“We are not here, we are not there”: Young Refugees' and Asylum Seekers’ Negotiations of Identity and Belonging

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ABSTRACT

Asylum seekers and refugees have been the subject of much research, as have notions of identity and belonging. However, I approach this subject from an innovative phenomenological perspective which attempts to bring to the surface the all too invisible ‘natural attitude’. I do this through an exploration of how embodiment affects encounters on the street, re-forming a sense of who we are, dependent on where we are and consequently how we belong. I also explore, through interviews with 12 young asylum seekers and refugees, the concepts of ‘barriers’ to belonging, or rather what gives rise to a sense of ‘non-belonging’. These methods have been developed as much as was possible in line with a participatory approach, culminating in an exhibition of the young people’s photographs. I privilege belonging over identity, contending that belonging is more important, indeed represents more of a ‘need’. This dissertation reveals that through a reorientation of belonging, as understood as negotiated at the level of the body, such a perspective is helpful in drawing attention to the way in which bodies tend to cluster along lines of ‘sameness’ and familiarity, orienting themselves away from ‘difference’. These lines tend to mark the included from the excluded constituted around those who are seen to fit the ‘corporeal norm’ and therefore belong to the national narrative more than others, thus producing an inequality of bodies where some are subject to ‘over-recognition’, precisely through their invisible or ‘non-recognised’ status. Ultimately, I wish to draw attention to the way in which this consequently affects what certain bodies can ‘do’, affecting the way in which asylum seekers and refugees dwell in the world.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Introduction*

The notion that one either belongs or not, and similarly that one either belongs 'here' or 'there' is challenged by the figure of the refugee and asylum seeker. The liminal status of refugees and asylum seekers and their frequent exclusion from parts of society, whether this is through racism, or state-sanctioned detention, disrupts the formation of place attachment and identity development. In this dissertation I employ a conception of belonging that does not assume a binary 'to belong or not to belong' to emphasis how feelings of belonging occur in a more fleeting, ephemeral manner; contingent on safe and familiar environments, as opposed to existing in a permanent state of being. Whilst this dissertation also considers the notion of identity formation for refugees and asylum seekers it privileges the concept of belonging as I contend that belonging is more important than identity as belonging encompasses the crucial feelings of feeling safe and at home (Ignatieff, in Antonsich 2010), around which identities can take shape, which is particularly critical for asylum seekers and refugees who have experienced trauma, loss and upheaval. This also contributes to the underdeveloped area of literature on belonging as it is so often used "as a synonym of identity" (Antonsich, 2010: 644). I also seek to offer an innovative approach towards the concept of belonging, by employing phenomenology as a way in which to reveal the highly embodied, material nature of identity and belonging and how everyday encounters on the street affect a sense of who we are and how we belong. However, this is not just a phenomenology of the politics of belonging, but of a wider conception of belonging, which encompasses the more emotional, needs orientated, place-based aspects of belonging. The partial focus on the political nature of belonging though does follow on from Saldanha's (2008) calls for embodiment to be privileged in geopolitical analysis. I attempt to reposition the body as the first point of contact through which judgements are founded upon and political decisions are made. Through this I explore the barriers to belonging, or rather how formations of 'non-belonging' occur.

The first chapter outlines the aims and intentions of the research. Chapter 2 assesses the literature around which the study has taken shape, dividing the concepts of identity and belonging as well as justifying the importance of a material approach towards race, whilst also situating the research in its challenging philosophical underpinnings. Chapter 3 explains and justifies the methodology, following in the footsteps of the 'participatory turn' (Kindon, et al. 2010). Chapter 4 explores the results of the interviews, revealing the ways in which sameness and difference holds certain bodies in place. Chapter 5 further develops notions of embodiment through looking at encounters on the street, with a stronger emphasis on phenomenology and how the refugee and asylum

seeker's body is both simultaneously 'non-recognised' and 'over-recognised'. Chapter 6 details the exhibition which took place of the young people's favourite photographs, as an event that potentially precipitated change, and a social space which reflected similar motifs that emerged in the research. Finally, chapter 7 draws attention to the limitations of the project and its conclusions: most importantly however, highlighting what the research reveals about what is at stake from the findings.

1.2 Research Aims

1. To gather new empirical evidence on the identity and belonging of young refugees and asylum seekers living in London.
2. To understand i) how the concept of barriers are central to notions of belonging.
   ii) how everyday encounters affect the formation of a sense of identity and belonging.
3. To contribute to the development of phenomenological literature on embodied practices of difference and to explore how this affects the negotiation of identity and belonging.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the barriers to belonging?
2. How do everyday experiences and encounters affect a sense of identity and belonging?
3. To what extent can phenomenology provide new insights into the concept of belonging?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Identity

"Identity is like fire. It can create warmth and comfort or burn badly and destroy." (Younge, 2010: 4)

Woodward (2004) suggests that we have to actively take up identities. Furthermore identity is a multiple and fluid concept (Valentine & Sporton 2009) that is continuously reshaped through our interactions with 'others' (Cohen, 1994). Indeed "you know who you are, only by knowing who you are not" (Cohen, 1994: 1). It could be argued that how 'straightforward' one's identity is relies on one's position in society, such as embodying the "somatic norm" (Puwar, 2006: 79) of British society, which could be conceived of as the white, heterosexual, male body occupying a position of power through the very 'invisible' unchallenged nature of such an identity. Having multiple identities, and embodying 'difference', can thus complicate a sense of who we are. It is the stories and narratives that people tell about themselves and others that constitute identities, relying on boundary constructions between 'self and 'other', argues Martin (1995, in Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Similarly, Lawler (2008) highlights the central notion of sameness and difference to identity formation. Whilst identity involves sharing common identities and identification, "identities, equally, rely on the expulsion of what they are not" (Lawler, 2008: 3). These 'unities', Hall (1996) argues, have the powerful effect of acting to exclude. Indeed, constructing identities in certain ways is not a benign act.

Whilst I cannot fully do justice to Stuart Hall's expansive and erudite contributions to concepts of identity, it would be foolish to not make reference, if not wholly adequate, to his work. Hall (1996) suggests that identities are "more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are…all-inclusive sameness" (4). This conveys the way identity may only emerge through difference from one's own identity. Hall (1996) argues that "identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse" (4). Despite the validity of Hall's semiotic, discursive approach I attempt to go further and develop the embodied, material ways in which identity takes shape through a phenomenological perspective. This concept of difference is central to notions of identity, as Connolly (2002) argues, "identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self identity" (64). This draws attention to the highly political nature of identities and the way in which they are mobilised to construct boundaries, to demarcate who is seen as outside, and who is inside. This has been compounded by a sense of otherness which Said (1978) drew attention to as the way in which a European identity gained strength, by contrasting itself with the 'otherness' of the orient, which was constructed as inferior.

The notion of identity becomes ever more complex for asylum seekers and refugees, whose lives in their new societies are often characterised by "positions of liminality and marginality" (Krulfeld & Camino 1994: ix). Inevitably this can create a confusion or even loss of identity, particularly for unaccompanied minors who arrive without a relative to help in reaffirming who they are and where they came from. Camino (1994) refers to adolescent refugees as possessing "double liminal status" (30) as refugees they are "between old and new surroundings" (30), yet they are also straddling a state between childhood and adulthood. Mortland (1994) explores the tensions for Cambodians living in American trying to establish their identity through holding on to traditions and a sense of what it means to be Khmer whilst also being drawn to American culture and a desire to fit in; becoming aware for the first time "of having 'ethnic identity'" (Mortland, 1994: 8). Indeed, as Hopkins' (2010) examination of Somali women in London and Toronto conveys, certain identity norms are disrupted in a new culture. Hopkins (2010) draws attention to the performative nature of identity and the way in which "words,

act, gestures…work to generate a core identity" (525), which is important in learning "*how* to be a Somali woman in those locations" (Hopkins, 2010: 525, original emphasis) or indeed how to be Cambodian in America. It is the complexities of attempting to maintain a sense of identity defined in relation to where you came from, whilst attempting to identify with a new culture that I will in part explore in this dissertation.

2.2 Belonging

"Where you belong is where you are safe; and where you are safe is where you belong." (Ignatieff, 1994: 25, in Antonsich 2010)

Whilst there is an established array of literature that focuses specifically on identity, that which is concerned with belonging tends to also mention identity alongside it. Arguably in much of Gill Valentine and Deborah Sporton's extensive and invaluable work, on young Somali refugees and asylum seekers (2007; 2008; 2009), the concepts of identity and belonging are not clearly defined, and to some extent become conflated. Antonsich (2010) argues that belonging is "vaguely defined and under-theorized" (645), its meaning often used interchangeably with that of identity and citizenship. However, belonging cannot be completely removed from questions of identity as Loader (2006: 25, in Antonsich, 2010) suggests, as the question "Who am I?" cannot be isolated from the question "Where do I belong?". Antonsich (2010) divides the concept of belonging into two analytical dimensions. Firstly, 'place-belongingness', which is a "personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place" (645), home in this case not standing for "the domestic(ated) material space" (646), but reflecting a phenomenological approach, instead representing "a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort and security, and emotional attachment" (646). As Yuval-Davis et al. (2006) argue, "Belonging is about emotional attachment" (2). Secondly, the 'politics of belonging', is "a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion" (645). Antonsich (2010) argues that any discussion of belonging ought to encompass both dimensions, as they mutually inform each other. I follow on from this theorisation, choosing to encompass both the political and emotional nature of belonging in the analysis.

