Mm::
- 16 A: Is that, my life is not important? Is my document more important than human
 17 life? So:: It tortures me too much

At this point it is important to factor into the analysis that Lisa is making this complaint to myself, the interviewer, someone she knows to be an advocate for asylum seeker/refugee rights and who has supported her in her own asylum claim. It is probable, then, that I am someone Lisa is comfortable making this complaint to. Indeed, Lisa positions me as an ally by making the complaint to me; under different circumstances, and with a different inter-locutor, she might formulate this complaint less directly. However, when we consider the complaints made through the voices of Monica and Khumbalani in her play (see Extract Seven, Chapter Three), we can hear her complaint as general and intended for a public audience.

In line 1 Lisa questions the Home Office practice of giving people, whose asylum claims have been refused, only 28 days to leave their supported accommodation. Lisa makes an ethical challenge to this policy, "*even if you say no to my refusal letter you keep me in the house, I need to have shelter over me*" (line 1-2); challenging the Home Office (their agency is implied-as the instigators of this policy) on the grounds of her most basic rights. Lisa's criticism of the policy is made on the grounds of her welfare; by making her homeless they put her in to a number of hypothetically dangerous situations. Ultimately, she could end up dead (line 11). In the face of this policy, which she formulates as an undermining of the value of her life, "*Is my document more important than human life?*" (line 16-17), she asserts her vulnerability.

However, as was the case with the previous extracts, the decision over how

Lisa is categorised and with what consequences, is not her own. Lisa formulates the decision to end her support as unfair; she sees herself as a genuine asylum seeker whose rights should be respected. However this self-categorisation is not grounds for fair treatment, the UKBA ultimately decide on whether she is bogus or genuine. Again there is a struggle over the politics of categorisation (Suchman, 1994); the Home Office ultimately allocate these categories, with concrete consequences for how Lisa is treated.

In line 9 Lisa expands on the consequences of this policy. By detailing this hypothetical (yet possible) situation with this level of granularity Lisa foregrounds the risk that she is put under through these actions. By having to rely on others for shelter her safety is compromised “*‘oh I will give you- I will shelter you’ and I go there and the next day you find me dead*” (line 11-12).

In line 15 she makes her case more acutely, “*Is that, my life is not important? Is my document more important than human life? So:: It tortures me too much*” (line 16-17). This treatment by the Home Office is a second torture. She contrasts her claim to a basic human life, with the mundane Home Office bureaucracy. She negotiates for herself the identity ‘tortured victim’ and the Home Office as a body that values documents over lives. Her victim status works to foreground the inhumane practices of the Home Office. It is at once a welfare claim, and a political claim (but made on the premise of her bodily suffering).

In many ways the narrative here mirrors the kinds of narratives we saw in Chapter Three, as asylum seekers/refugees, “*on the horns of an awful dilemma*” (Extract Eleven). She maps herself onto the category ‘victim’, but she is not a passive victim (as we have seen elsewhere in the thesis/literature). She is a victim speaking out about her plight and locating the blame with the immigration system. She is suffering, but she is also posing a challenge.

In the following extract we hear the voice of Elizabeth again. She also

brings up the issue of support, which she introduces as “*one other thing that I wanted to mention*” (line 1). Again, Elizabeth positions me as a person to whom she can comfortably make this complaint, indeed I align myself with her in line 22 on the issues of vouchers. To this extent, my particular role as interviewer has a degree of procedural consequentiality. Elizabeth introduces the issue of support as something that she wants to discuss; that she states that she “*wanted to mention*” it (line 1), suggests that it was a priority of hers to get this onto the agenda of the interview. As we will see, in the interviews here, the issue of support is a prominent feature of most of the narratives. In many cases, this is formulated as a complaint, and Elizabeth’s, “*I have no support from immigration*” (line 2-3) can also be read as a complaint that she would like to have heard in the interview. That the informants present me with these complaints perhaps indicates their willingness for me to take them forward, either through my academic work or through my campaigning and advocacy activities, which they are mostly aware of. In this sense, the informants situate the interview as an opportunity to voice these complaints and have them heard, perhaps treating me as a advocate who might take these complaints further.

Extract Seventeen

- 1 E: so one other thing that I wanted to- to mention about the support, do you know
- 2 at the moment, [---], I have
- 3 no support from immigration
- 4 L: right ok
- 5 E: I have no house from immigration, I’m living with my boyfriend
- 6 L: ok
- 7 K: my partner, I have no support
- 8 L:mm::
- 9 E: when I used to use the voucher before, because I was arrested again in 2009,
- 10 first time I was arrested in 2006 I did three months in detention and came out but
- 11 in 2009 I was arrested again. You know myself I do not have children. But I
- 12 have two children I’m taking care of
- 13 L: ok
- 14 E: my sister died
- 15 L: right ok [sorry
- 16 E: they live in xxxx] they need to go to school to study, I had no money to support
- 17 them
- 18 L: OK

- 19 E: the voucher I used to receive couldn't help me to support
 20 L: of course
 21 E: because the voucher I can't have the cash with it
 22 L: yeah, you can only [use it in certain places
 23 E: I can't because for myself I can't it is very very hard, very very hard, at the
 24 moment I'm telling you these kids they do not attend the school and they are girls,
 25 what about their future?
 26 L: right, are they in the xxxx still?
 27 E: they're in the xxxx very very sad (...) no one to take care of them at the
 28 moment, I have no financial support for them, because of myself I am sorry. [It
 29 is very very difficult.
 30 L: right yeah]
 31 E: you know, I can say, my experience here is sometimes bad and good
 32 L: mm:: hmm:: yeah

What these complaints achieve is a demonstration of the consequentiality of categorisations. Participant categories, as other-conferred, are not just a process of labelling, but have terrible consequences, not just for the informants, but for their friends and families. Again, formulated as a complaint, the emphasis of the narrative is at once on her suffering at the hands of the immigration system and on the failures of the system to provide what she needs. The narrative is multi-dimensional; she does not negotiate for herself the identity 'pure victim, she is an agentive actor, with a complaint to make and opinions on the future of her sister's children. She is a carer in an environment that jeopardises her ability to care. This dynamic narrative, of suffering and complaint, deviates from the 'pure victims' that we saw in Chapter Three, and that were presented as characteristic of refugee representations in the literature (Malkki, 1996). She is not simply hungry and homeless. Although the vouchers she receives put huge limits on her financially "*the voucher I used to receive couldn't help me to support [the children]*" (line 19), there is depth to her complaint; she can only spend them in certain places, she cannot support her sister's children. What is at stake here is more than her basic welfare, it is her civil right to autonomy and choice, and the future of the children. This goes beyond the 'asylum seekers as merely surviving' representation we saw in Chapter Three (Extract 10/11), these are people who want choices and good futures for themselves and their families.

In line 5-6 she asserts her desire for independence, she is not just surviving, she has preferences on who she lives with and on what terms, “*I am living with my boyfriend, my partner, I have no support*”. She formulates herself as a woman who does not want to be dependent on her partner. She wants to be independent, or at least not dependent on others. She is also a carer, a responsible adult with concerns for her sister’s children who she looks after, “*they need to go to school to study, I had no money to support them*” (line 16). This concern shifts the focus from her problems, to the children she is trying to care for; she doesn’t foreground her victim-hood, she prioritises the children’s disadvantage. In doing so, she foregrounds ethics of care related to children and counters the hostility theme documented in Leudar et al. (2008) in which ‘asylum seekers’ were deemed to be ‘lacking in care for their children’. This mirrors the formulation made by Lisa with regards to the future of Dorothy’s family and the social responsibility of the UK government (Extract Four). The UK asylum system is letting down future society by not taking appropriate measures to protect children, “*I’m telling you these kids they do not attend the school and they are girls, what about their future?*” (line 24-25).

Although this is a narrative of her suffering; she is dependent on her partner, her sister has died and she cannot provide for the children, it is also a narrative that foregrounds the inadequacies of the immigration system rather than her identity as victim. How so? The identity she negotiates for herself is that of an independent, responsible woman in dire circumstances. She is someone who cares for children, who is responsible and sees the importance of them going to school in contrast to the ‘immigration’, who give her these vouchers and refuse to provide adequate housing. It is the children’s suffering that is foregrounded; her lack of finances is a problem for her in that it is a problem for these children. Her suffering features but is not the crux of her argument.

Elizabeth is more than a victim; she is a woman with a complaint. Her narrative is rich and complex; she negotiates for herself the identity of responsible agentive woman, in very hard and sad circumstances. As she

states in line 31 her “*experience here is sometimes bad and good*”. It is important to note here that to some extent I collaborate with the women in making these complaints. For example, in line 22 I uphold Elizabeth’s complaint about vouchers, “*yeah, you can only use it in certain places*”, foregrounding my position as an ally, and to some extent inviting the informants to continue.

In the next extract, Elizabeth develops her self-presentation, again through a complaint about the problems her legal status and the vouchers cause for her. In line 3, I collude with Elizabeth more explicitly, in response to her emotional disclosure in lines 1-2. As I outlined in Chapter Two, it is at times appropriate to go beyond the minimal contributions that traditionally characterise narrative interviews. In this case, Elizabeth became very upset and I felt it was appropriate to summarise for her this part of her narrative that focuses on her usefulness despite her difficult situation. This formulation is in line with the narrative Elizabeth had presented to me thus far, yet at the same time provided me with an empathic response. In line 6 Elizabeth takes on this formulation in agreement “*that’s why I try to manage...*”. Although I have colluded with her here this formulation is in line with the narrative she had already begun to construct in line one.

Extract Eighteen: *Elizabeth, June, 2010.*

- 1 E: I’m useful. I can do something but I can’t I have no status, no paper,
- 2 immigration doesn’t accept me yes- yet so it’s very hard, very hard (starts to cry)
- 3 L: you obviously are very strong I mean you- it sounds like you are doing a lot
- 4 despite not having your status there’s lots of things that you’re doing at the
- 5 moment
- 6 E: that’s why I try to manage and I say, I say “no let me wake up, I cannot sleep
- 7 forever, let me wake up”. I went to the college now
- 8 L: yeah
- 9 E: I’m involved in different organisation.
- 10 L: yeah
- 11 E: I try to build myself I feel a little bit better
- 12 L: right
- 13 E: not better at all but a little bit

At this point in the narrative, Elizabeth becomes very upset as she describes

her experience as “*very, very hard*” and attributes this to not having her status, “*I have no status, no paper*” (lines 1-2). Again, however, her suffering is tied in with a political complaint about her recognition as a refugee and her entitlement to rights. “*The immigration*” (line 1) is located as the source of the problem; keeping her passive by withholding her status, “*I can do something but I can’t I have no status*” (line 1). However, Elizabeth foregrounds her usefulness and determination; trying to be active and to use her skills despite this. She formulates herself as someone with skills that she is being denied to use, she is strong and determined, “*I say “no let me wake up, I cannot sleep forever, let me wake up”*” (lines 6-7). By going to college and getting involved in organisations (which we will hear more in the next section of this chapter), she negotiates for herself the identity active determined woman, despite the situation she is being put in by the Home Office. She is helping herself to feel better despite their actions. She does not formulate this as easy “*I try to build myself I feel a little bit better*” (line 11) but she is taking action to improve how she feels and to some extent it is working “*not better at all but a little bit*” (line 13). This determined and resilient voice of an asylum seeking woman is something that was rare in the publicity materials.