Valentine & Sporton (2009) and Valentine et al. (2009) propose that identity cannot just be claimed, but also relies on identity being accepted or recognised by a wider community. Belonging operates in a similar way, in that the claims of those who profess to belong are counterbalanced by those who have "the power of 'granting' belonging" (Antonisch, 2010: 650), or as Hage (1998) might term those seen to possess this power, the "masters of national space" (17). Valentine et al. (2009) discovered that in Aarhus, Denmark Somali children identified themselves as Danish, but did not feel that they

belonged there. Whereas in Sheffield, England young Somalis felt that they belonged there, but did not identify as British. Whereas this was partly attributable to an ability to "define their own narrative of identity…beyond narrow prescriptions of Britishness" (246), another major contributory factor was that both ''British' and English' are still imagined as white identities (Sporton & Valentine 2007; Valentine & Sporton, 2009). I argue that such a feeling of belonging is more important than a sense of identity, indeed we experience a *need* to belong (Baumeister & Leary 1995; Mellor, et al. 2008), and without a sense of attachment, ill-health and lack of well-being can ensue (Baumeister & Leary 1995). One of the traditional integration measurements has been that of language use (Valentine, et al. 2009). However, as Warriner's (2007) study suggests, English language proficiency does not result in, as is often assumed, a sense of belonging or membership. This alludes to the complex multitude of factors which contribute a sense of belonging, indeed "It is clearly possible to belong in many different ways at many different scales" (Mee & Wright, 2009: 772). I argue that a feeling of belonging is not a permanent condition for asylum seekers and refugees, being so frequently disallowed and deliberately disrupted, particularly as an asylum seeker. I contribute to the way in which Yuval-Davis et al. (2006) situate the politics of belonging in three different ways, as temporally, spatially and intersectionally, by suggesting that embodiment should also feature as a way in which belongingness is constituted. This is explored further in the discussion of race in section 2.4, as Mee and Wright (2009) argue, "the politics of race and identity are important themes… in understanding processes of belonging and one that needs further study" (775).

2.3 Citizenship and the Nation

Although the main focus of this dissertation is not explicitly concerned with aspects of citizenship and how this relates to the imagination of the nation, it would be myopic to not acknowledge the highly political nature of being a refugee or asylum seeker. The state acts in a mutually informing way with public perception to create boundaries, which are used to justify the differing treatment of people (Gill, 2009). Citizenship is one such boundary. It has been framed as "the core institution of the nation-state" (Nordberg, 2006: 525), but is increasingly seen as an informal, multi-layered way of participating, which is not limited to states (Yuval-Davis et al. 2006). In a globalising world, with increasing migration as a fact of life (O'Neill, 2010) citizenship is being redefined (Castle & Davidson, 2000; Isin & Turner, 2002), and whilst some might see citizenship as the end point of belonging, it has in fact been argued that globalisation has fostered the decoupling of this seemingly inevitable partnership (Christiansen & Hedetoft, 2004). Furthermore, notions of belonging and citizenship have been redefined around a discourse of security that has

occurred since the 'war on terrorism' (Yuval-Davis et al. 2006). This highlights the fluidity of the nation, revealing how the nation can be continually re-worked as it is an invention of the imagination (Anderson, 2006). Through this construction of our own national identity and imagination we thereby become aware of what we are not (Penrose & Mole, 2008). The paradox of modern citizenship, born of the nation-state, is that in its very language of "inclusion, belonging and universalism…[it] has systematically made certain groups strangers and outsiders" (Isin & Turner, 2002: 3). It is this sense of exclusion, through notions of citizenship and nations, that this dissertation draws upon to deepen an understanding of how identity and belonging operates on an everyday, embodied level.

2.4 Race

The concept of 'race' is now overwhelmingly accepted as a social construction as opposed to biological fact (Jackson & Penrose, 1993). However, this social construction tends to present race as a problem of language and therefore as an epistemological problem (Saldanha, 2006). Gilroy (1987) highlights the shortcomings of this position, criticising such writers as Robert Miles for writing on occasion "as if he believes that banishing the concept of 'race' is a means to abolish racism" (11). Indeed, simply to stop talking of 'race' does not negate the effects that it produces. Saldanha, (2006) criticises Gilroy for not properly interrogating what race *is*, stating that what needs to be examined is "precisely the uneasiness about the term race" (13), Gilroy's (1987) assertion that "skin 'colour', however meaningless we know it to be" (36), minimises the real material effects that race has. Indeed it is far from meaningless, but as I argue, it is a crucial factor which has the power to draw the line between people who are seen to belong and those who aren't.

In an attempt to overcome the problem of epistemology, Saldanha (2008), takes a materialist ontological approach towards race. Saldanha (2006; 2008) discounts the self/other dialectic in favour of thinking about the 'viscosity' of race, and how certain bodies stick together. Saldanha (2006) argues that "embodiment [is] often forgotten in geopolitical analysis" (323), flagging up phenomenology as one such approach towards "thinking the political at the level of the fleshy and the sensual" (326), which is precisely an area in which I intend to contribute through this dissertation. The work of Dan Swanton (2008b; 2010a; 2010b) also argues that the transcendence of race, that Gilroy suggests, does not go far enough. In an attempt to show what race 'does' and how it emerges through practice Swanton joins this 'material turn' by revealing the "immanent processes through which race takes form" (Swanton, 2008b: 240), exploring how encounters affect our understanding of situations, such as how "brown skin, flash cars and location stir suspicions and prejudices" (245). Swanton (2010a) categorises race as an event and

technology which sorts bodies, but which is always "emergent and ever changing" (463). Swanton's (2008a; 2010a) ontological lens brings to the surface perspectives which have been missed. Swanton's (2010a) examination of the road as contact zone in Keighley, a northern mill town in England, reveals the "indifferent, irritable and ungenerous" (464) encounters that take place, "disturbing arguments that encounters are the way for negotiating, or even transcending, raced differences" (464). Swanton's (2008a; 2008b; 2010a; 2010b) work has opened up the possibility to confront a new form of racism, which extends beyond racial epidermal schema to include the material in revealing how "the force and plasticity of race…temporality fixes bodies, things and spaces" (Swanton, 2008b: 240). However, the epistemological and ontological effects are not as independent of each other as these studies would suggest. Studying race with an epistemological lens is not wrong, indeed the ontology of race is allowed to emerge because of the way in which epistemology assigns certain realities. Riggs (2008) echoes this point, arguing that despite the fact that "racial categories are the result of particular power relations and histories of oppression, they are none the less *constructed as mattering* – they are accorded a materiality" (1, original emphasis). In this sense, Jackson's (2008) suggestion that Lorimer's (2005) 'more-than-representational' approach to understanding social life, opposed to a 'non-representational approach', as seen in Swanton's work, is arguably more appropriate, as the meanings that are attributed to these everyday encounters are shaped by underlying social constructions.

As Dyer (2000) states, "race is never not a factor, never not in play" (539), but race has come to symbolise "any racial imagery other than that of white people" (539). Whiteness has come to represent the norm, the standard and the invisible. However, Frankenberg (1997) warns of reifying whiteness and how talking about whiteness "might contribute to the process of recentering rather than decentering it" (1), whilst balancing this with an understanding of the danger of leaving whiteness to remain unexamined. Sara Ahmed (2007) takes a phenomenological perspective to examine "how whiteness is lived as background to experience" (150). In line with Saldanha (2006), Ahmed (2007) rejects the notion that "race does not exist, or is not real" (150) and thus affects what bodies 'can do'. Similarly Linda Martín Alcoff (1999) declares that "race is real" (15) choosing also to take a phenomenological perspective to reveal the embodied, lived experience of race and how bodies are imbued with meaning and thus the need to "make visible the practices of visibility itself" (25) as a way of highlighting the ontological effects of the epistemological process of this learning, which attaches certain meanings to particular bodies. David Macey (1999) also uses phenomenology as a way to explore the "physical, fleshy…mode

of being in the world" (11) that Fanon talks about in his seminal work 'Black Skin, White Masks' (1986) and how the gaze acts to reveal to oneself its own being, its own difference, or marked identity. I seek to further the material turn of embodied literature on race by using a phenomenological lens to analyse how everyday encounters on the street affect a sense of belonging and identity.

2.5 Encounters

The etymology of the word encounter is a useful starting point for understanding its force and meaning. According to The Oxford English Dictionary (2010), its late Latin counterpart is incontrāre, meaning in + contra, or in + against; a meeting of adversaries. This ties in with a sense that encounters on the street are productive through their difference. Bodies, however similar, are always different and therefore oppose one another. The 'in' part expresses a sense of being *in*volved; being fully a part of that opposition, an inability to separate oneself from the being and the doing, the act of being both in and against. However, whilst this older definition presupposes a sense of antagonism, this is not so central in more modern definitions of the word. Both however offer a sense of 'contact'. Ahmed (2000) suggests that an encounter is a meeting which involves a surprise, and perhaps conflict.

Encounters are intensely embodied experiences and in a similar way to how Connolly approaches identity, as forming through opposition, bodies too "take form through and against other bodily forms" (Ahmed, 2000: 39). I follow from Valentine, (2008) in that contact between different individuals and groups is insufficient in generating respect for difference. Valentine (2008) argues "city streets are spaces of transit that produce little actual connection or exchange between strangers" (326). Yet whilst physical face-to-face encounters may be rare on the city street, I argue that there is a meaningful exchange which occurs, located in the micropolitics of such everyday social contact (Amin, 2002). Indeed the way in which the very passing of 'strangers', the 'rubbing of shoulders' and the interpreted gaze affects how one feels in that space: accepted, judged, safe, fearful, out-of-place. This reveals how "bodies are maps of meaning and power" (Haraway, 1990: 222, in Pile & Thrift, 1995). Pile and Thrift (1995) contend that encounters map the subject "into discursively-constituted, embodied identities" (41). This concept of 'mapping' reveals the inherently spatial nature of encounters, and how "places are experienced through the body and how the body is experience through places" (Nast & Pile, 1998b: 405). I develop this concept of encounters through exploring the ways in which "'bodies' come to be lived through being differentiated from other bodies" (Ahmed, 2000: 41) as we continually reform our identities and a sense belonging as a result of the encounters we incur.

2.6 Phenomenology

"Phenomenology is the study of essences" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: vii)

The 'essence', to which Merleau-Ponty (2002) refers to, is not, as Manen (1990) argues, "some kind of mysterious entity or discovery, nor some ultimate core or residue of meaning" (39), but "a linguistic construct, a description of phenomenon" (39). Phenomenology is an expansive philosophy, originating with Husserl's rationalist-phenomenology, to the more existential-phenomenologists, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger (Baronov, 2005). Ultimately phenomenology offers as close as possible a description of the everyday lived experience, to "capture life as it is lived" (Moran, 2000: 5). Phenomenology studies the "world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively" (Manen, 1990:9), temporarily suspending the judgements that stem from the natural attitude (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). A phenomenological account of a lived experience should be able to reveal the significance and nature of that experience in a deeper, previously unseen way (Manen, 1990). Indeed, Heidegger (1962, in Manen, 1990) talked about following certain 'woodpaths' towards a 'clearing' where something could be clarified or revealed in its essential nature. Heidegger (1962) argues we are always already in the world; "to be a person is to be in the world" (Becker, 1992: 13). One can therefore not separate person and world, subject and object, for the perceived world is not an object, but 'the ensemble of my body's routes' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 247, in Spurling, 1977). An ontological phenomenology allows this to take place as the search for being is inherently one that involves the body in the world. Indeed, the body and the world 'fuse' to transcend the subject/object dualism, as "the body is reversible…a thing among things, and…what sees them and touches them" (Spurling, 1977: 46).

Using the term 'body-subject', Merleau-Ponty (2002) challenged the split between mind and body, arguing, "to be human is to be simultaneously mind and body (Becker, 1992: 16). Heidegger's (1962) claim that consciousness only comes into existence through human experience is of particular consequence for the body as the body acts as a means of communication with the world. Perception, which is necessarily preceded by consciousness, for Merleau-Ponty, is "a manner in which we, as embodied beings, are projected into the world" (Moran, 2000: 424). Sara Ahmed (2007) uses phenomenology to "bring what is behind to the surface" (149) in her study on whiteness. Having bodies, means "we must be some place" argue Nast and Pile (1998a: 1). It is the "'here' of the body, and the 'where' of its dwelling" that Ahmed (2007) describes as the starting point for orientation. Ahmed (2007) argues that race, or specifically whiteness, shapes what is within reach of someone, as "we are shaped by what we inherit, which delimits the objects

that we might come into contact with" (155). Ahmed (2007) crucially draws attention to the fact that "phenomenology is about whiteness, in the sense that it has been written from this 'point of view', as a point that is 'forgotten'" (160). Merleau-Ponty's habitual body, which is behind the action, is the white body as Ahmed (2007) suggests. The habitual body "'trail[s] behind' action…they are not orientated 'towards' [their whiteness]" (Ahmed, 2007: 156) as it is unnoticed. This reveals how the body is central to the way in which spaces take shape and being-in-the-world is experienced. I employ phenomenology to bring to the surface what is invisible or seen as the natural attitude and to interrogate what it means to experience the world as an asylum seeker or refugee.

3. METHODOLOGY

I carried out the following methods with 12 young asylum seekers and refugees. Their ages ranged from 16 to 26. There were 5 girls and 7 boys. Of the 12 participants, half had indefinite leave to remain and the other six were still seeking asylum. Most of the participants had spent between 4 and 7 years in the UK. However, 1 had only been in the UK for 14 months, whilst 3 had lived in the UK for 9 to 10 years. 9 of the participants are from different countries in Africa, along with 1 participant from China, 1 from Afghanistan, and 1 Kosovan. Initially I had wanted a group that was as 'homogenous' as possible, and whilst I endeavoured to do this, for numerous reasons, it became impossible and I now believe that the diversity of the group adds to the richness of the project. All however, have experienced extreme violence, trauma and loss during their developmental years. All, except one, arrived in this country as unaccompanied minors.

3.1 A Participatory Approach

Maggie O'Neill (2010) calls for "renewed methodologies for social research that are participatory, relational, interpretive and action-oriented" (93) with refugees and asylum seekers. However, I do not confess to following a 'pure' Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. Such an aim was thwarted from the very conception of the project as it stemmed from my own interest in carrying out research on a specific topic. 'Proper' PAR would have identified and developed the parameters of the project in conjunction with the participants themselves as well as the methods (Kindon, et al. 2010a). However, institutional constraints, such as the time in which the research was to be carried out, as well as finding appropriate times to meet all of the young people, restricted the project's participatory potential. Fully participatory projects can take many years to develop, requiring 'slow research' (Kinpaisby, 2008). Despite this, I endeavoured to develop a project that was "with and for, rather than on, participants" (Kindon, et al. 2010a: 2). This was an ambition from the beginning, due to the highly sensitive nature of the subject

matter of the project. PAR assumes that there will be action taken to change the situation identified (Kindon, et al. 2010a). Whilst a haughty approach might assume that the research in itself represents the action to change, which, whilst not completely untrue, I felt it would not be an adequate enough contribution towards precipitating such change. Therefore an essential part of the project, from the very start, was to create an exhibition of the photographs taken and chosen by the participants themselves. The exhibition is of central ethical importance to the project as one of my main initial considerations was the question of what the participants would gain from the research. For further explanation and analysis of the exhibition see chapter 6. It has to be recognised however that PAR is a form of power (Kesby, et al. 2010; Kothari, 2001). It is in fact “at the very heart of PAR” (Kesby, et al. 2010:19). Participation, like all forms of knowledge production, is at risk of being manipulated in favour of achieving an agenda which is fundamentally not about the sharing of power (Manzo & Brightbill, 2010). Yet this corruption should not diminish the merit of the principals of PAR which attempt to destabilise the notion that knowledge only resides within the researcher. Indeed, PAR “represents a counter-hegemonic approach to knowledge production” (Kindon, et al. 2010b: 9).

3.2 Ethical Considerations

One of the primary of objectives when undertaking this research was to avoid ‘re-traumatisation’. There are always many ethical dilemmas when conducting research with a group of such vulnerable people, questions such as “will the research make life even harder to cope with because sad memories and thoughts are revived?” (Dyregrov, et al. 2000: 413) were of essential consideration. Before each interview I stated that I would not ask any questions regarding their lives in their previous country and that I was only interested in their experiences of living in the UK. Furthermore, whenever it was clear a participant was becoming upset I would change the conservation topic and take a break where necessary. I made it clear that all of the recordings would be anonymous and pseudonyms are used throughout, the names chosen, where possible, by the participants themselves, although there were three participants who wished to use their real names. It was also important for the interviews to be conducted in a safe and familiar environment for the participants. All of the interviews, except two, were conducted at the Baobab premises. The presence of Sheila Melzak, the clinical director of the Baobab Centre, compounded a sense of safety and familiarity for the participants as she represents the centre of the organisation. The two interviews that weren’t conducted at the Baobab Centre were a result of logistical issues. One was conducted at the participant’s new flat, which she was proud to show off, and the other at a coffee shop near where the

participant was working as this was most convenient for him. Whilst it is advocated that interviews are conducted in a neutral setting where the interviewees can feel comfortable and unthreatened (Longhurst, 2003), spaces can never be ‘neutral’. Rather “politics and power are necessarily negotiated and fundamentally linked to the production of knowledge in PAR ‘safe space’” (Stoudt, 2007: 282). Indeed, as will be explored in the interview method section, the highly embodied nature of conducting interviews inevitably affected how participants responded. However, by conducting the interviews in an environment that was symbolically their own space and not my own I hoped to de-centre my own position of privilege or authority that I might embody.

3.3 Semi-structured interviews

A qualitative approach was the most appropriate technique for the nature of the project. The main reason for choosing the more informal semi-structured interview style was that I wished to facilitate a conversational atmosphere that would allow the interviewee to feel that they could open up and talk at length without being interrupted or guided by a rigid agenda (Longhurst, 2003). I had a few key questions which I used, the opening one was asking them to tell me about how they felt about living in the UK, and perhaps to ask for examples of good or bad things. I also asked about where they feel like they most belong or feel safest and if they have a favourite place. As a way of gauging what might constitute a part of their identity I also asked what kind of things they enjoyed doing, such as hobbies, as it became clear that the complex meanings of the word identity meant that it was not actually a useful word to ask about directly. These examples are brief, but formed the core of my questions, intending them to be limited but conducive to depth. This was primarily as I did not know what might emerge from the interviews, and therefore I wanted them to be very much led by the young people themselves as I felt that this was the fairest and most ethical way for the participants to communicate their experiences. This also reflected a more participatory approach, which does not assume a superior knowledge. I also used open questions such as “tell me about…” and “how did that make you feel?” in order to encourage further communication (Burgess, 1992).

I chose not to position myself as a neutral, passive interviewer, attempting to withhold information about myself, as I might in a therapeutic position, as this could been seen as an attempt to retain power. Therefore, where appropriate, I chose to share experiences with my participants to propagate further conversation and foster a sense of shared trust. Inevitably the social positions that the researcher and the ‘researched’ hold affect interviews, although it would be impossible to gauge exactly how, as so many judgements operate on an unconscious, embodied level. However, the differences

between me and the participants does not have to be negative, but rather can be productive (Pratt, 2010). This is a way of "working with – rather than attempting to overcome – difference" (Pratt, 2010: 100). Indeed, I picked up on the sense that a lot of the participants actually enjoyed being in the company of someone who was not representative of their usual social group, in the same way that I enjoyed being in the company of people I don't normally spend time with. However, other influences that could have affected the interviews, aside from our fleshy, economic and social differences could have been the presence of a recorder in the room, which may have formalised the interview, introducing "a silent but potentially political listener" (Stoudt, 2007: 291). However, the honesty and openness of the participants actually surprised me, perhaps reflective of a feeling of trust and ease.