Here it is the ‘immigration’ that makes her inactive. She is not lazy or incapable (as the hostiles would have it); the system is preventing her from using her skills. It is this that causes the inactivity and again this is formulated as a complaint against which her determination is foregrounded. Importantly, unlike the demands made in Chapter Three for fairer treatment of asylum seekers/refugees (or for temporary protection, see the text from *Refugee Act Now*; ‘Extract Eleven’, Chapter Three) Elizabeth, and the other informants, organise their complaints around the issue of categorisation and recognition of their refugee status; this recognition is at the crux of their complaints. Temporary protection would do little to resolve this dilemma.

e. Active Lives

As we have seen in the extracts above, the issue of status, and of support,

plays a figurative role in many of the narratives. The issue of legal status, and particularly the limits that the immigration system puts on working or receiving benefits, are formulated as important factors on which the agency of the interviewees lives are contingent.

In Chapter Three we saw reports of asylum seekers/refugees as being trapped, stripped of their dignity and silenced by the restrictions placed on them by immigration system. Lisa mirrored this formulation, stating that she is tortured by these restrictions, that she is pushed into homelessness and that her life is at risk. Elizabeth makes a similar complaint, the vouchers she receives do not allow her to send her sister's children to school, she states explicitly, "*I'm useful, I can do something, but I can't, I have no status, no paper*" (Extract 20, Line 1).

This negotiation of one-self as capable, but restricted, is notable as a reoccurring pattern. Here, we hear the informants narrating themselves as agents in their own change, not just receivers of help, and as people with complaints to make and whose demands go beyond the purely physical. These self-presentations are noticeable in their divergence from the 'pure victims' that have been documented as characterising the advocacy discourse, and that we saw in the publicity materials analysed in Chapter Three.

In this section I will look at features of the narratives in which the interviewees narrate themselves as capable and agentive forces in their own lives; contributing to their communities, giving back and drawing out the positive aspects of their lives as asylum claimants in the UK.

Only two of the interviewees who took part in this research had their refugee status at the time of the interview, in both interviews getting their status is formulated as a pivotal point in the narrative; enabling them to participate in society again, in particular to live a "*general life*" (Extract Twenty One) and to "*give back*" (Extract Twenty Two). However, as we will see interviewees who do not have their refugee status also report transformations in their life attributable to getting involved in organisations,

helping others and keeping busy.

The following is taken from my interview with Mrs Belba, who had recently been granted her leave to remain with the help of ILAM. At this point in the interview (line 1), I ask her what her plan is now she has her status, specifically I introduce an activity she mentioned previously; that she intended on “*going to go and visit your Mum*” (line 1).

Extract Nineteen: *Mrs Belba, March, 2010.*

- 1 L: and so what's your plan now you said you're going to go and visit your [Mum
- 2 in Nigeria
- 3 MB: yeah yeah just to stay] with my Mum and then come back
- 4 L: right yeah
- 5 MB: just for the two weeks (laughing) just for the two weeks holiday
- 6 L: right ok
- 7 MB: so then I'll come back and look for a job to do, so I'll be working, I'll take
- 8 good care of my daughter
- 9 L: yeah
- 10 MB: and general life, as we expect it to be before
- 11 L: yeah::
- 12 MB: (laughing)

Prior to my question, “*so what's your plan now?*”, in line 1, we have been talking about how she has recently been granted her Leave to Remain. Here, Mrs Belba formulates her future as a return to “*general life, as we expect it to be before*” (line 10). The activities she describes, visiting family, looking for a job, working, caring for her daughter, map her onto category ‘ordinary woman’. She didn’t expect to find herself in these circumstances. As she stated in the opening of her interview (Extract Six), she had a “*general life*” before and she wants to return to this; she is an ordinary woman in extraordinary circumstances. The activities she details in line 7, “*I'll come back and look for a job to do, so I'll be working, I'll take good care of my daughter*”, negotiate for her the identity 'active citizen' and 'good mother', and bear a stark contrast to the hostility themes that Leudar et al. (2008) observed where asylum seekers/refugees were formulated as lazy and lacking in care for their children.

She formulates for herself a desire to return to her normal life, doing normal mundane things as she had expected to be doing on arriving in the UK. This formulation mirrors that made, in the opening of her interview where she formulates herself as an ordinary woman looking for work in the UK, then forced into prostitution. The UK wasn't what she expected (a theme that occurs in several of the other interviews, i.e. Elizabeth, Janet, Lisa and Dorothy); she is an ordinary woman with ordinary expectations.

Her laughter in lines 5 and 12 where she speaks of “*going on a two week holiday*” and having a “*general life*” can be read as delight at the fact that she is now free to do these things and also index the notability of these ordinarily mundane activities. The laughter marks the notability of these actions, “*just for the two weeks holiday*” (line 5), to have a passport, to be able to leave the UK, to go on holiday and to return to Nigeria for a 'two week holiday', voluntarily, on one's own terms, is notable and noted here (through the laughter) as a series of activities that predicate the category 'citizen'. At this time to be able to do this is formulated as novel. In this sense, her refugee-hood is omni-present and is what makes these activities notable to talk about. She formulates herself as an ordinary person against the backdrop of her extraordinary circumstances.

The following is taken from my interview with Jasmine who we heard from in 'Extract One' of this chapter and who I met through the organisation ILAM. Jasmine's narrative is striking at times in its divergence from many of the themes that typically characterise asylum seeker/refugee narratives (Extract Ten). Jasmine was granted her refugee status shortly before the time of the interview and here, like Mrs Belba, she formulates this as a pivotal moment in her life with consequences for how she participates in society and everyday life.

Extract Twenty: *Jasmine, March, 2010.*

- 1 J: like I am I've fitted in now I'm a bit more grounded like before I used to like
- 2 feel in- as I said intimidated and I went into my shell because you don't know who
- 3 to trust or what people are going to judge you or look down on you so you

4 become a recluse in yourself but as I said now I've got my confidence back and I'm
5 ready to take on anything

6 L: right [(laughs)]

7 J: (laughs)]

8 L: so why do you think that is like what's the change

9 J: the change is me getting my leave to remain to feel as I said like a part of
10 society as now as I said I'm giving back to feel like your giving back something

11 L: right OK [yeah

12 J: your not just ta]- like I said people think you're here just to take, take, take but
13 this me I'm willing to give back and like I said it makes me into a bigger person
14 cos before I would be like not say angry but I have time for people now I listen
15 more and I'm more compassionate about... I can say my experience during my life
16 has made me a better person cos I could have took it the wrong way and let it
17 destroy me and let me be angry and so on but I don't want to be angry I don't
18 want to be living in an angry society so you know I want to go out there and make
19 the most of my life now

20 L: right OK yeah yeah so you see it very much as it could have turned you into an
21 angry person

22 J: it could have turned me into a really- I could have been on the street I could
23 have been in drugs I've come close to giving it all up, I've come close to you
24 know but then I thought this is not me how I want to be I don't want to take
25 drugs I don't want to work to do stuff to make money

Jasmine treats her self-presentation as contingent on circumstances, particularly on getting her leave to remain (line 9). Before, she was “*intimidated*”, in her “*shell*”, un-trusting, self-conscious, judged, looked down upon, reclusive and not part of society (line 1-4). Indeed, in line 23, she states that she has “*come close to giving it all up*”. Prior to getting her Leave to Remain, she was desperate and isolated. On the other hand, she attributes the following characteristics to having her status; she is grounded, confident, part of society and able to give something back. In line 4-5 she states that she is “*ready to take on anything*”; this extreme case formulation

further sharpens the contrast between how she presents herself before and after being granted her status. This change does not have only practical consequences, but personal ones; “*now I’ve got my confidence back*” (line 4).

Interestingly, Jasmine situates her experience of asylum seeking and getting her leave to remain, as part of her 'life experience' which has made her a better person, “*I can say my experience during my life has made me a better person ‘cos I could have took it the wrong way and let it destroy me...*” (line 15-16). Getting her Leave to Remain is constructed as a pivotal part of her narrative, which has given her new strength. Again, the significance of this life event makes explicit the importance of this form of recognition in the lives of many of the informants.

Jasmine formulates herself as a person with a new lease of life, contingent on her refugee status, and in orientation, not just to the exclusion that asylum seeking entails, but also to the hostility, “*people think you’re here just to take take take but this me, I’m willing to give back*” (line 12-13). Jasmine does not challenge this assumption, however she formulates the asylum system as having an intimidating and exclusionary impact; narrating the possible consequences the hostility could have had, “*I could have took it the wrong way and let it destroy me and let me be angry and so on but I don’t want to be angry I don’t want to be living in an angry society*” (line 16-18). Here, she reminds the listener of the horror of her experience, it could have destroyed her. In contrast to this, she foregrounds her strength and commitment to rise above it, for the sake of herself and the society she lives in, “*I don’t want to be living in an angry society so you know I want to go out there and make the most of my life now*” (line 18-19). She narrates herself as a person who wants to be an active member of society in contrast to the hostility. The experience then is one that “*makes me into a bigger person*” (line 13) and a “*better person*” (line 16).

Jasmine's narrative at this point is largely organised around the impact of having 'status' on how one can live one's life in the UK. In orientation to the hostility that asylum seekers 'take take take', she asserts her agency and

desire to be an active member of society. In doing so, she partially usurps the hostile logic that asylum claimants are deliberately idle; formulating this idleness (and all the psychological consequences it entails, as detailed in lines 1-3) as contingent on having status. However, the narrative is also personal, it is Jasmine's desires and attitudes that are formulated as motivating her actions, she is agentive in her decisions and choices. Where it could have made her angry, instead it has made her more compassionate. She constructs her experience as a journey of personal growth in which she has hit rock bottom and developed as a person; learning about herself and her role in society. This also foregrounds a moral discrepancy between her own values and the system which pushes people to homelessness, drugs and working "*to do stuff to make money*" (line 25). The possible consequences of the hostility and the exclusion; desperation, criminality and poverty, bear a stark contrast to the woman speaking before us who is courageous, strong and willing.

Jasmine's agency, at this part of her narrative, then, is contingent on her getting her Leave to Remain, but also on the choices she has made for herself in her life. Many people do not pass through the system unscathed and indeed Jasmine constructs her experience of asylum seeking as something that could have ruined her, pushed her into drugs and homelessness. Jasmine, however, presents herself as someone who has made choices that have shaped her experience and the impact it has on her.

The positivity in the previous two narratives is located around the pivotal moments of getting one's Leave to Remain. However, the majority of the informants that I interviewed here, and indeed who access the organisations under analysis, were men and women in the midst of their asylum claims. Many were appealing refusals and facing imminent removal of benefits and housing. Yet, this positivity featured in many of the interviews I collected. In this following extracts, I will demonstrate how this positivity is located in the ordeals of the men and women who have not yet had a positive decision on their claims.

The following extract is taken from my interview with Janet, who we heard

from in Extract Five (where she provided an account of hostility towards 'black people'), and who is seeking asylum and accessing numerous support services at *Refugee Act Now*. At this point in the interview, Janet is discussing her weekly schedule, formulating herself as a very busy woman involved in many different activities.