3.4 Photovoice

The first stage of the project was marked by giving each individual a simple film camera with which to take photos of anything that was meaningful or important to them. It is perhaps inappropriate to label this method 'photovoice' as my aims were more modest in comparison with those that define a 'proper' photovoice method, which positions the outcome of photovoice "to create an educational tool informed by local knowledge to influence public policy" (Krieg & Roberts, 2010: 152). Rather my aims were firstly to use the photos as a way in to talk about the respondents' sense of identity and belonging, gathering an understanding of what or who was important to them in their everyday lives. Secondly, but no less importantly, for the photographs to make up the exhibition at the end of the project, as a way for the participants to take ownership of the project and for members of the local and broader community to gain greater understanding and insight into the lives of asylum seekers and refugees. Despite the limited potential to influence social policy through the exhibition, I do not believe that this undermines the participatory endeavour that the photos were designed to achieve. If photovoice is a process which allows people to "identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique" (Wang & Burris, 1997: 369), then this is arguably still the case that this project sets out to achieve, although on a more modest scale. Furthermore, as the participation in the project was a very individual experience, the exhibition represents a way of "collecting and telling stories… [to] empower a community by documenting marginalisation as a shared…experience" (Pratt, et al. 2010), and potentially assisting the process of re-building identities, and constructing narratives of belonging as photographs give shape and form to experience (Sontag, 1979). It is this empowerment, through the

use of a camera to document their own lives, of people who may normally be marginalised, which is one of photovoice's central aims (Krieg & Roberts, 2010).

3.5 The 'Walking Tour'

The walking tour is an innovative methodology, and as far as I am aware, there is no same or similar method, thus there is no existing body of literature around the idea. There is however, of course, literature on the notions of encounters. The walking tour was carried out after each individual interview, and took place on a short section of the Holloway Road in North London, lasting for approximately 10 to 20 minutes. The Holloway Road in many ways embodies London. It is a diverse street which represents many different cultures and features a range of establishments. What proved most challenging about this method was attempting to communicate what I was trying to achieve as it was a more abstract concept, compared with the interviews. What became obvious was that a combination of observation and a few questions worked best. I asked what kind of people the participants would try to avoid, who they would ask for directions and how they felt in the area and about the police. Whilst the walk represented a chance to galvanize further discussion and draw out particular issues (Alexander et al. 2007), it was primarily designed to explore how everyday encounters on the street; not necessarily verbal or physical face-to-face contact but the very act of being around other people that we may glance at, be the subject of a gaze, accidentally brush past; general perceptions that infiltrate our subconscious to re-form a sense of who we are and how we belong depending on where we are. This is in contrast to Valentine (2008) and Amin (2002) who assert that the street actually produces very little exchange or warrants actual encounters. Rather, encounters are multiple and often exist as unconscious observations, indeed "an ontology of encounter emphasises the event-fulness of place. Place as always becoming" (Swanton, 2008a: 3).

4. BARRIERS TO BELONGING

To belong is a powerful state of being, but to not belong is not just overwhelmingly disempowering, but emotionally damaging. Arguably it is more important to feel a sense of belonging than it is to have a sense of identity, as it is often from the places in which we dwell, that our identity takes shape. Indeed, "belonging is a deep emotional need of people" (Yuval-Davis, 2004: 215, in Nordberg, 2006). This chapter is divided into three sections, but is infused with a sense of 'difference' as this concept prevailed as a major theme from the interviews. Difference has a powerful effect on the creation of a sense of belonging and identity as identity requires identification (Hall, 1996), but when one finds very little to identify with, this reinforces a sense of marginality. As the interviews reveal, differences are also constructed through places and are therefore fluid, constructed

contextually and relationally (Pratt & Hanson, 1994). The first section focuses on how living as a refugee or asylum seeker continuously disallows a sense of only ever being in one place and therefore disrupts the establishment of a sense of meaningful belonging. The second section addresses how issues of language, race and difference affect a sense of how one identifies and belongs. Finally, the third section will focus more on the politics of belonging, specifically how often state sanctioned treatment of asylum seekers and refuges inhibit their ability to develop a sense of place attachment, identity and belonging.

4.1 Living in Exile

It emerged that the refugee and asylum experience is undeniably one of exile. All of the participants were forced to leave their own countries having experienced extreme trauma. Consequently there was not one participant who did not talk about 'home', or 'my country' as reference to their place of birth. Many of the photos that people took were taken because they were a reminder of something from their home country. In fact, one respondent, Zarak, spoke almost exclusively of his home country, Afghanistan, during the interview. These memories, or rather 're-memories' as Tolia-Kelly (2004) terms them, defining them as "memories that are encountered in the everyday" (316) which can be "stimulated through scents, sounds and textures" (314), are "imbued with the sentiments of loss [and] absence, (Tolia-Kelly, 2004: 323). Isaac, who is still seeking asylum and has lived in the UK for 5 years, took a picture of the King of Uganda and his wife, saying "it's very important for me to have a picture of him, it's like here when you see people putting a picture of the Queen in their houses. I like to see the traditional way she dresses – that's the way traditional women dress in my country. It reminds me of home sometimes." (Isaac, interview, 2011). Such reminders of home were recurrent in the pictures that people took. Nature was a common reminder of home for Christelle and Halima. Christelle mentioning how "back home the weather is sunny… the green reminds me of my country" (Christelle, interview, 2011). Whilst Halima talked about how the park she goes to "reminds me of my home…it's so calm and fresh" (Halima, interview, 2011). All of these act as symbolic reminders of a life and identity that all of the participants were forced to leave behind. They also allude to how familiarity acts as a meaningful reference point in their lives as they attempt to reconcile living between two different cultures.

This sense of the familiar and similar was often related to finding a sense of comfort and belonging in places and with people of the same or similar cultural heritage. Lori admitted "the reason why I believe I am at home [where I live] is because there are lots of Kosovan people and Albanian people" (Lori, interview, 2011). Similarly when I asked Mei if she has a favourite place in London, somewhere where she feels she belongs, she

replied: “when I go to Chinatown I feel like I was in my country” (Mei, interview, 2011). The search for similarity manifested itself in different ways. For example, with Sisay, she talked about her love of sad books and films as she can relate to the stories, saying “ I just put myself in that situation and always you know that stories belonged to me” (Sisay, interview, 2011). Similarly she recounted a recent conversation she had with a newly released prisoner, saying how involved she was by his story “because I’ve been through that situation so I know what he feels” (Sisay, interview, 2011). Sisay’s description reveals how similarity of experience was important to her, whereas similarity of cultural origin was important for Mei and Lori. Zarak, Christelle and Isaac all implied, when talking about places they enjoyed being in, that the multicultural aspect of it was a prime reason. With the exception of Sisay, these insights reveal how the search for familiarity can cluster along racial lines. As Spicer (2008) found in his study of refugees’ and asylum seekers’ experiences of neighbourhoods, the interviewees stressed the importance of “social networks with people of the same ethnic or religious identity and other black and minority groups” (491), as living in a neighbourhood with a history of immigration can “mitigate some of the more extreme forms of social exclusion” (Spicer, 2008: 507). Indeed, as Lichtenberg (1999) might add, “our native culture provides us with a sense of being at home in the world” (173, in Hedetoft, 2004). However, this desire to be around familiarity or ‘sameness’ should not be taken simply as an unproblematic psychological ‘norm’ to seek comfort in that which we see as similar to ourselves, which is not to say that this is untrue, but rather, accepting such an understanding conceals the more problematic reality: that people seek ‘sameness’ as they feel they are different and that they do not belong in certain places. In other words, it is symptomatic of a society that does not accept ‘difference’ against the dominant ‘sameness’. In particular it is the very act of *having* to seek sameness which demarks the people that do this as identifying themselves as existing outside of the ‘dominant culture’. Indeed, one might hear of ‘gay communities’ but may not hear of ‘straight communities’, as the latter constitutes a certain ‘norm’ of society who do not need to do the ‘seeking’, but rather are ‘seeked’ around. In this way Lori’s decision to live in an area where she heard there was a large population of Kosovans and Albanians potentially stems from a feeling that this may be the only place that she feel she could belong. Similar to Isaac’s photo of his King and Mei’s precious jumper that her grandma made for her, and the way nature prompts ‘re-memory’ (Tolia-Kelly, 2004) for many of the young people, being around cultural familiarity for Lori and Mei also act in a similar way to objects as “private mementoes [which] take the place of interpersonal relations as a depository of sentiment and cultural knowledge.” (Parkin, 1999: 317).

The reminders of home also convey the longing aspect of be-longing. The familiarity of objects and cultures could be interpreted as protective measures, acting as a buffer between English society and their own cultural origins. Indeed, this could be of heightened importance for the young people as all the participants, with the exception of Lori, arrived in the UK alone, without any family, and parents wellbeing and ability to cope has been cited as a key protective factor during the stress and upheaval of resettlement (Correa-Velez, 2010). Such reminders are also important in helping to establish and maintain a sense of identity. However, they can also act as painful reminders of loss. Therefore, inherent in the very process of becoming a refugee, a person will always potentially feel “we are not here, we are not there” (Lori, interview, 2011). However, it should not be viewed that belonging ‘100%’ to the new society represents the end point for assimilation and attachment. Rather, holding on to a ‘percentage’ may be important for a sense of security. For Hanni, when asked how far he feels part of British society, he replied “60% I’d say” (Hanni, interview, 2011). I asked what would need to happen in order to get that other 40% or maybe he did not even want that. To which he replied, “I think would just keep that to myself… I’m not prepared to give it to Chad, to England or to Barak Obama, no, no, no, no” (Hanni, interview, 2011). This could also be seen as a self-protective measure, a way in which to cope with aspects of trauma and loss, as you cannot lose something if you are not fully apart of it. However, it also perhaps disrupts the notion that refugees experience “intense longings to be-long” (Kumsa, 2006, 236). Rather, belonging is contested, constantly in flux and never fully ‘here’ or ‘there’. This notion of belonging is developed further in the following section, but focuses more along lines of race, language and difference in general as barriers to belonging.

4.2 Living with Difference

This section focuses on how race, and a general sense of difference, touching briefly on language, can foster a sense of ‘non-belonging’. Halima expressed the strongest feeling of non-belonging, which seemed to stem from a sense of dislocation and difference. At the time of interview Halima had refugee status and had been living in the UK for 18 months. For Halima school was a very important safe place for her. She took a number of pictures of various classrooms. I asked her about a photo of a board displaying the name of her form, 10JCL, which was one of her favourite photos:

Me: *How do you feel when you see that photo and you know you belong to ‘10JCL’?*

Halima: *Belonging is, I think, a bit different. Because you know when you are in the class for two minutes or so you feel like you belong and then there’s another point when you won’t feel that.*

Me: *What creates that shift?*

Halima: *You know when you look at everyone else, and you know you're different. Then you just ask yourself 'who am I?'*

Later she added:

Halima: *...I just feel that I don't belong, I don't have an identity to call my (silence)*

Me: *what do you think has prevented that?*

Halima: *because I have a different background. I always feel that everyone is looking at me. Sometimes I feel like, (Silence) I feel alone most of the times.*

This extract alludes to the fleeting, transient nature of belonging, feeling only for a brief moment that you belong, and then being shocked back into a sense that you don't through an awareness of your own 'difference'. Halima was the only participant who does not live in London, living in a market town with a community that is not diverse, which arguably could have compounded her sense of isolation and lack of belonging. Living in an area which is not multicultural potentially offers fewer 'ways' to belong, as what constitutes an inclusive identity is more narrowly defined. This was the main reason cited by Valentine et al. (2009) why Somali refugee and asylum seekers in Aarhus, Denmark did not feel like they belonged there, along with the fact that the Somali community was "a weak community of practice" (246). As Halima describes, she became aware of who she was by who she was not. This echoes Fanon's (1986) description of an encounter with a young girl who exclaims when she sees him, "Look, a Negro!" (111). Which Fanon describes as the point where "I discovered my blackness" (112), for "as long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion…to experience his being through others" (Fanon, 1986: 109). It is this realisation that one differs from the 'corporeal norm' which makes one conscious of being, body and therefore dwelling. However, opposed to the gaze of others, Halima is referring to her own self-reflexive gazing. For Macey (1999), this sense of "being-for-others is…a precondition for self knowledge" (8). In this way Halima comes to know herself through the realisation that she does not know herself among these others. This relates to Fanon's sense of "not knowing *what* he is because *that* is what he is" (Macey, 1999: 8, original emphasis).

This sense of dislocation is also constructed politically. As Bond (2006) argues, the "three most prominent markers of national identity are residence, birth and ancestry" (611). When one occupies a space in which one cannot claim any of these "passive criteria of belonging" (Hedetoft & Hjort, 2002: 102, in Hedetoft, 2004), forming a sense of attachment and acceptance is further complicated. This more nation-state understanding of identity and belonging was also reflected by Mei, who stated that "I feel like I'm not a part of

English society, but I want to be…you have to know like a bit of English history" (Mei, interview, 2011). This is what Hedetoft (2004) might see as "institutionalised belonging in the form of…ethno-national versions of historical memory" (25-26). Mei feels like she cannot belong to English society because, by birth and ancestry she is excluded from the national narrative. Halima too arguably struggles to belong because the national narrative of who belongs to the 'imagined community' where she lives, conflates "familiarity as nationality" (Hedetoft, 2004: 26). This more political understanding of belonging, which 'naturalises' certain people as being included is dangerous as it can easily descend into racist discourses of who "authentically belong[s]" (Hedetoft, 2004: 26).

Both Christelle and Sisay mentioned how they tend to stick with a certain group of people. For Sisay this was fellow Ethiopians. Christelle expressed how:

"When you are a foreigner born here, it is not the same if you…are a refugee...we don't feel like we belong to them, and them, they also don't feel like we're like them… You just feel like you belong to a group, the group is like "refugee, asylum seeker"… you don't feel like you can be any British kid in this country…it's like really strange for an asylum seeker or refugee to be friends with someone who is white" (Christelle, interview, 2011).

Both Sisay and Christelle expressed a desire to mix with 'other' kinds of people, those that aren't from "my country" (Sisay, interview, 2011) but implied that there were barriers. For Christelle this barrier was marked by race. The cause for this divide may be enlightened by examples that David and Fabrice gave. David mentioned how he believed that particularly outside London "as a black person everyone knows you are bad…they think we sell drugs, we use drugs, we're killers" (David, interview, 2011). Fabrice recounted a racist encounter he had at a football game, when a fellow Liverpool supporter told him "we don't need you black people to support Liverpool, we are really enough" (Fabrice, interview, 2011). Sisay was also the victim of racism on the London tube, describing a situation which really angered and upset her, when she sat next to a white woman who got up and moved across the carriage so as not to sit next to her, exclaiming "as soon as they find out I'm foreigner they don't treat me as other people" (Sisay, interview, 2011).

All of these examples allude to the insidious idea that bodies, which have a different nationality, are excluded from the British national imagination. Christelle herself refers to, what presumably must be anyone who is not white, as 'foreigners' despite being born here. This challenges Bond's (2006) assertion that birth is one of the "three most prominent markers of national identity" (611), pointing out that birth does not denote automatic acceptance and unchallenged belonging. Humpage & Marston (2006) stress the importance of "recognition and respect as key elements of social belonging" (124), but all

of the examples of racism above convey a lack of respect towards those seen as' different', thus producing narrow groups to which people are seen as 'naturally' belonging. Thus prejudice and intolerance create the need for spaces of sameness and familiarity for refugees and asylum seekers as they represent the potential to be less visibly out of place as difference morphs into sameness. This is also emblematic of the way in which viscosity makes certain bodies stick together "based on attributes like sex, skin colour, nationality, economic power or fear" (Saldanha, 2008: 324). This is explored further in section 5.

It is not just by not representing a body 'norm' that processes of belonging are disrupted, but Lori mentioned how language also contributes to such barriers, saying how "my English has improved, not exactly the right accent" (Lori, interview, 2011). Christelle also expressed frustration about how she cannot always express herself in the way she wants to in class. Valentine et al. (2008) shows how "language is a situated practice… you are what you speak, and what you speak is where you are." (385). In certain spaces there exists a hegemonic linguistic form, which for example, the accents of some of the young people might not conform to. However, in other spaces, surrounded by people who represent sameness through the very shared difference of accent or language, such a hegemonic linguistic form is redefined by a new context and new normality. Thus this highlights how the refugee and asylum seeker's body is in constant flux between sinking into spaces of sameness and non-recognition, and into those where the body, through the skin, language and accent mark it as different and therefore overly recognised. This suggests how important identification with people who may speak the same language is in the process of developing a feeling of identity and belonging in a new culture, as Antonsich (2010) argues, "contributing to a greater sense of feeling 'at home'" (648).

4.3 The Effects of Legal Status

One of the most powerful effects that influenced how the young people felt about living in the UK related to the effects of their legal status, whether this was the uncertainty and limitations that asylum status brought or the negative discourse that surrounded being a refugee. There was a common paradox however that emerged from these varying experiences, that of occupying the position of non-recognition and 'over-recognition'. The marginalisation that many of the participants suffer is encompassed in this concept of non-recognition, which Humpage and Marston (2006) refer to as "being rendered invisible by means of the authoritative, representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture" (114). Yet simultaneously through the way in which the body is disciplined by practices such as detention, refugees and asylum seekers presence in society is rendered as 'overly-recognised', so much so that they are made invisible.

The practice of detaining asylum seekers has been directly linked to psychological stress and mental health problems (Hodes; 2010; Lorek, et al. 2009; Robjant, et al. 2009). The potential for re-traumatisation of people who may have or may still be experiencing post-traumatic stress, is substantial. I was aware that three of the young people interviewed, David, Isaac and Hassan had spent time in detention. And although I asked no questions about detention, David and Isaac both discussed at length their experiences. Both likened detention to prison, with David having taken a photo of metal gates which reminded him of the time he spent in detention:

"This one reminds me of when I was in detention… I just feel a little bit sad because though I managed to come out of there, there are a lot of other people who didn't manage to come out from detention already, or were deported; and those who go to report [each week to the Home Office] every time when they're in there they don't know whether they are coming out or they are going to be detained… I don't see a difference between a prison and a detention." (David, interview, 2011)

Isaac has also been detained a number of times, and is still seeking asylum, whereas David has received indefinite leave to remain. Isaac described his most recent experience of going to sign on at the Home Office, as required each week, and being taken into a room, not told what was going to happen to him and then a number of hours later two men from G4S security took him to Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre. He describes the process when he arrived:

"they measure you, take your finger prints, take your picture, make you like a card…I was in that room for 23 hours a day for one week… then I was taken to another centre, which is not even a centre, it's a prison, H.M.P. Dover. So I asked the women 'why am I in prison? I'm not a criminal'. She said to me 'oh you know it's not prison, the Home Office, asked us to give them some space'…. They take away everything, you're not allowed to have cash, not allowed to have anything… I was there for like one day, and then I got released from there. So they gave me a ticket to come back to London, with their bags: 'HMP Dover', those like plastic bags, so when I met people on the train, they said like 'oh welcome back'. So they thought I was like from prison, so I said 'no I'm not a prisoner, they just took me there'. So it was really horrible and every time I go to sign on now I don't trust them, I think they are going to do the same thing" (Isaac, interview, 2011).