Extract Twenty One: *Janet, June, 2010.*

- 1 L: so everyday
- 2 J: ah everyday, everyday different different, Friday I'm going to ASWU I'm going
- 3 to college Friday morning until twelve
- 4 L: mm::
- 5 J: after twelve I go to ASWU
- 6 L: right
- 7 J: Monday I go to college until- until two uh until one o'clock I go to Refugee Act
- 8 Now I go to Revive
- 9 L: right
- 10 J: one o'clock Tuesday I'm very busy have to sign Tuesday but not every Tuesday
- 11 L: mm::
- 12 J: I have to go see my counselling, I have to go see GP, GP I have to see
- 13 counselling Tuesday I have to go gym Tuesday
- 14 L: right
- 15 J: uh:: then Wednesday I'm going to swimming swimming class
- 16 L: yeah
- 17 J: and uh and you go to swimming
- 18 L: yeah
- 19 J: and Thursday I'm going to I'm going to British Red Cross woman group
- 20 L: right for the English classes?
- 21 J: yeah English class, Friday I go to ASWU I got to college I go to ASWU
- 22 L: right yeah (laughs)
- 23 J: (laughs) I'm very busy
- 24 L: at the weekends are just you like (mimes falling into bed)
- 25 J: by the time I go to bed ahh I feel tired I just want to sleep
- 26 L: right yeah I bet yeah (..) mm::
- 27 (pause)

Janet brings these activities together in such a way as to describe her life as being varied and busy, "*everyday, everyday different different...*" (line 2). I collude with her on this description of events in line 24 when I offer the formulation, "*at the weekend are just you like (mimes falling into bed)*". In

doing so, we mutually accomplish her status as an active woman. The long list of activities she describes give the impression that her week consists, quite literally, of one thing after the next. She is getting an education, she is participating in various refugee groups, she is swimming and attending appointments with her GP and the Home Office. She formulates herself as a woman who is in control of her life and is making choices about where she goes. Implicitly, the 'asylum seeker' category is implied through the specific activities she describes: reporting, attending English classes and groups for asylum seekers. The trauma that she may be experiencing is also implied through the activity of attending counselling, for example. However, explicitly she manages her incumbency of the category 'busy woman'. Primarily here, Janet presents herself as a particularly busy woman engaged in a range of social and personal activities.

Whether or not Janet's narrative at this point is constructed in orientation to hostile or other dominant (advocacy) discourses on asylum seeking (for example asserting one's agency as a contrast to accusations of malignancy or laziness), the self-presentation is notable both in its divergence from these hostile notions of idleness and from notions of passive exclusion that characterise hostile and advocacy discourses respectively.

In the following extract, Elizabeth adds further description to her formulation in 'Extract Nineteen' that her, "*experience was bad and good*". Here, she makes explicit the positive elements of her life and her feelings of happiness in spite of her lack of legal status, "*I don't have my status but I feel like I'm happy*" (line 9). What account does she give for this happiness, a sentiment that as we saw in Chapter Three is rare in public representations of asylum seekers/refugees? The notability of this positivity is foregrounded by the fact that Elizabeth provides an account of this happiness which is formulated as an unlikely outcome of not having status (and therefore warrants an account), "*I don't have my status but I feel like I'm happy*" (line 9), she is happy despite this predicament.

Extract Twenty Two: *Elizabeth, July, 2010.*

1 E: do you know I'm involved everywhere

- 2 L: yep
 3 E: in ASG I'm doing some volunteering as well
 4 L: right ok
 5 E: with my little bit of English I translate for some [country of origin] people
 6 L: oh right ok
 7 E: they can't speak in English but I try to translate for them, you know what, I feel
 8 like I'm happy
 9 L: ok
 10 E: I don't have my status but I feel like I'm happy, because I'm integrate in the
 11 community, I do some work and I keep [myself busy
 12 L: right]
 13 E: I try to build myself, that way I can say my experience in the UK is bad and
 14 good
 15 L: ok
 16 E: bad about immigration matter but sometimes good because I am integrate, I've
 17 got a family, I've got my partner, my boyfriend.

Immediately, this section of Elizabeth's narrative mirrors what we have just heard from Janet ("*I am very busy*", Extract Twenty One) and earlier from Jasmine ("*I'm ready to take on anything*", Extract Twenty). The extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) in line 1, "*I am involved everywhere*", works to emphasise and foreground the extent of her activity and involvement in society. Again, she negotiates for herself the identity active, involved, integrated woman. She attends refugee groups, not just to receive help, but to help others, "*with my little bit of English I translate for some [country of origin] people*" (line 5). By stating that she does this work with her own limited knowledge of the English language, "*my little bit of English*" she foregrounds the commendability of her actions.

Indeed, it is these activities that account for her happiness. Being integrated, doing some work and keeping herself busy are all formulated as reasons for her happiness, despite not having her status. These activities help her to "*build herself*" (line 13). As we have seen in many of the narratives in this chapter so far, *despite* the persecution and restrictions the men and women are faced with in their countries of origin, and indeed in the UK, there are many expressions of complaint, resistance and creativity in overcoming these barriers.

Not having her status is formulated as a potential barrier to getting involved and living her life happily. This counters the hostility that asylum seekers are inherently lazy and intentionally parasitic in their relationship to the UK. Yet, this barrier is overcome; the ‘normal’ and mundane activities she describes, volunteering, working, keeping herself busy, again maps her onto the category ‘ordinary woman’, in extra-ordinary circumstances. It is these extra-ordinary circumstances that make the refugee category omni-present; it is a lived reality for these women, but it is not the primary category foregrounded in the text. It is not the identity that the women here narrate for themselves.

Elizabeth goes on to talk about her “*political matter*” (line 2) which she introduces as an “*important*” thing that she forgot to mention (line 1). Again Elizabeth emphasises this as an important part of her story to me and indeed an important part of the identity she is negotiating for herself.

Extract Twenty Three: *Elizabeth, July, 2010.*

- 1 E: so I forgot one more thing important. Since I'm in UK, when I was arrested on
- 2 two thousand and uh:: six and when I came out from the detention I'm involved in
- 3 the political matter
- 4 L: right ok
- 5 E: I'm a member of ASG [solidarity group- anonymised]
- 6 L: ok, of what sorry?
- 7 E: ASG did you hear about ASG?
- 8 L: no
- 9 E: ASG is one of the political group as a organisation who is against the Africa
- 10 [country anonymised] government
- 11 L: ok
- 12 E: so I'm a member of ASG in Manchester. I demonstrated a lot and I still going
- 13 on to demonstrate against our government
- 14 L: right ok
- 15 E: because our government is very very unfair
- 16 L: ok,
- 17 E: very very unfair
- 18 L: yep [yeah sure
- 19 E: so now] I am a political woman

- 20 L: yeah
 21 E: I'm a member of ASG
 22 L: right
 23 E: so in Manchester I'm the secretary in ASG matter in Manchester, Manchester
 24 ASG

Elizabeth explicitly identifies herself as a “*political woman*” (line 19). Her activities map her onto the category 'political activist'; she plays a central role as secretary in a political anti-government group, she attends demonstrations and she formulates this political activity as following (perhaps motivated by?) her spell in detention, “*I still going on to demonstrate against our government*” (line 12-13). She manages her status here as a morally conscious citizen, in contrast to the government in her country of origin, who are corrupt and unfair “*because our government is very very unfair*” (line 15-17).

Elizabeth is not a 'mute victim' of these persecutions. Rather, this persecution is formulated as a reason for her political activity. The persecution, both by the government in her country of origin and in detention in the UK, breeds resistance and struggle rather than 'helplessness' or 'hopelessness'. It has been suggested that incumbency of the category 'political activist' negates one's incumbency of the category 'victim'; by putting into question the innocence of the person and therefore their right to humanitarian treatment (see Lee, 1984; Judge 2010). Here, however, her political activity is contingent on her victimisation by her government. Her oppression has turned her to politics. In this sense her political activity is warranted.

These narratives present us with active women who, against the backdrop of their predicament as 'asylum claimants', are living meaningful, busy lives, in contrast to the hostility that asylum seekers are lazy or anti-social and importantly in contrast to the 'lives without purpose hope or dignity' (Extract Ten, Chapter Three) or the 'mute victims' (Malkki, 1996) that we were presented with by the advocacy organisations in Chapter Three.

f. Giving Back and Helping Others

As I have demonstrated, this positivity is often organised around everyday activities, such as visiting family and being part of society. And in turn the emotional consequences of this; feeling independent and involved. Interestingly, many informants formulate their experience as giving them the motivation or skills to 'give back' and 'help others'. Again, this emphasis on giving back can be understood as an orientation to the hostile accusation that asylum seekers 'take, take, take' (Extract Twenty). As Judge argues in her 2010 paper on the bio-politics of asylum, this trope of the talented 'asylum seeker' is equally problematic; raising the bar of refugee legitimacy. As we will see in the final section of this chapter, not everyone reports being able to participate in society in such a way, in the midst of such brutal treatment from the Home Office. However, these narratives are also expressions of agency, of skill, of moral and political views and of the specific knowledge that seeking asylum endows one with. Importantly, they demonstrate the moments of mutual aid, resourcefulness and normality which escape many established representations of asylum seekers/refugees.

In the following extract, we hear again from Jasmine (ILAM). Here, she is talking about a service she has set up for elderly women in retirement homes. Again, as in 'Extract Twenty', she formulates herself now as an ordinary woman making a contribution to the society that she lives in. She contrasts this to a time "*a couple of months ago*" (line 20) when she was less secure and confident. As we know from the previous extract, she attributes this change to having her refugee status granted. The impact of her work is formulated as both personal and interpersonal; she has renewed confidence, and she is helping people who might be in despair. Importantly, she formulates her activity as filling a gap in (British) society, where "*nobody cater for the elderly no more*" (line 1).

Extract Twenty Four: Jasmine, March, 2010.

- 1 J: and I am doing, nobody cater for the elderly no more
- 2 L: right yeah
- 3 J: so I would go there and I'll do there nails and give them make up, you know

- 4 cos I it's my thing it's called 'xxx' (laughs)
- 5 L: right OK (..) oh right is that something you've started up?
- 6 J: Yeah that's what I've started up so I go there like two days a week and I'll just
7 you know give them a little make up do there nails and (..) you know let them feel
8 a bit better. Cos you know sometimes in these places people like that if they would
9 have someone to talk to them or you know just to listen or you know just to let
10 them feel a bit better I don't think they would be in that despair
- 11 L: right OK yeah yeah
- 12 J: so much so I've been doing that at the moment
- 13 L: oh wow. So what's that been like?
- 14 J: It's been really good, I enjoy it so much, just to see people coming in down, on
15 a downer and them leaving smiling feeling good 'oh look at my nails'
- 16 L: right yeah yeah
- 17 J: and so you know that's a good thing
- 18 L: yeah and so what's that been like for you?
- 19 J: For me that's been, it's been really uplifting, really I feel so good because a
20 couple of months ago I' was like gone into myself, really shy, insecure, not sure
21 of myself any more,
- 22 L: right
- 23 J: don't, like before I maybe wouldn't be talking to you because I wouldn't know
24 how to put [myself
- 25 L: right OK]
- 26 J: about which still I am because I've been like you know for 14 years just in like
27 a bubble, but now I feel good about myself it's done me a lot of favours cos me
28 wanting, that's why this place here it will help me to come out of my shell to be
29 back into society to meet people and talk to people and everything so for me it's
30 been good
- 31 L: right yeah
- 32 J: it's given me my confidence back and everything

Again, the asylum system, and the exclusion from work and normal participation in society, is formulated as having an emotional impact. She describes the asylum system as leaving her feeling like she's spent "*14 years just in like a bubble*" (line 26-27). This mirrors the formulations made by the advocacy organisations in Chapter Three, of 'asylum seekers' as 'trapped' and without 'purpose'. However, Jasmine situates this within a description of a service she has set up to help elderly people. This activity, setting up a beauty business, gives primacy to a new category; she is a volunteer giving her time to help other people who are lonely and in despair.