Isaac was not told why he was detained. The very concept of detaining asylum seekers requires that they are seen as less worthy of equal rights and therefore as 'lesser' citizens. Indeed, as Squire, (2009) argues, the asylum seeker is "a key foreign figure by which the limits of citizenship are drawn" (5). Both David and Isaac describe themselves as feeling

and being treated like prisoners, constituting the asylum seeker as one who has done something wrong. Isaac's description of how his body was measured, photographed and documented is emblematic of how the state administered regime of power, which holds certain bodies deemed to be disentitled to certain rights in place, operates at the level of the body. In this way the body can be seen as a border at which decisions about the right to rights and citizenship are made, as Tyler (2010) argues, "in migration studies, borders have tended to be understood as places; however, borders are also practices" (70). The regulation of the body in this way also serves to strip the body of it's own identity, transferring 'a copy' of the body into the hands of the state, whilst reducing identity to a set of numbers, patterns and images. Such 'identity stripping' is compounded through asylum seekers not being allowed to take in any material possessions of their own, thus further attempting to produce the detained asylum seeker akin to the way in which prisoners are produced. Indeed, it is within actual working prisons that some asylum seekers are detained, the humiliation of which is evident in Isaac's desire to let people know that he is not a criminal when he was spotted carrying a bag labeled "HMP Dover". Shame and humiliation are powerful emotions which can further act to condition the body as out of place. The police stop and search powers further compound this effect, with Isaac having been most regularly subjected to such treatment. For discussion of this see section 5.3. Tyler (2010) argues such "discriminatory and dehumanising state practices" (70) as those detailed in Isaac's account, are a direct effect of the implementation of the 1981 British Nationality Act, which marked a pivotal moment in the redrawing of the limits of British Citizenship along biopolitical lines (Tyler, 2010), acting to draw the lines of the nation "around the boundaries of race" (Baucom, 1999: 195, in Tyler, 2010).

David and Isaac's descriptions of the uncertainty and mistrust when going to 'sign on' at the Home Office each week highlights the state's refusal for asylum seeker's to fully participate in the decisions of their own lives. Whilst this might enable asylum seekers to be seen as powerless individuals, stripped of political significance, and thus liable to being labeled as emblematic of 'bare life', which, according to Agamben (1998) is an act of sovereign power to produce parts of the population as existing outside of the polity. In fact I contend that life cannot ever be 'bare', for we are always already involved in the political, indeed being an asylum seeker or refugee is inherently political. Rather, I follow Butler and Spivak (2007), who describe "jettisoned life" as, "saturated with power precisely at the moment in which it is deprived of citizenship" (40). It is the danger of the asylum seeker being constructed as disentitled to rights and citizenship and therefore being created as outside the law, and an exception, which conversely enables the full force of the law to

come into being, subjecting asylum seekers to practices which are in fact unlawful. The detention centre can be seen as one example where this takes place. Indeed, as Diken (2004) argues, in the detention centre "the human and the inhuman enter into a biopolitical zone of indistinction, and the detainees can be subjected to all sorts of physical and symbolic violence without legal consequences" (88). This has severe consequences for the maintenance of a sense of belonging as the biopolitical practices of detention attempt to assert a formal rejection of the asylum seeker from being welcome to join British society. Furthermore, the uncertainty that the state reinforces through its practices of forced dispersal throughout the country, sudden deportation and detention, act to maintain the bodies of asylum seekers as existing on the margins of society, preventing them from forming a sense of attachment and developing an identity, as Isaac poignantly added "sometimes I used to feel like sort of rejected by society here"(Isaac, 2011).

The effect of this is a life stymied. Christelle (interview, 2011), who was still seeking asylum at the time of the interview, expressed this predicament as like being in a box. She describes how she cannot afford the mobile phone she wants because she cannot work and is not allowed to open a bank account. She said how the uncertainty of her legal status, "makes you not plan something because… I don't even know if I stay here… For example I started a really nice course of keyboard, I just give up because I was thinking why should I do that? Maybe I will not be able to finish it. I almost give up my college course also" (Christelle, interview, 2011). She said that this led to feelings of helplessness and a lack of freedom. Similarly Lori, (interview, 2011) described her situation before receiving indefinite leave to remain as like being "in the air, we didn't know what to do, we couldn't buy things, we couldn't study, we couldn't do nothing because we were always thinking oh they might take us today". Whilst Christelle felt that her legal status was a barrier to belonging she also expressed how sometimes when she compares her life to other people who do have indefinite leave to remain their lives are in fact not very different. This differed to Hassan (interview, 2011), who believed that people who have refugee status are treated better than those without it. He mentioned how it affects his confidence, saying that "I think if I have status I could be kind of confident to talk to people, to make friends, to speak in any place. But now, even if I have a right – someone done something wrong to me – even if I have a right, there's something prevent me, stopping me to tell 'this is wrong, this is my right' because… I'm afraid even if I ask for my right this is going to affect my status" (Hassan, interview, 2011). This reveals the disjuncture between the human rights that Hassan is aware he is entitled to and the reality of the state constructed rights that he has been assigned. This fear is another practice of control which exerts itself

over the body. All of the examples that have been detailed throughout this section serve to highlight the way in which in state policy towards immigration fundamentally does not just allow, but actively promotes the regulation and exclusion of certain peoples and bodies from British society, indeed the very existence of Immigration Removal Centres testifies to this. As Tyler (2010) argues, “the existence of populations of failed citizens within Britain is not an accident of flawed design, but is foundational to British citizenship” (62). Citizenship in this way acts more as a means of marking the excluded than it does to actively include. The consequences for this are stunted or “dormant” (Isaac, interview, 2011) lives. For those who are forced to endure years of uncertainty living as an asylum seeker their lives become characterised by “social isolation and boredom” (Lewis, 2010: 576) as they are disentitled by the state to participate in the same ways as those with full formal citizenship can.

Whilst phenomenology offers that we might “discover ourselves in a world, as part of the world” (Moran, 2000: 424), the world in which the self is discovered is a world which has always already constructed ourselves through how we perceive each other and in turn are perceived. But when particular perceptions act to suppress certain bodies, the power of the seemingly benign observation above reveals itself: the practices by which we are defined are inherently unequal, in other words, how we are seen is not an act of choice. Furthermore, one may discover that one is not quite a ‘part’ of the world in the way that others might be. In this section I have presented how state practices towards asylum seekers act to prevent a fostering of belonging. The life of asylum seekers is characterised by a range of paradoxes, from the invisible status of ‘non-recognition’ as rights are disallowed, to the ‘overly-recognised’ evident in the biopolitical documentation of bodies, to being constructed outside of the law, yet imbued in politics. As Butler and Spivak (2007) succinctly summarise: “the interiorized outside” (16).

5. ENCOUNTERS

I glance, a bulk of a man wobbles towards us. He has one of those bellies that looks tight with drinking. He is white, a few days unshaven, clutching a glass liquor bottle in his left hand but not as grubby as I would have expected. I try to imagine him remaining on the periphery of our wander down Holloway Road, but this is thwarted when the man is now close enough to be smelt. He’s stopped, we’ve slowed down, we knew this was coming: “Can I give you girls some advice?” The first few moments: slight panic, unease, self-consciousness - I prefer to go unnoticed. He has picked us from the crowd. A line has been drawn around the three of us, around which other people move, glance, judge, wonder. People must see us now, more than before. Shall I ignore him? No, I can’t, he’s

asked us a direct question. I look briefly at Sisay, she's to my left, he's to my right. She looks uneasy, I feel slightly protective, but I think I probably look as uneasy as her. Then, decision. No I want to respond, I'm sure he's harmless. You shouldn't ignore people anyway, it's rude. I answer uncertainly, "yeah". The 'punch-line' arrives, if that's what you can call it, "only marry for money". The drunk man bursts into laughter, we look at each other bemused and chuckle nervously at the situation, acknowledging how such encounters always throw up temporary feelings of anxiety. He walks off, "sweet girls" or something he tells us. We brush it off with a few trite remarks as our encounter dissolves and our bodies resume their comparatively less unnoticed state, "some people are so weird", "I think he was drunk", "crazy man".

This description of the only 'face-to-face' encounter which occurred on any of the walking tours, is an interesting example of the temporary and haphazard way in which bodies cluster at moments around points of contact. I could not remove myself from the encounters that took place during the waking tour, despite initially not considering myself as 'taking part' on the walk. Rather, the proximity of my body to the participants' body inevitably fed into encounters that were negotiated around the nearness of our difference. My experiences too therefore became equally as valid, which is why I have chosen to include my own observations from the walking tour as well. This section focuses more on the phenomenological, material embodiment of difference and race and the way in which perceptions emerge which in turn affect being and belonging.

5.1 Bodies as skin

"When I walk on the street… you see people's thinking, if you look at them…for example if you enter the shop and then you are two black boys… you see the way they act, they put an eye on us. They think maybe we're going to steal something and run away…If I go with you and we walk on the street some black girls they would look at me and they say 'oh look at that, there's this black guy he's going out with this white girl'…you can see it, the way they look, they say "why?". Some black guys they say 'oh, he has a white girlfriend, he's looking for papers maybe he's trying to show people how that he has a white girl'. Those things come in." (David, walking tour, 2011)

This extract exemplifies how the silence of encounters rely on another medium to communicate meaning: the body. As Ahmed (2000) suggests, "what passes is hence not spoken [but]…communicated…through the body of another" (39). Indeed, "to be embodied is to be capable of being affected by other bodies" (Weiss, 1999: 162, in Ahmed, 2000). David's implicit suggestion that "two black boys" entering a shop gives rise to suspicion from shopkeepers of trouble, indeed potential criminal behaviour, acts to demonstrate how

certain expectations and behaviour stick to certain bodies. Bodies never occupy a space or arrive in a situation without prior meaning. Rather the meaning and history are always already etched onto the skin, in the clothes and the accents people have, which have consequences for what bodies can 'do'. As such, "we are in the world through our body…we perceive the world with our body" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: 239). This alludes to the productivity of our bodies, thus enabling the potential for lines to be drawn between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal', the 'expected' and the 'unexpected'. In this case the proximity of a black male body and a white female body represented the 'unexpected', as David believed it would draw attention or interest, even if concealed.

A body in the same space can both be familiar to some bodies and unfamiliar to other bodies, therefore the conception of the unmarked body as a body not marked by difference or 'strangeness' (Ahmed, 2010) is only ever temporarily visible in this way. This is evident in the bodies of David and myself, in the encounter detailed above. Had our bodies not been associated with one another, they could have been seen as unmarked, in that they looked "*at-home* or *in-place*" (Ahmed, 2000: 46, original emphasis), in so far as there were many bodies on the street which were similar to my own body and other bodies similar to David's. Yet our bodies associated as *together*, emerged as more 'marked' precisely through our difference. Indeed, "difference is not simply found in the body, but is established as a relation between bodies" (Ahmed, 2000: 44). I too noticed glances from people; a momentary gaze which portrayed an inquisitiveness; a flickering of eyes back and forth between our bodies, judging our relationship; our body to one another perhaps: How did these bodies know each other? This suggests how the 'fleshiness' of the body, it's viscous potential, is central to interpreting encounters. Indeed, "embodiment is fundamentally about difference" (Saldanha, 2008: 325).

Whilst Saldanha, (2008) frames viscosity as a "dynamic emergence…of collectivities of people based on attributes like sex, skin colour, nationality, economic power or fear" (Saldanha, 2008: 324), the proximity of my body to David's defied expectations of similarity acting as a sticking point: we are of different sex, skin colour, nationality, economic power and possess different levels of fearfulness. Thus the proximity of our bodies was perhaps seen as less explicitly obvious. In this sense bodies can also be seen as possessing not just viscosity but magnetism. Had we not known each other our bodies might normally have maintained a distance akin to the way in which two positive or two negative poles refuse each other's closeness. Although this is a flawed analogy, as it is similarly charged magnets that repel and the different poles which attract. But rather, leaving aside the actual physics of magnetism, I argue that similarity acts as a force which

pulls certain bodies towards each other, similar to the force exerted by magnets, whilst difference more commonly can refute interaction. In the same way that say iron fillings orientate in a magnetic field, our bodies orientate around fields of push and pull factors which exert influence in spaces such as the street. Ahmed (2006b) sees orientation as a matter of “how we reside in space” (453). Ahmed argues:

“emotions are directed to what we come into contact with: they move us ‘toward’ and ‘away’ from such objects. So, we might fear an object that approaches us. The approach is not simply about the arrival of an object: it is also how we turn toward that object. The feeling of fear is directed towards that object, while it also apprehends the object in a certain way, as being fearsome. The timing of this apprehension matters. For an object to make this impression is dependent on past histories, which surface as impressions on the skin”. (Ahmed, 2006a: 2).

This alludes to the patterns of bodily orientations which occur according to how other bodies are perceived. The act of turning, or orientating, is the inevitable consequence of being-in-the-world. We cannot apprehend an object objectively rather meaning is already located within the object. This constructs the object as inhabiting certain dispositions or tendencies. Furthermore, Ahmed’s (2006b) analysis of Heidegger’s (1999) description of how a table is experienced reveals how the things that we do ‘on the table’ is “what makes the table what it is and take shape in the way that it does” (Ahmed, 2006b: 551). Similarly, what we ‘do on our bodies’ or how we perform them forces them to take shape around certain ways of being. Yet equally it is what others ‘do’ to bodies that also defines this. In David’s case it is the suspicious eye of the shopkeeper that makes David’s body what it is at that moment in time: suspect, threatening, as a result of the impressions which surface around the colour of his skin. As he describes, “those things come in” (David, walking tour, 2011.). This typifies the ephemeral nature of perception, which is constantly in flux, according to different spaces and practices. Whilst his body before entering the shop might not have been constructed to this effect it “come[s] in” as an effect of a particular gaze, acting to temporarily fix his body (Swanton, 2008b).

Adisa (walking tour, 2010) revealed during the walk that he would like to live in the area, as there were lots of people, more things to do, such as going out to eat and meeting people, mentioning specifically that there are black people. This alludes to the way in which bodies cluster along lines of similarity, orienting themselves towards each other. For Adisa, the presence of similar bodies to his own, albeit defined on the superficial level of the skin, allowed him to feel a greater sense of attachment and belonging to the area. Similar bodies may cluster together as they offer the promise of shared culture and

perhaps a shared language. Such shared characteristics can generate “a sense of feeling ‘at home’” (Antonsich, 2010: 648). Furthermore, Adisa’s desire to be around or near similar bodies means that he does not have to contend with difference in the same way, as the absence of the “somatic norm” (Puwar, 2006: 79), the white body of English society, is out of sight, which frequently acts as the ‘zero-point’ from which difference is defined.

Conversely, Lori, who has lived here for 9 years and identifies herself as white, said she felt “more European in culture now” (Lori, 2011, walking tour, 14th Jan.) She said she would avoid Somalis on the street because “they walk around like they own the place” and they “push you on the bus”. She added, “I’m not being racist, but sometimes I walk out of my house and I think ‘oh it’s like I am in Africa’”. Arguably this portrays a feeling of a greater sense of belonging, indeed a right of ownership in spaces where she experiences others behaving in a way which she deems them disentitled to. From this, it could be deduced that Lori’s feeling that she belongs and identification with ‘European culture’ could position her as a “master of national space” (Hage, 2000: 17). This is Hage’s observation that the ‘White nation’ fantasy is “the White belief in one’s mastery over the nation” (18) which is shared by both ‘white multiculturalists’ and ‘white nationalists’. However, Lori’s statement complicates this simple binary between the dominant culture, who get to set the parameters of tolerance, and those who are not considered a part of this ‘dominant culture’, the marginalised section of society whose limits of inclusion are fixed by others. Lori herself, through the inherently political nature of applying for asylum, has been subject to a similar discourse of exclusion and the limits of tolerance, yet she herself now exerts a similar attitude towards Somalis. In the same way that Hage (2000) argues that “the more migrants stay in Australia, the more they consider themselves Australians first” (104), the nine years that Lori has years spent in England may be responsible for a similar reflection of such an attitude, feeling that she is more able to define herself along national lines of inclusion. Whilst Malkki, (1995, in Lewis, 2010), suggests that adopting practices similar to the dominant culture, such as dress, is a form of exhibiting ‘sameness’ or becoming less visible, similarly the way in which Lori arguably displays an adoption of discursive practices aligns her within the dominate culture which decides on behalf of certain people whose behaviour is seen as acceptable, acting to delimit what and who is ‘tolerable’ and ‘intolerable’.

5.2 Bodies as material

The sight of myself, a 5ft 5” white girl, converse trainers, skinny jeans and a giant parka, trying to hug a 6ft 3” young black man in low-slung baggy jeans, diamante earrings and a fake leather jacket, as I said thank you and goodbye to Fabrice, might have looked an

incongruous sight. However, arguably our differences were most starkly conveyed through our contrasting dress sense, as opposed to our 'skin'. Indeed, what we choose to adorn ourselves with is reflective of where one perceives one belongs. Clothes can reflect wealth, class, aspirations, jobs, and interests. They potentially offer a snapshot into the social standing that one occupies in society, or desires to be accepted by. Therefore in this section I explore another theme which emerged from the walking tours, that of the more literal 'material' effects of our bodies.

Hopkins (2010) argues bodies are "highly charged sites of identity construction" (74). For Fabrice (interview, 2011), encounters with certain types of "black boys" on the street prompted him to mention how when he first came to this country he used to dress like them, but changed what he wore as a result of how the police treated him. He says he tries to avoid certain boys on the street, saying "even if they're black and I'm black I don't want to have anything to do with them". This highlights how it is not just 'skin' that acts to ascribe certain characteristics to certain bodies, but the ways in which we choose to adorn them affects how they are perceived too. In a similar way to Adisa, Fabrice highlighted how his decision to start to wearing clothes similar to those of certain 'black boys', shows how he too orientated himself around familiar bodies, but familiar only in so far as they were black. Fabrice's statement that the way he used to dress drew more attention from the police than he wished to receive, follows on from an argument in chapter 4 that certain bodies, particularly a body which is seen as threatening or unpredictable, is marked as 'overly-recognisable'. In turn this produces an inequality of bodies as certain bodies come to 'matter' more in certain places, holding particular bodies in place through the regulatory effects of policing and suspicion and thus reducing the capacity to challenge stereotypes which cluster along lines of race, and dress.

Fabrice's attention to the way he dresses and his pride in his appearance - he mentioned how much he likes clothes and would like to model part-time - reflected a similar body-conscious disposition to Christelle who mentioned how she looks at people on the street, judging whether she thinks they have good or bad style. She specifically mentioned she did not like to see young groups of girls on the street wearing clothes that deliberately exposed their underwear, as she thought it showed a lack of dignity. This points to ways we compare our own bodies with others as a way of negotiating a sense of who we are and where we belong, indeed "dress communicates identity" (Huisman & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2005: 45). Christelle's distaste at the way some young women dress may in part stem from a different cultural background which may emphasise modesty, yet it is also a rejection of a certain identity, a way of demarcating one's own identity by

comparison of one's perception of what one is not. Whilst it could be deduced therefore that this is evidence of Christelle and Fabrice possessing a potentially strong sense identity it is only through the acceptance of their identity by a wider community (Lawler, 2008) that they can feel comfortable to perform such an identity and belong. They are however producing a narrative of the self. Furthermore it conveys a desire to fit in and a shared sense of dress and material objects, such as mobile phones, are a way in which a body can display a sense of 'in-place' and reflect a commonality with the 'norm'.