The exclusion in her past is narrated as circumstantial; it does not render her “needy” or “victimised” rather it provides the ground against which she formulates herself as a strong determined woman. The asylum process is formulated implicitly as isolating; stripping her of her confidence and ability to participate socially. Jasmine's response to this is to get, “*back into society to meet people and talk to people*” (line 29) which she formulates as helping her to “*come out of my shell*” (line 28).

Jasmine presents herself as entrepreneurial and charitable. She is someone who recognises the plight of others and sees ways of helping them. She is finding a gap where people are suffering and using her skills and kindness to help them. Importantly, helping others makes her feel good. “*...just to see people coming in down, on a downer and them leaving smiling feeling good 'oh look at my nails*” (line 14-15).

Pupavac (2008) criticises the talent trope in refugee advocacy claiming that by relying on the image of the talented refugee, as an acceptable marker of refugee legitimacy, advocates systematically exclude many others (particularly young single men) who cannot match these expectations. Jasmine presents herself as a woman going beyond her duty to help the elderly. I would argue that in light of the analysis in Chapters Three, and in the interview material analysed so far in this thesis, the 'talent' trope documented by Pupavac, can be understood more thoroughly when we consider it as an orientation to hostility themes such as, 'asylum seekers are lazy', or 'asylum seekers are anti-social/criminal', (indeed the 'trauma' trope can also be understood as an orientation to hostility). Jasmine's narrative, however, does not simply read as a defence against the criticism that asylum seekers “*take take take*”, but as an assertion of her personal growth, interests, opinions and development. Pupavac argues that a victimised image is often thinly veneered by these talented representations, yet Jasmine does is not viewable as a victim, thinly masked by her community work, rather, she is an ordinary woman participating in society in a relatively ordinary way.

Jasmine describes ILAM as a place that has helped her to come out of her

shell. She is using her experience, her suffering, to help others; because she has suffered she can recognise the how others suffer and is more compassionate, “*sometimes in these places people like that if they would have someone to talk to them or you know just to listen or you know just to let them feel a bit better I don't think they would be in that despair*” (line 8-10).

The extract below is taken from my interview with Elizabeth, this time she is talking about the voluntary work she does supporting people who are in detention. Elizabeth cannot undertake legal paid work as she is still an 'asylum seeker', so like many of the people I interviewed, she works voluntarily through refugee organisations. As a woman who is seeking asylum, Elizabeth could find herself in detention at any time; here she positions herself as an advocate for other 'asylum seekers' who are in detention and who are “*very very desperate*” (line 6).

Extract Twenty Five: *Elizabeth, July, 2010.*

- 1 E: you know and one time I went to support people in detention, how?
- 2 L: ok
- 3 E: I used to work for one of the English lady she gave me some credit I put on my
- 4 phone to call the people who are on detention
- 5 L: right
- 6 E: they are very very desperate
- 7 L: yeah sure
- 8 E: some of them they want to kill themselves, I just try to encourage them,
- 9 L: right ok
- 10 E: to make them strong
- 11 L: right
- 12 E: don't forgive [she uses this to mean give up – see line 22], I tell them you'll be
- 13 alright, because I've been there, in there and out. You know if you have been
- 14 somewhere and someone is there
- 15 L: yep
- 16 E: so you the person who was there before you can encourage her or him very
- 17 very well because you knew what is going on there
- 18 L: sure you've [had experience
- 19 E: yeah yeah] don't worry about- don't even if you receive any kind of letter from
- 20 immigration don't worry about it, you'll be alright, just have your solicitor

- 21 L: right
 22 E: and try to deal with your solicitor, if your solicitor send some letter to
 23 immigration maybe you be alright, but don't forgive up
 24 L: right [ok yeah
 25 E: I've encouraged] them so much
 26 L: right
 27 E: because I've been [there
 28 L: yeah]
 29 E: so my support, I can d- it is like emotional support, psychological support,
 30 because I know, I know
 31 L: right yeah:: so you're really using your own experience
 32 E: yeah I'm using my skills and my experience
 33 L: sure
 34 E: yeah yeah

Elizabeth maps herself on to the category 'advocate'; she is strong, encouraging, experienced, clued up, knowledgeable, determined and insightful, "*if you receive any kind of letter from immigration don't worry about it, you'll be alright, just have your solicitor*" (line 19-20). The "*people who are on detention*" that she describes in line 4 are suicidal, worried, in need of support, alone and desperate. Elizabeth situates her ordeal as a source of knowledge and experience that she can put to use to help others in her situation "*...you can encourage her or him very very well because you knew what is going on there.*" (line 16-17). Elizabeth is using her knowledge and experience of the system to help others, "*I've encouraged them so much, because I've been there*" (line 25-27).

'Mutual aid' plays a central role in many of the narratives collected here, bearing a stark contrast to the victims and receivers of advocacy we were presented with in Chapters Three and Four. These are agentive women using their skills, and compassion, in spite of the asylum system, that either continues to exclude them, or has almost pushed them to the edge.

Again, here, Dorothy from ASWU talks about how her experience as a woman seeking asylum puts her in a position to help other asylum-seeking women.

Extract Twenty Six

- 1 D: You know just to be silenced on your own at [home
 2 L: mm::]
 3 D: it really depresses. As my friend has said you know she went through
 4 counselling and all that kind of stuff. Most of the time you feel suicidal you can
 5 do anything to yourself
 6 L: Right
 7 D: but then you know meeting people like we are doing now, yeah it has really
 8 improved our lives. And also in the end of the day you feel like you are the
 9 strongest person to help other vulnerable women who are just coming or who have
 10 just you know been refused and they don't know what to do and (..)
 11 L: sure, because you've had the [experience
 12 D: because] you've had the experience and so you know how to help other people
 13 L: hmm::
 14 D: It's like you don't have problems yourself but you try to be strong, and also to
 15 see a group of women in the same kind of situation it's like 'oh wow I'm not
 16 L: [ok sure
 17 D: the only one] and also we are very open to one another because we support
 18 each other to empower each other and (breathes in) because the only thing which
 19 have er you know experienced more is back in our countries as for women we are
 20 people who are always looked under, you don't have a say at all. But being asylum
 21 seekers here we are just out there talking about ourselves, in the end of the day it's
 22 like you know "I need help, I need help, I need help"

Here, Dorothy describes the emotional impact of the isolation caused by asylum seeking, "*to be silenced on your own at home, it really depresses*", "*most of the time you feel suicidal, you can do anything to yourself*" (lines 1-4). Although she emphasises the immense torture the women are put through, this part of her narrative is not concerned with their victim-hood. In fact, once again, the women draw on this ground of exclusion and suffering against which they foreground their strength and resilience. Their experiences could have rendered them silenced, depressed, isolated and suicidal, they receive counselling and they are too vulnerable. Yet Dorothy formulates herself, and her friend, as sociable, strong, resilient and as experienced and knowledgeable helpers, "*It's like you don't have problems yourself but you try to be strong*" (line 14). Despite both battling their own asylum claims (as Elizabeth also was), they are using the experience they have gained from this to help others who are "*just coming*" (line 9).

Becoming active, and meeting other women through the self-advocacy group ASWU, is introduced as a source of positivity in their lives, “*you know meeting people like we are doing now, yeah it has really improved our lives*” (line 7-8).

Again, their experience is situated as a source of knowledge and strength. They are strong women, “*you feel like you are the strongest person to help other vulnerable women*” (line 8-9), with invaluable experiences and knowledge to share, despite their own vulnerability.

The women draw an interesting comparison between their lives as women in their countries of origin, and their lives as women seeking asylum in the UK. They construct a contrast between themselves “*back in our countries*” (line 19) as women who are “*looked under; you don’t have a say at all*” (line 20) and as “*asylum seekers*” (line 20) in the UK “*out there talking about ourselves*” (line 21). Here, incumbency of the category ‘asylum seeker’, grants them voice, or necessitates it. Whereas, as ‘women’, they were silenced. Here, then, the category ‘asylum seeker’ generates new possibilities and subjectivities for the women. Whereas typically the category has negative implications for its incumbents; implying either criminality or mute victim-hood, here it grants the women authority to speak and act. Speaking out and saying “*I need help, I need help, I need help*” (line 22) is not presented as a desperate cry, but, in the context of ASWUs work, as an assertion of one’s predicament. The activity of asking for help is not in itself dis-empowering (as Pupavac argues in her work on refugees in the sick role, 2008). As we see here the help is mutual, and is formulated as part of their being recognised and heard as asylum seeking women. This notion of asylum-seeking, as a process that facilitates voice, is rarely heard in advocacy talk. Here, although ‘asylum seeker’ is omnipresent, their activities and descriptions generate a new notion of asylum-seeker which goes beyond the hostile or victimising tropes.

In these extracts, the informants give new meaning to the experience of asylum seeking and to being an ‘asylum seeker’. The trauma of their ordeals is not denied, yet the positivity is noticeable due to its relative rarity in the

materials in Chapter Three. Asylum seeking, and indeed being an asylum seeker, is formulated here as a source of knowledge, insight, skill and compassion. Asylum seekers then are not simply the receivers of specialised help; they are helpers themselves, with specialised knowledge.

g. Dilemma of Active vs. Passive Lives

As we have seen, the issue of getting active and involved is dilemmatic for the interviewees. The ordinariness of their activities are noticeable due to their rarity; the actions are formulated as achievements against a background of restrictions and bureaucracy. Here, two interviewees address this dilemma.

The first extract is taken from my interview with Dorothy and Lisa. Dorothy explores the issue of recognition, and how the decision to become active can back-fire on you. This orientation suggests that the women tie the issue of activity with the outcome of their asylum claim. In the second extract, also from the same interview, Lisa shares her own feelings on the matter, stating that she finds it too hard to remain active when she has so much on her mind, and when her life is not in her control at all.

Extract Twenty Seven: *Dorothy and Lisa, June, 2010.*

1 D: and the last thing which I can say myself is about voting, you know we know
2 there are some other British people who don't vote at all. But since I've been in
3 this country, every:: time I vote (laughing). So I don't know what helps you to be a
4 good citizen?

5 L: OK

6 D: you are voting, you are signing, you are doing whatever they are asking you to
7 do, at the end of the day (exasperated laughing)

8 Li: you are not committing any crime

9 L: right OK, but it's not being respected what you're doing

10 D: it's not working, it's not working at all,

11 Li: and I have noticed on two fronts, there was a friend who received her refusal
12 letter since she came here she has not been- since she came here she has just been
13 so silent she has not been contributing and this and that', yeah. And then there was
14 another friend 'oh:: you have been so active, you do this, you do that, do you do
15 this and that and that, that's good of you, you have been so active we appreciate
16 that but, I think you should go back home, these services will be needed back
17 home'.

18 L: right OK::

19 Li: the one who was not doing anything they say 'she has not been doing
20 anything' so she is refused, the one that is doing 'oh you can do this back home'

21 L: right::

22 D: you know like myself when I went to court that is what the judge said 'you
23 seem like a very intelligent woman, you've been studying in this country, you've
24 been volunteering, you've made so much of, um:: friendships in this country, go in
25 your country, relocate and use all of those skills'.

26 L: mm::

27 D: it was like (swoosh noise) it just back fired in my face, I was shocked, I thought
28 oh so it's good not to do something then? But at the end of the day they say they
29 want people that are contributing in the community

30 L: right::

31 D: and you are not contributing just because you want to, you know you want to
32 convince them, but you are trying to- because back home we were people who
33 were very active

34 L: [yeah

35 D: doing] lots of things and you don't want just to fall on your hands; you want to
36 do something at the end of the day, 'whatever you've been doing go to your
37 country and use it and ...' (exasperated laughing).

In line 3-4 the rhetorical question, “*what helps you to be a good citizen?*” frames the dilemma under description here; no matter what they do with their lives, how they participate in society, their refugee status is withheld. The issue of being active, then, has so far been put under description as a complaint about systemic restrictions (i.e. enforced inactivity), a story of self-empowerment/transformation (activity despite restrictions/after restrictions have been lifted), activity in orientation to hostility themes (“people say you just take take take”), and here, activity as mapping one onto the category ‘good citizen’. The reported actions of the judge, here, evidence the importance of ‘activity’, of appearing active, in relation to being recognised as a refugee and having one’s status granted.

The women formulate themselves as active members of society, this time specifically in orientation to the difficulties of being recognised as a ‘good citizen’. As Dorothy explains in line 22 her qualities have been recognised by the judge; she is intelligent, she has been studying, volunteering and making friends. These activities should, according to the reported voice of the judge in line 12-13, make her eligible for refugee status, yet “*it’s not working, it’s not working at all*” (line 10). On the contrary, her activities and qualities are used by the judge to refuse her claim; stating that she should take these qualities back to her country. This is formulated as dilemmatic and also as unexpected, “*it was like [swoosh noise] it just back fired in my face, I was shocked, I thought oh so it’s good to not do something then?*” (line 27-28). Her activity is not mapping her onto the category good citizen, it is not respected.

The issue of ‘activity’ is formulated as the crux issue on which the judge makes the decision on asylum claims. And yet it is inconsistent. The women attempt to generate the category ‘genuine asylum seeker’, or in this case, ‘good citizen’, through their activities, but it is not in their power to do so. The judge, who ultimately decides their fate, uses an inconsistent and unreliable criteria, “*they say they want people that are contributing in the community*” (line 28-29).

Dorothy formulates the asylum system as a game that she is working out

how to play. She is trying to win but the rules aren't clear, "*it's not working, it's not working at all*" (line 10). However, she goes on to say, "*and you are not contributing just because you want to, you know you want to convince them*" (line 31-32) accounting for what can be heard as a strategic approach. This formulation is hearable as an assertion of her genuineness; she isn't simply 'playing a game', as the hostiles might presuppose. In fact, back home, the women were "*very active*" (line 33). Their motivation to act as engaged citizens spans their personal history; it is not contingent on winning their asylum claim. These are women who want to act; it is part of who they are, part of their history.

Through this narrative, Dorothy highlights the dilemma that she and other women in her position face, and also suggests the partial context for the narratives of activity and social engagement that we have seen thus far. Social engagement is at once formulated as an empowering means of combating the isolation caused by the asylum system, and also as a strategic move in one's appeal for asylum.

In the following extract, Lisa situates the issue of participation as problematic, not in terms of its acknowledgement by the establishment, but in terms of the pressures the asylum process puts on you as an individual.

Extract Twenty Eight: *Lisa, June, 2010.*

1 A: as we said before some people are different in their approach, she's using her
2 skills and I am very happy for that, but some of us, sometimes I feel, if given the
3 oppor- sometimes I feel like I am just too concerned with this issue of deportation.

4 L: OK

5 A: like even when I leave the home, I have that feeling like, now we are here, I
6 don't know what letter is coming

7 L: OK

8 A: if they're going to stop my support again in eight days time like they did

- 9 before? Am I going to be on the street again? So I don't have the courage of even
 10 doing something
- 11 L: [like being distracted
- 12 A: yeah:: but I like to, I go to groups I try to share with friends but really like 'oh
 13 you can do this course' sometimes I feel, I do this course, it's just access course, I
 14 can't do an access course when after that I don't know if I can go to do the proper
 15 course or very soon they are telling me you have to go home
- 16 L: right ok
- 17 A: so what do I do? It's like i- it gives you too much worry, every time you are
 18 thinking anything can happen at any moment, somebody can come to knock on
 19 your door, this is your letter you are leaving or this.. so it's really disturbing.
- 20 L: OK

Lisa distances herself from the position that her friend Dorothy took in the previous extract, “*as we said before some people are different in their approach*” (line 1). Lisa, as we know, wrote a play about asylum-seeking that was widely screened in community theatres and arts council funded. These activities suggest that Lisa is someone who has a great ability to overcome the pressure of the asylum process. Here, however, she foregrounds the difficulties she faces as an asylum seeking woman, “*if given the opport- sometimes I feel like I am just too concerned with the issue of deportation*” (line 2-3). The imminent threat of deportation is formulated as a barrier to her using her skills. Lisa constructs this concern as pervasive and persistent, “*now we are here, I don't know what letter is coming*” (line 5-6). The future is unknown, and her agency and choice is diminished, “*am I going to be on the street again?*” (line 9).

This uncertainty, and lack of control over her life, takes away her courage, her inclination to continue her education and her ability to concentrate, “*So I don't have the courage of even doing something*” (line 9-10). In this instance, Lisa's narrative mirrors the formulation in Chapter Three, where asylum seekers were presented as “*living on the horns of an awful dilemma*”

(Extract 11, Chapter Three). She narrates an almost total lack of control over her life; the Home Office is in control, “*every time you are thinking anything can happen at any moment, somebody can come to knock on your door...*” (line 17-19). The ambiguity of her future prevents her from doing things in the present, “*I can’t do an access course when after that I don’t know if I can go to do the proper course or very soon they are telling me you have to go home*” (line 13-15).

Lisa's narrative usurps the hostility that asylum seekers are simply unwilling to participate, that they would rather “cream off benefits” (Extract Two, Chapter Three), rather she states that the asylum process socially and psychologically isolates her and prevents her social engagement. Yet despite her troubles, she does not represent herself or others as 'mute victims' of this process. She states that Dorothy is “*using her skills and I am very happy for that*” (line 1-2), and we know from other parts of her narrative that she is an active and engaged woman. However, the effect of this part of her narrative, is to foreground the dilemmatic nature of social engagement for asylum claimants. The limits placed on her, and others in her position, are real and at times overwhelming.

The narratives we have heard in this chapter are complex and dynamic. The need to stake one's claim as a legitimate refugee (in line with the hegemonic markers of refugee legitimacy) is often balanced with an assertion of one's autonomy and desires. The stories can be heard as lives in struggle, the struggle to survive the brutality of the asylum system and the struggle for recognition. Importantly, it is their multi-dimensionality that differentiates the narratives presented to me here from the stories told by the organisations in Chapter Three.

5.4 Conclusions

As I introduced at the start of this chapter, Leudar et al. (2008) concluded that, “*all our refugee and asylum seeker informants constructed their identities around hostilities expressed towards them in the media and by the*

local inhabitants”, they go on to say, “*In particular, their identities were constructed in terms of biographical contrasts that made the grounds of contemporary hostile rejections false and irrelevant to themselves.*” (Leudar et al, 2008, p.187). This is certainly the case in many of the narratives disclosed to me by the interviewees; they construct themselves as 'genuine asylum seekers' against notions of illegitimacy and fraudulency. At times explicitly claiming this label, more often implicating their incumbency of this category through narratives of persecution and compliance.

Van Dijk (2000), argued that asylum seekers/refugees and other migrants are constructed by others as agentive only when they are engaged in criminal activities. Pupavac (2008) updates this work arguing that refugee advocacy discourses are characterised by two common tropes; refugees traumatised and refugees as talented. These theoretical observations, alongside Leudar's notion of dialogical network and hostility themes, can help us to understand the materials here. Informants orient their talk against “*hostilities expressed towards them*” (Leudar et al, 2008), constructing their biographies in terms of contrasts to 'false asylum seekers', those who live 'underground', who do not 'sign' and who 'lie'. Whereas it has been argued that this hostility is often met with a victimised image of the asylum seekers, here many of the informants present themselves as active members of society; with busy lives and something to contribute to their communities, specifically to other people who might be in distress due to their asylum claim or other circumstances. The counter-identities they negotiate for themselves, however, largely go beyond the tropes identified by Pupavac (2008). Although the trauma trope is clearly evident at times (indexing the high likelihood of suffering in the lives of those who seek asylum), not all self-presentations appeared to be constructed in orientation to hostility or along the dominant tropes of refugee representation.

Hostility, then, is not always passively received or internalised by the informants. It is denied on personal, but also universal grounds. Many of the denials in the first section of this chapter were organised around claims to universal humanity or social responsibility, “*Are they helping to create a future society that will be responsible or vagabonds on the street and so on*”

(Extract Four, Chapter Three). They were constructed as complaints against the asylum process and those who manage it. Additionally the suffering that people report due to hostility was often formulated as the ground against which their strength and resourcefulness, and indeed their ordinariness, was foregrounded. As I noted, of great analytic importance is the fact that the informants aren't making these complaints to anyone, but to myself, who they know to be an advocate for refugee rights. Yet still, why are these complaints, spoken from the voices of those who are seeking asylum, not more often present in advocacy publicity materials and discourses where the interlocutors are also sympathetic and understanding? Too often, the organisations construct an appeal or demand on behalf of asylum seekers, with their stories of suffering used simply to evidence the claims being made on their behalf.

Significantly, the self-representations in these interview materials are vast, intricate, inconsistent and contradictory; as with all instances of dialogical interaction (Hermans et al., 1992). It is this multi-dimensionality that is not accounted for in the publicity materials.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Review of Research Question and Aims

As I outlined in Chapter One, there is an emerging body of literature, and an increasing sentiment amongst those who advocate for asylum seekers/refugees, that the dominant humanitarian representation of asylum-seeking and refuge-hood may be, in often subtle ways, limiting or stifling. Indeed, that these representations may be equally as oppressive as the hostility they ostensibly seek to challenge. On the other hand, biographic research organised, around the premise of narrative freedom, has been promoted as the basis for a more emancipatory approach to refugee representation.

I aimed to map, using the notion of dialogical network, how these advocacy representations are shaped in orientation to other, specifically hostile, talk on asylum-seeking, and with what consequence for how the identities of asylum seekers/refugee are managed. In this sense, I wanted to understand the production of these humanitarian representations in everyday activities, rather than simply applying a theoretical post-colonial critique to the paternalism of UK asylum policy. In light of the analysis and conclusions drawn thus far, I would argue that the notion of dialogical network as a framework for analysing talk, as a site of social reproduction, has allowed me to ground these emergent criticisms of refugee advocacy in the activities of four organisations and the contexts in which they operate. It has allowed me to show how these theoretical critiques apply to the work done by advocates on the ground, but also to demonstrate how members of these organisations (and their clients) produce the very discourses that challenge contemporary framings of refugee advocacy.

Refugee advocacy organisations orient their talk to hostilities towards refugees, constructing 'defences' to the hostility that are organised around

victimised or passivised notions of refuge-hood. However, the members of these organisations: the advocates, and the asylum-claimants and refugees, organise their narratives in terms of attacks on government or media hostility, mobilising a more diverse range of counter-identities. The conclusions I would like to draw from the analyses are both academic and practice-oriented. Before I go on to review how the materials analysed in this thesis speak to the praxiological questions posed in Chapter One, I will first summarise the conclusions from each of the analysis chapters.

6. 2 Summary of Analyses

That advocates organise their publicity materials in orientation to social hostility towards asylum seekers/refugees was clearly demonstrated in Chapter Three. This was mostly explicit in the *Refugee Act Now* 'Mobiles, Money, Mayhem' booklet in which systemic hostility towards asylum seekers/refugees was re-contextualised as 'outrageous' and 'ironic', and later by *Against Immigration Controls* as 'whacky'. In addition to this, the organisations invariably called out government policy as exclusionary and unfair. The organisations situated their representations of asylum seekers in orientation to this hostility; formulating their counter-representations in terms of biographical contrasts that either made the hostility immoral (our client is only a child; our client is hopeless and stripped of their dignity) or unwarrantable and irrelevant (the hostility is a lie; our client had no choice but to come). Challenges to the hostility were often formulated via the image of the suffering asylum-seeker, who may experience mental health problems, homelessness, isolation and loss of dignity and faith (with the exception of *Against Immigration Controls* who generalise the problem to the extent that the identities of particular asylum seekers become irrelevant). The hostility themes then elicited a number of *sympathy themes* organised around notions of restricted choice, or agency, and a foregrounding of innocence and victim-hood. The arguments put forward in the materials were structured as defences and the framing of asylum seeker identities mirrored some of the common tropes of humanitarian refugee representation, as outlined by Pupavac (2008) (talent/trauma) and Van Dijk

(2000) (passive), etc.

Similarly, advocate informants organised parts of their narratives in orientation to hostility themes and other systemic hostilities towards asylum seekers/refugees. Again, advocates did not only orient their talk to generalised social hostility that is thematised; they also oriented specifically to what government and its agencies did (of course the two are related). The idea of 'hostility theme' does not provide an exhaustive description of the hostile context in which migrants live. Many of the narratives were organised as attacks on policy as well as defences against hostility. These attacks were often voiced by the advocate informants more vehemently than in the publicity materials; with the hostiles being named and allegations of malpractice, racism and xenophobia being voiced. Asylum seekers/refugees were often established as ordinary people, who are subjected to state/media/public brutality; the emphasis being on the injustice carried out, more so than the consequences for individual asylum seekers. Organised in terms of an activity-occasioned description, the standard activity-occasioned pairing: asylum seekers/refugees as perpetrators of crime, and the British authorities and public as the victims, was reversed. Advocates also demonstrated a degree of flexibility in their representations of asylum and 'asylum seekers', in comparison to the standard tropes (Judge, 2010) we saw replicated in many of the publicity materials. Often giving primacy to the ordinariness of their 'clients' or of asylum seekers/refugees in general. Indeed the victimising tendency within a lot of advocacy work was at times explicitly challenged.

In line with the conclusions drawn by Leudar et al. (2008), in their work on hostility in media, community and refugee narratives, the asylum seeker/refugee informants often organised their narratives “*in terms of biographical contrasts that made the grounds of contemporary hostile rejections false and irrelevant to themselves.*” (Leudar et al, 2008, p.187). For example, the opening sections of most of the interviews, in which people often accounted for coming to the UK, were understandable as constructions at least in part in orientated to the ‘culture of disbelief’ or ‘will to exclude’ that characterises the UK asylum system (Tyler, 2006, Judge

2010). Informants negotiated for themselves incumbency of the category 'genuine asylum seeker', by describing their coming to the UK as one of little choice and victimisation. However, the narratives were complex and not all aspects can be accounted for by this framework; many of the informants present themselves as active members of society, with busy lives and something to contribute to their communities, specifically to other people who might be in distress due to their asylum claim or other circumstances. The counter-identities they negotiate for themselves are not easily contained by the tropes identified by Pupavac ('talent' and 'trauma', 2008). Importantly the women and men that I interviewed often formulated the hostility, and the subsequent suffering, as complaints via which they asserted their agency and resilience.

6.3 Ethnomethodology as a Tool for Critical Research

“the tension that exists between ‘the urgency of staking a political claim’ (on behalf of asylum-seekers) and the need to reflect critically on the language in which those claims are made, is a tension that we should not seek to alleviate but should encourage and explore in critical theoretical practice.” (Tyler, 2010. p.199).

Ethnomethodology, characterised by its dedication to the data and grounding in naturalistic participant observations, is not immediately reconcilable with critical practice, where the emphasis is often on interpretation and theorisation. However, I would argue, in light of the research and analyses conducted for this thesis, that only by using an ethnomethodological approach have I been able to bring to light the 'tensions' that Tyler points us towards in the conclusion to her 2010 paper on asylum advocacy discourses.

Often the 'critical theoretical practice' that Tyler advocates, works to contain the struggles and contradictions that characterise everyday life; tidying the chaos into a new theoretical framework, and in doing so, imbuing the phenomenon with a seemingly final or permanent nature. For example, Tyler is critical of the appropriation of the figure of the asylum seeker by

theoretical work such as that proposed by Agamben, for whom the figure of the refugee is abstracted to represent a crisis in political democracy (Agamben, 1998). Similarly, the conclusions drawn by Ruth Judge (Judge, 2010) and Vanessa Pupavac (Pupavac, 2008), based on their theorising of macro level humanitarian discourses, suggest that refugee advocacy is trapped in a cycle of victimisation, contingent on an historical shift away from the political figure of the refugee, to the contemporary de-politicised figure of the refugee in the 'sick role' (Pupavac, 2008). Whilst I would agree that refugee advocacy faces these very failings (indeed the analysis of the publicity materials conducted in Chapter Three speaks to these 'trauma' themes), and that the historical contrast to the post-cold war refugee is stark and illuminating, I would argue that critical work needs to go beyond the naming of problems and must indeed explore the tensions and cracks that already exist within these phenomenon, in order to conceptualise new ways forward. Tyler advocates an approach that values "*listening*", placing the emphasis on the "*bodies and constituencies from whose suffering such accounts takes its cue*" (Tyler, 2006, p. 200). Listening is at the heart of an ethnomethodological framework.

What insights has this 'listening approach' achieved? By studying, not only the publicly available materials produced by refugee advocates, i.e. the publicity materials, but also the actions and talk of their members, I have been able to gain an internal perspective that reveals the struggles and tensions that exist within advocacy organisations. My analysis has revealed that the question of how to 'stake a political claim for refugees', and the questioning of the language used to do so, are not just theoretical concerns for analysts but real problems voiced by the members of these organisations and situated in their everyday practice as advocates. That these questions are being raised by the very people who make up these organisations and carry out the work under the banner of refugee advocacy, suggests that the picture may not be as dire as some theorists have concluded.

The first observation is that advocates organised their talk in terms of criticisms or attacks on government policy to a far greater degree than in the publicity materials. The publicity materials produced by the four

organisations varied both within and between the organisations, and these variations were in no doubt in part due to the different financial and political stranglehold they find themselves in. For example *Refugee Act Now* receives funding from the Home Office, which may be why their materials tended to formulate the hostility as stemming from the media rather than from the government. Similarly, ILAM (providers of government subsidised legal aid) formulate the hostility as stemming from a 'hostile climate' (Extract Four, Chapter Three) implicitly criticising government policy without naming any names. On the receiving end of this prevalent (yet ambiguous) hostility is the suffering asylum-seeker whose suffering and hardship is endowed with significant narrative description, they are people who experience “*stigmatisation, isolation, and increased poor physical and mental health*” (ILAM, Extract Four, Chapter Three), who are “*vulnerable to homelessness and sexual exploitation*” (ILAM, Extract Eight, Chapter Three), who are “*trapped in lives without hope or purpose or dignity*” (RAN, Extract Ten, Chapter Three) or who have a “*history of repeated rapes leading to life threatening gynaecological complications*” (ASWU, Extract Twelve, Chapter Three).

In line with this tendency towards victimisation, the materials were often concerned with the stories of women and children; in this sense the narratives work to infantilise the image of the asylum seeker (eliciting and justifying a paternalistic response) and are highly gendered. Many of the stories we hear in the materials speak of women who are persecuted in gendered ways in their countries of origin (rape being the most pertinent example of this) and also here in the UK, where they work as prostitutes or are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. In Sara's case in particular, whilst foregrounding her victim-hood through detailed descriptions of her medical injuries due to repeated rape, the organisation also colludes with the established structures that do not take people's accounts/expressions of suffering at face value. Rather, these accounts are legitimised through medicine and physically-visible suffering, reproducing this epistemic authority, as opposed to the suffering that you can't see through surgery or scars.

This construction of a gendered risk (which is of course factually grounded) also keeps women in the position of needing protection from the (patriarchal) state and indeed advocates. It colludes with the established order that all women need to be scared and protected. It works to reinforce and under-pins this fear. This particular 'sympathy theme', then, contributes to the narrowness of contemporary understanding of refugee-hood (see Judge, 2010), but also reinforces established presentations of men and women in society.

The ethnomethodological grounding of my work, however, has shown this representation to be fairly off the mark when it comes down to the lives of everyday women asylum claimants. Yes, the women report gendered violence and the threat of exploitation by men in the UK, but they were in fact more engaged in positive activities and less isolated than their male counterparts. The fact that only one male asylum seeking participant took part in this study speaks to this; the organisations are attended primarily by women, and from my experience women are more likely to be involved in their communities and in self-help and mutual aid networks (the fact that no male equivalent of ASWU exists being an example). This is, of course, in part due to the vast provision of services for women asylum seekers as opposed to men (an inequality which is in no doubt caused by these gendered discourses!). But importantly the women did not infantilise or victimise themselves through their narratives of suffering and violence; indeed they asserted their need for independence and the material bases on which to build this (financial independence being key here). For example, Lisa formulated her vulnerability as resulting from her enforced destitution and made a demand for better conditions for herself, *“Even if you say no to my refusal letter you keep me in the house, I need to have shelter over me... I need a roof, maybe I meet someone who pretend “oh I will give you- I will shelter you” and I go there and the next day you find me dead”* (Extract Fifteen, Chapter Five).

Through their defensiveness advocates limit what is required for one to be 'considered genuine'; this has consequences not only for the social and political empowerment of refugee voices, but also for personal recovery. As

Berry argues (in press), “*a convincing narrative of trauma and suffering is required for a claim to be considered genuine, whether or not a person has, or would have had, sufficient inner resources and resilience to prevent past events from dominating their present*” (p. 5). Similarly, Kesi Mahendra, at the MMIDA network conference in the summer of 2012, summarised from the discussion on the dialogical selves of refugees, that people become trapped in a cycle where they must “*act as a victim, to be recognised as a victim, to one day not have to live as a victim*”. Exasperated, she asked “*when does that ‘victim’ status get shaken off and what personal and social scars does this leave?*” I would argue, on the basis of the analysis conducted here, that we have seen that this victim-hood is reified by the organisations in their propaganda, battled with by advocates, and lived and transformed in multifarious ways by asylum seekers and refugees.

The often defensive terms on which the publicity materials are organised (they are not criminals- in fact they are more likely to be victims of crime!) reproduces the 'othering' and exclusionary logic that the hostiles promote. Pupavac's (2008) historical perspective draws on Hannah Arendt's work to support this claim, “*As Arendt analysed 50 years ago, ‘Innocence, in the sense of complete lack of responsibility, was the mark of their rightlessness as it was the seal of their loss of political status’*” (Arendt, in Pupavac, 2008, p. 282). The identities of asylum seekers/refugees are passivised by advocates; they become the mute victims who we (unfortunately) expect to see suffering and whose rights are contingent on the recognition and judgement of others.

In contrast to the publicity materials, which provide the 'public face' of the organisations, their members (staff and clients) tended to focus their narratives on the source of the hostility, more so than its consequences. The advocates in their interview talk attribute the hostility to Home Office case-workers who knowingly send people to their death (ILAM, Extract Ten, Chapter Four), or to University lecturers who have xenophobic attitudes to foreign students (AIC, Extract Four, Chapter Four). Government policy is explicitly challenged in all of the organisations. Labelled as 'shit' (RAN) and 'racist' (AIC), members of Home Office funded *Refugee Act Now* also

formulated government policy as undemocratic and anti-progressive (Extract Eight and Twelve, Chapter Four). Their asylum seeking clients are generally constructed as ordinary people, who fall victim to this institutional inadequacy (and racism), “*these are just nor- people like themselves...they could find themselves in this situation it’s not a far flung idea you know*” (RAN, Extract Twelve, Chapter Four), with lives that go beyond asylum-seeking “*they’re not just there to talk about themselves as asylum seekers or migrants or Diaspora they’ve got lives that they’re living now that they want to talk to you about*” (ASWU, Extract Sixteen, Chapter Four).

This is with the exception of *Against Immigration Controls* who, by situating the problem historically, maintain their radical position; generalising the issue of immigration and entitlement to the extent that 'we are all migrants'. That *Against Immigration Controls* can maintain this position is in now doubt due to their relative obscurity and marginalisation in mainstream asylum advocacy, and of course manifests as a struggle for members in their everyday work with asylum seekers and refugees. For example, Hayley, a member of *Against Immigration Controls* summarised the problem of representation in anti-deportation campaigns, “*that was a really good example of why you never win an anti-deportation campaign even if the people are given, as they were, ultimately, um:: right to remain because it’s just so disgusting that you have to have it to start off with and one of the tensions in that and many other campaigns is the tension about how much you assert that people are entitled to stay here because it’s a basic human right and how much you campaign on the particular vulnerabilities of that- person*” (Extract Eighteen, Chapter Four).

On the surface, then, the organisations in their publicity materials are to a large extent complicit in the reproduction of what I will call the *sympathy themes* that Van Dijk (2000), Pupavac (2008) and Judge (2010) etc. have called out as characterising advocacy discourses. Yet for *their members* this manifests as a site of tension and struggle; often their narratives push the very limits put in place by these discourses. *Against Immigration Controls*, as a radical political network, routinely challenges the 'othering' that arguably results from both hostile (asylum seekers as bogus criminals) and

advocacy discourses (asylum seekers as a distinct class of victimised people), and instead subsumes the issue of migration as a class struggle: between those who control borders and those who are controlled (i.e. all of us). However, it is not only AIC, an organisation we would expect to make such challenges based on their publicity materials, who put into question some of the common practices of refugee representation. As we have just seen, advocates routinely challenge the 'stereotyped' representations of refugees through their own constructions of refuge-hood and of their clients. At other times, explicit challenges are made to the accepted markers of refugee legitimacy, such as by Lee (ILAM) stating that, “*personally, politically, it doesn't bother me if they are an economic migrant*” (Extract Five, Chapter Four). And Members of *Against Immigration Controls* succinctly demonstrate how the hostile climate in which people make asylum claims brutalises even those who try to help, “*Um m- my late friend xxx said that he realised how completely brutalised he'd been by the system, he was a barrister, when somebody once told him she'd been raped and his first response was 'oh good I can use that'*” (AIC, Extract Eighteen, Chapter Four).

These tensions over how asylum seekers/refugees are represented are rife, and are a live issue for advocates, one that is masked by the homogenised humanitarian messages that, for the most part, characterise their publicity materials. It would seem then, that to some extent, advocates 'on the ground', even within mainstream services, are already “*working at the limits of the available lexicon, including rights discourses, while simultaneously contesting the 'regimes within which the terms of recognisability take place'*” (Tyler, 2006, p. 199). Naomi Millner, in her critical work exploring the traction of radical political movements against immigration controls in the UK argues, and drawing on Ranciere (e.g. 1999), argues that such breaks from the dominant modes of acting and thinking leave people with an 'embodied experience' of acting in alternative, which in turn contributes to the multiplication these 'ethical' responses (Millner, 2012). I would argue that these ethical moments already occur within the more mainstream organisations, who may not have the same degree of flexibility in how they operate within established legal and political structures, but who *despite* this

continue to challenge and question these boundaries. By grounding my analysis of refugee representation in the activities of the very people who make up these organisations the dissenting voices that exist within these organisations are made visible. The crux of the issue then is facilitating space for these voices in their publicity materials.

The struggle over managing one's incumbency of the category 'genuine asylum seeker', whilst pushing the very boundaries and meanings associated with this category, also manifested in the stories told by asylum seeker and refugee informants. One of the questions I posed at the start of this thesis was to what extent asylum seekers/refugees are complicit in maintaining the victim status assigned by refugee organisations. I have found that, although the informants partially construct themselves as victims (no doubt contingent not least on their very real victimisation, as well as the need to assert their genuine refugee-hood), their narratives also transcend the limited subject positions made available by the hostiles and advocates. *Refugee Act Now*, *Asylum Seeking Women Unite* and *Immigration Legal Aid Manchester* formulated their clients as people with mental illness, who are destitute, and who are surviving in lives without hope, purpose or dignity. Whilst the informants certainly talked about the suffering and persecution they had faced, these experiences did not make up the whole story. In fact, the materials produced by the organisations excluded many of the themes that emerged from the stories I was told. Mutual-aid and self-help, community, political and ethical stances and demands that went beyond merely surviving, characterised these narratives.

Informants positioned themselves as active agents in their lives, "*I don't have my status but I feel like I'm happy, because I'm integrate in the community, I do some work and I keep myself busy*" (Elizabeth, ASWU, Extract Twenty Two, Chapter Five), as ordinary people with ordinary dreams, "*I'll come back and look for a job to do, so I'll be working, I'll take good care of my daughter and general life, as we expect it to be before*" (Mrs Belba, ILAM, Extract Nineteen, Chapter Five) and as engaged in solidarity networks where mutual assistance and informal transfers of knowledge and skills are practised, "*And also in the end of the day you feel*

like you are the strongest person to help other vulnerable women who are just coming or who have just you know been refused and they don't know what to do" (Dorothy, ASWU, Extract Twenty Six, Chapter Five).

Significantly, these were not the mute victims, or the isolated and down-trodden service users, that we were presented with in the publicity materials. They are men and women who want more than the limited provisions provided for them by the Home Office, *"they need to go to school to study, I had no money to support them the voucher I used to receive couldn't help me to support because the voucher I can't have the cash with it"* (Elizabeth, ASWU, Extract Seventeen), who have important ethical evaluations of society to offer, *"So now like the children who are not allowed to work, who are not allowed to go to school, what will they look like? Are they helping to create a future society that will be responsible or vagabonds on the street and so on"* (Lisa, ASWU, Extract Four), and who are critical of government policy, *"sometimes you wonder what criteria does really the Home Office follow?"* (Dorothy, Extract Thirteen).

The most striking narrative I heard came from my interview with Jasmine, who reported that she left Jamaica and came to the UK to have a better lifestyle for herself, and, notably, to 'eat a whole chicken'. What enabled Jasmine to break with the conventions of refugee legitimacy here? Jasmine was one of two informants who, at the time of the interviews, had her refugee status. Arguably, she no longer needed to maintain her genuine asylum seeker 'face' (Goffman, 1955) and was consequently free to tell her story the way she wanted to tell it. Her narrative can be contrasted to Janet who maintains her victim-hood and lack of agency in coming to the UK and accounts for the hostility as resulting from the bad behaviour of 'my people, black people' (Extract Five, Chapter Five).

Similarly to those who advocate for them, the difficulty for asylum seeking informants lay in maintaining their agency and critical voice in light of the need to counter hostility, and to assert one's legitimacy as a genuine asylum seeker (aka. a relatively passive victim). For example, for Dorothy, her activities in the UK are grounds on which the judge deems she is fit to

return to her country of origin, “*you know like myself when I went to court that is what the judge said ‘you seem like a very intelligent woman, you’ve been studying in this country, you’ve been volunteering, you’ve made so much of, um:: friendships in this country, go in your country, relocate and use all of those skills’*” (Dorothy, ASWU, Extract Twenty Six).

An ethnomethodological approach has allowed me to map how these ‘hostility’ and ‘sympathy’ themes shape advocacy discourses, but importantly to demonstrate that this criticism-defence pattern cannot contain the complexity of asylum seeker/refugee experiences. Beneath the shiny surface of the humanitarian pamphlets, where images of hungry and homeless people are intended to haunt members of a supposed liberal democratic society, there are real men and women trying to live ordinary lives. Not only this, but for many people their experience is formulated as *good* and bad; from their trauma and suffering they take skills and knowledge to be passed on. These are informed and resilient voices that could teach us a lot about what it means to live as an asylum seeker in the UK. Yet, these voices are so rarely heard. Indeed it would seem they are silenced by hostile othering and also by compassionate ‘(s)mothering’. The observations put forward by Van Dijk (2000) (asylum seekers as passive/criminal) and Pupavac (2008) (talented/traumatised) can be applied to some of the materials produced by the organisations, but they cannot account for the numerous voices of their members. Whilst these tropes might characterise the advocacy materials, they do not characterise advocacy *per se*, which operates at many levels.

Despite this relative flexibility, the hostility was still pertinent to these narratives and all informants oriented their talk towards instances of racism, xenophobia and exclusion, often accounting for the negative images of themselves created by the hostiles by drawing on characteristics such as victimisation. Yet, notably, the men and women narrated for themselves identities that went beyond the hostility/defence pairing; this is where the emancipatory potential lays. I will discuss the implications for advocacy practices in the final section of this chapter.

6. 4 Extending 'Hostility Themes'

This work extends, and poses a partial challenge, to the conclusion that Leudar et al. (2008) drew, with regards to the impact of hostility themes on asylum seeker/refugee informants. As we have seen, asylum seekers/refugees are not passive recipients of the themes of either hostile or advocacy discourses. Whilst both are relevant as features of the ground, or field, within which they negotiate their self-hood, this criticism-defence structure does not provide an exhaustive description of the context in which migrants live. Leudar et al. (2008), concluded that:

self-presentations are constructed so as to exclude the relevance of the hostility themes to themselves as individuals, yet in having to acknowledge the themes, these become part of them, with negative consequences for personal well-being. (p. 191).

going on to state that:

This means that the conditions for suffering a trauma – the presence of pervasive hostility and its ‘internalization’ in oneself – seem to be satisfied. In fact, we have seen that most of our refugees/asylum-seeker informants reported psychological problems and attributed them to their ‘problems of living’ in the UK. (p. 216).

Based on the narratives I have collected for this thesis, I would contest elements of this conclusion. It seems apparent from the creative and varied ways in which informants situate the hostility towards them, that this hostility is not necessarily (or only) internalised in such a way as to lead to mental illness or trauma, but that the impact of this hostility is contingent on how it is dealt with and what resources (both personal and social) people have to situate their experiences in a meaningful way. For example, talking about the aims of ASWU, Dorothy highlights the importance of maintaining one's humanity in the eye's of others; yes she suffers but *she* is not suffering, she has been victimised but she is not a victim, “*we feel pain and you know as she's saying we were (..) people before we came to this country where*

they always say "Oh (---) so so so" we, so we just want to tell people that we are we, we- are still human ,we are who we are, no matter what they say we still remain what we know we are...and we are strong, we are strong, because people just listening to it (..) they are depressed" (Extract Two, Chapter Five). Her pain is formulated here as one part of her experience, indeed knowledge of her circumstances moves others deeply, yet she is strong despite this pain, and as we find later, she uses the knowledge she has gained from her painful experience to help others in her situation. Jasmine also finds meaning in her experience, it has enabled her to be a more compassionate person, *"I said it makes me into a bigger person cos before I would be like not say angry but I have time for people now I listen more and I'm more compassionate about... I can say my experience during my life has made me a better person cos I could have took it the wrong way and let it destroy me and let me be angry and so on but I don't want to be angry I don't want to be living in an angry society"* (Extract Nineteen, Chapter Five). Indeed many of the informants reported getting involved, and giving back, as means of personal growth, *"I don't have my status but I feel like I'm happy, because I'm integrate in the community, I do some work and I keep myself busy"* (Extract Twenty One, Chapter Five). They formulated their experiences as sources of knowledge with which they can help other disadvantaged people; this bears a stark contrast to the conclusions drawn by Leudar et al. (2008) in which, *"Most refugee/asylum-seeker informants in our study experienced psychological problems and attributed these to enforced idleness"* (p. 187).

The same can be said for the conclusions drawn by those who are critical of humanitarian representations of refugees. I would argue that theorists have a tendency to assume that the victimising nature of many advocacy representations actually speaks to the lives of those it claims to represent; placing the problem with the asylum seekers who 'relinquish' the 'sick role' rather than on the organisations that perpetuate this imagery. Pupavac (2008) argues, *"There are obvious temptations for refugees as well as citizens in relinquishing to a sick role, not least the enhanced financial support of incapacity benefits, but self-help, initiative, ingenuity and not too much trust in authorities are vital for those like refugees in an insecure*

position politically and socially” (Pupavac, 2008, p.283). I would argue that the informants who took part in this thesis have demonstrated that despite their passivisation in public discourses, they do indeed demonstrate a significant amount of self-help, initiative and ingenuity, and are invariably suspicious and critical of authorities.

Many of the narratives collected for this thesis contained transformative moments that took the speakers away from the 'problem saturated' identities that characterise the academic and advocacy literature. This form of narrative freedom should only be encouraged as it is, *“a way for individuals and communities to remember, bear witness, or seek to restore continuity and identity, can be a symbolic resource enlisted to alleviate suffering and change their situation”* (Eastmond, 2007, p. 251).

6.5 Sympathy Themes

The notion of hostility theme has been an excellent framework with which to map the co-dependency of hostile and advocacy discourses, yet it does not account for all hostility towards asylum seeker/refugees; it does not provide an exhaustive description of the hostile climate in which migrants live. In many cases, concrete government policy (which is however often accounted for along the lines of hostility themes) was called out as a source of exclusion and victimisation.

However, as a theoretical framework for mapping the reproduction of popular 'stereotypes' of refugees, it has provided some important insights. In the conclusion to this thesis, I have named the thematised representations of refugees that characterise advocacy talk 'sympathy themes'. Hostility themes, then, are relevant as a feature of the field or ground in which the identities of asylum seeker/refugees are negotiated, and in response to this emerge shared 'sympathy themes' of refugees as victims. These themes are parallels to hostility themes; they refer to the commonalities of the depiction of refugees as victims. These include images of asylum seekers as naïve, as

passive agents in coming to the UK, as people with little choice, as victims of violence, mental illness and as lost and without hope. Whilst hostility themes and sympathy themes have different consequences for asylum seekers/refugees both, as we have seen, to some extent dictate what it means to be an asylum seeker. As I have already argued, it is the moments in which this hostility/sympathy pattern is broken that reveal more emancipatory understandings of refugee-hood.

6.6 Charitable Services or Empowering Spaces?

Interestingly, the activities carried out by the organisations were ‘put under description’ in different ways in the publicity materials and by their members. In the publicity materials *Refugee Act Now* and *Immigration Legal Aid Manchester* negotiated for themselves the identity of ‘specialist helper’ relationally to their clients who were at times formulated as entirely helpless or were spoken on behalf of. Yet the people who attend these organisations, particularly the asylum seeking women I interviewed who attend the various services at *Refugee Act Now*, formulate the activities as something they are ‘involved’ in rather than on the receiving end of. The activities are situated in their narratives as a means of taking control of their lives, “*I try to manage and I say, I say “no let me wake up, I cannot sleep forever, let me wake up”. I went to the college now. I’m involved in different organisation. I try to build myself I feel a little bit better not better at all but a little bit*” (Elizabeth, Extract Nineteen, Chapter Five). The social aspect of these services is formulated as equally as important as the practical support that is offered alongside it.

From listening to these narratives, it is clear that a major source of hostility and isolation in the informant’s lives is their exclusion from work, mainstream services and normal participation in public life. *Against Immigration Controls* attempt to rhetorically ‘normalise’ migrancy as an attempt to counter this exclusion, yet, the Manchester group at least, did not engage in any practical solidarity work. ASWU explicitly introduces the project as a space from which women asylum seekers can, “*empower ourselves*” and “*...Bring the wider community together with ASWU women*

who may otherwise be "invisible"' (Extract Fourteen, Chapter Five). This kind of community and self-help was formulated on several occasions as transformative.

Advocates, then, should be fostering these spaces within their organisations if they are dedicated to empowering refugees. Obviously this is not within the scope of all of the organisations, ILAM for example exist to provide legal aid and have very limited resources to do more than this. Yet despite the obvious importance of these opportunities (including volunteering opportunities and open spaces for mutual collaborative work), they are often the least prioritised. The well-being project at *Refugee Act Now*, which many of the informants attended, had its funding cut part way through this three year project. The project was replaced by the 'Assisted Voluntary Return' programme which offers failed asylum claimants money to return to their country of origin, a move that one asylum seeking informant told me had caused her huge offence and ultimately stopped her from attending any services at the organisation.

6.7 Implications for Advocacy Work

What I have demonstrated here is that advocacy organisations, in their propaganda, construct asylum seeker/refugee identities along a set of sympathy themes. In doing so they demonstrate their need for compassion and protection; they do this by (at least partially) foregrounding their victim or trauma status. There is a real urgency to promote compassion in response to hostility themes; to tackle xenophobic attitudes and to facilitate proper standards for the treatment of migrants. Yet there is also a need to go beyond the compassion/victim complex. This framing gives primacy to the disablement of asylum seekers/refugees; constraining asylum seekers to a narrative of disablement and trauma, whereas inherent to advocacy and empowerment is a need for *enablement*.

As we have seen from the interviews with asylum-seeker/refugee

informants, this self-enablement already exists in how people interpret and give meaning to their experiences, including their participation in mainstream advocacy services. The task for these services, then, is to provide a space for this enablement not only in their activities but also in their propaganda. Whilst the restrictions on what it means to be an asylum seeker (and to be acknowledged as such) go beyond the control of advocacy organisations, this form of 'embodied action', these ethical interruptions to the status quo (Millner, 2012), are vital in maintaining the challenge to oppressive and exclusionary discourses and practices.

The challenge for advocacy organisations is not only to recognise and harness the much needed critical voices that *already exist* in their midst (as this thesis has demonstrated) but to also provide a space, and a public platform, for those with lived experience of the asylum system (their asylum seeking and refugee clients), to speak and act as themselves, not just as asylum seekers but as *people*. To be able to tell their own versions of their stories. Hitchcock, in her 1993 book *Not Born A Refugee Woman*, argued that:

The oppressed are victims of social injustice; their significance, however, does not reside in the fact of their victimisation, but in the possibility that their agency will transform their lived relations. (Hitchcock, 1993, p.1).

Advocacy organisations need to attend to the significance of the agency and transformation that already exists in their client base. Here, the stories are rich, complex, dynamic and present the individuals who come to the UK to seek asylum as whole people. They defy the narrow definitions of refugee-hood put in place by the hostiles and some advocates. It is important that those who are affected by the asylum system have a platform to tell their stories and to make their demands; this automatically imbues the speaker with a degree of narrative authority and by hearing demands from the voices of asylum-seeking people we can begin to see them as people who have the right to make these claims. As McNevin argues, this is achieved via the "*public assertion of asylum seekers' status as equal subjects of justice alongside citizens and as equally capable authors of the shape that justice*

should take” (McNevin 2010, p.143).

Members of these organisations routinely organised their talk as attacks and criticisms of mainstream policies, and norms of representation and language use. Whether these are formulated positively or negatively (i.e. as refusal or demands) they are premised by the notion that the speaker has the authority to assert themselves in such a way. They imbue the speaker with political rights and voice rather than subordination to the technical solutions of others (Nyers, 2006). Members of these organisations are pushing against the boundaries set by established advocacy practices. Due, I'm sure, in no small part, to the brutality of the asylum system and the overwhelming resilience of their clients they challenge hostility and exclusion on the premise of its affront to liberal democratic society. The difficulty is managing this re-orientation of advocacy whilst maintaining a credible public ‘face’.

The true ethical test is not only the readiness to save the victims, but also - even more, perhaps - the ruthless dedication to annihilating those who made them victims. (Zizek, 2002, p. 68).

A common response by mainstream community or charitable organisations to criticisms of their reformist humanitarian practices is to state the urgency of the charitable work being done, and the small gains that can be won for people, versus the impossibility of radically over throwing the asylum system. But these moments of critical action already exist *within* these organisations. These voices are important cracks (Holloway, 2010) that illuminate the contradictions in liberal reformist practices, the challenge is to continue (as I have done here) to make these cracks visible.

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