5.3 Bodies as fearful

All of the participants said that when walking on the streets they would deliberately try to avoid people that they saw as potentially 'troublesome', these included "drunk people" (Adisa, walking tour, 2010), "hoodies" (Sisay, walking tour, 2011) and "gangsters or junkies" (Hanni, walking tour, 2011). For Hassan (walking tour, 2011) this was very important to him as he did not want to get a criminal record, as "asylum-seekers convicted of crimes, however minor, rescind their rights to political asylum in Britain" (Tyler, 2010: 66). He stated that he has not once been asked for his ID by police, attributing this to the fact that he does not hang around with "gangsters". Ironically the way in which all of the participants identify certain people as 'troublesome' is exactly the same way in which some of their own bodies are targeted as 'out of place' or suspicious: through the material enfleshed body. Isaac (walking tour, 2011) expressed explicit dislike of the police as he has been 'stopped and searched' on numerous occasions. There were mixed reactions to the police such as Adisa and Mei who both liked the police, whilst Halima and David very much disliked them, yet Fabrice, David, Hanni and Lori felt somewhat ambivalent. Whilst Isaac was the only one who talked about being stopped and searched, there is importance in exploring this as Isaac experienced the actual act that many of the participants felt afraid of: being noticed; picked out of the crowd by the authorities.

I concur with Ahmed's (2007) contention that "'stop and search' is of course a technology of racism" (161): because to be stopped is "distributed unevenly between others" (Ahmed, 2007: 161). Furthermore it leaves an impression upon the body (Ahmed, 2007). Isaac's body is made 'strange' through the gaze of the police officers and to be made 'strange' the body must differ from the 'familial' world which is recognisable through the specific ways it is organised (Ahmed, 2007). However, the fact that Isaac's body, and not the other participants, seems to be targeted more complicates a sense that 'stop and search' only operates as a racist technology. Rather the policy operates to disqualify bodies that are interpreted as marginal, 'out of place', perhaps conceived as the 'non citizen', which acts as a away to renegotiate the parameters of national identity and

belonging (Cresswell, 2006, in Gilmartin, 2008). Struggling on the limited money that he receives from the government, as he cannot work, Isaac's clothes and his unconfident demeanour, which could perhaps be interpreted as furtive, potentially constructs him as poor in addition to being an "African man" (Isaac, walking tour, 2011), which he sees as a prime reason for being targeted by the police, thus doubling his 'status' of marginality, as he could be seen as both black and poor. If, as Merleau-Ponty (2002) argues, the way we gain knowledge about ourselves is through our relations with other people, then consequently we can come to live that very knowledge. This is where practices such as stop and search reveal their powerfully regulatory effects: it has the power to "produce that which it names" (Butler, 1993: 107). It is through the very occupation of a body that is marginalised and 'non-recognised' in many ways by the state, as has been detailed in chapter 4, that it comes to be 'over-recognised'; constructing a body which the state can admonish more. To stop and search is also a very political act as it suggests that certain bodies belong in national spaces, whilst others, through the skin, are seen to denote a lack of citizenship. The examples detailed in this chapter show that the way in which asylum seekers and refugees are seen, is constructed through their bodies, which is not to negate socially constructed ways in which such meaning is assigned to certain bodies, but is to draw attention to the way in which the body acts as the first point of encounter and judgement. Thus race is frequently at heart of the way in which spatial and body inequality forms, reducing the capacity and sovereignty that such marginalised, yet over-recognised bodies can exert.

6. THE EXHIBITION

6.1 A Word on The Exhibition

The exhibition was mounted in conjunction with the Baobab Centre. It included my display of the participants' favourite photographs, with captions, and the writer-in-residence's display of a series of writing projects undertaken with the young people. The event had a number of intentions. For me, it represented the fruition of the participatory aims of this project, intending it to be a space in which the participants could take ownership of the project and feel a sense of pride in their pictures. The event also intended to create greater awareness of some of the work of the Baobab Centre, a relatively new charity, such as the creative writing. It was also a networking event, with funders and many people from other charities attending, local politicians were also invited. A full explanation of the exhibition can be found in the appendix where I have included a leaflet that was handed out. However, it also became apparent that this was not simply additional, or supplementary to the overall project, but could in fact be conceived of as an important part of it, in the sense that it too acted as a space in which belonging and identity were

negotiated amongst the various encounters that took place. This section will very briefly discuss the exhibition as space of difference in which the participants were invited to take place and how it has contributed to the participatory nature of the project.

Only 5 of the 12 actual participants came to the exhibition, which was disappointing, but interesting in itself. Therefore, as I could only discuss with the participants who were at the exhibition about how they felt about the event, I will not discuss at length the implications of the exhibition and what light it might shed on notions of belonging and identity as it is not a 'true' methodology, representative of the entire group. It was also important to me that the exhibition was a space in which the young people did not feel that they were research subjects once again, I felt that this was a deceptive ulterior motive of what was supposed to be a celebration. Therefore I did not want to be too intrusive, choosing to ask questions that were short and subtle. I mainly undertook an informal observational approach. Although this may not have achieved the most extensive insights, I do not believe this detracts from the project, due to the extensive results of the main methodologies used. Those who came were Halima, who lives outside London and travelled over 70 miles by train to come, Fabrice, Zarak, Mei and Adisa. All of them turned up either just before it began or at the very beginning, except Fabrice, and all of them stayed until the very end. The dynamic of the participants was interesting, Halima, Zarak and Mei were the most shy and about half way through I found them in the corridor outside talking. I asked them why they were there and not inside, to which Halima said that she felt really out of place and that she did not know anyone. Mei said that there were so many unfamiliar faces. However, Adisa remained in the room the entire time, and was talking to so many people that I barely had a chance to speak to him. Fabrice also seemed to possess a similar level of confidence, but chose to speak to people that he was more familiar with. Zarak especially, but Halima, Mei and Adisa were quite shy about having their photos displayed, although they still seemed eager to see their own, and other people's, photos. Fabrice however seemed very confident and proud of his pictures.

Lewis' study (2010) explores 'refugee' parties and events, illustrating how such events "operated boundaries of inclusion and exclusion" (574). Although her study focuses on gatherings designed solely for refugees, and not the mixed attendance that characterised the one that I jointly held, there are some interesting parallels. The exhibition was a social space and the fact that 3 of the 5 participants who came did not actively socialise with anybody apart from the people they knew was telling. Mei and Halima's feeling that they were out of place is perhaps not unsurprising given their expression of a general feeling of 'non-belonging' in the interviews, except for moments which occur in

safe spaces. The differing behaviour displayed is also a matter of confidence. Indeed, as Yuval-Davis et al. (2006) note, “belonging refers to patterns of trust and confidence” (4). Adisa said he enjoyed talking to other people and said he had a really good time, although he was so busy I did not have a chance to interrogate this further before he left. It became obvious that there were multiple processes at work which drew intersecting lines of inclusion and exclusion throughout the room. The aspect of social standing and age was perhaps the most notable. The division between the three who excluded themselves from the room and those who remained in the room, echoed the divisions between adults and children at a party which is primarily for the adults to socialise. The notion that unfamiliarity acts to orientate bodies away from one another, as has been revealed in section 5 is reinforced by Mei exclaiming how many unfamiliar faces there were. The young people in the room also occupied a different position than the rest of the people: they were the subjects of the very exhibition. They were therefore in many ways ‘overly-visible’, and perhaps were to some degree embarrassed by this, which could explain the attempt to make themselves less visible. Finally, the participatory potential of the exhibition, to act as a space in which change could be precipitated, was given further possibility as John Schlapobersky, Group analyst and Master’s Course tutor at Birkbeck College, London University was so impressed with the whole exhibition that he wants it to be exhibited at the Institute of Group Analysts conference that he is holding in August 2011. In this instant the project’s modest beginnings took on a new form of potential for the higher ambitions of PAR to be achieved: that for social policy to be influenced by the voices of those who frequently exist on the margins of society.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Conclusion

I have contended that an embodied conception of belonging and identity, that works from the understanding that “man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: xii) produces an insightful way of reconsidering notions of how belonging is constructed, thus proposing that the body should be one of the central sites which is seen to mark the boundaries between the included and the excluded. I have also argued that bodies cluster along lines of sameness and familiarity, contingent on the simultaneous awareness of difference. The uncertainty that many of the participants felt about their belonging exposes how belonging is variable and fluid: never a permanent state of being-in-the-world. Furthermore, the lack of a clear split between those still seeking asylum and those who had indefinite leave to remain, in relation to how firm their sense of belonging was, could be seen as testimony to the fact that state ‘acceptance’ does not automatically translate into belonging, or wider community acceptance. Indeed,

‘non-belonging’ is inscribed onto certain bodies in certain contexts, as “the ‘foreigner’ plays a founding role through which a broader imaginary of citizenship is constructed” (Squire, 2009: 4). I have also attempted to expose the inequality of bodies. For example the way in which detention centres attempt to strip asylum seekers of their identity requires that the bodies of asylum seekers are seen as less than human. Furthermore, this lack of recognition discounts them as political beings (Rancière, 2001, in Rajaram, 2007). Similarly, stop and search techniques target bodies of a particular phenotype (Mountz, in Saldanha, 2008), consequently affecting what bodies can do; all too frequently defined along racial lines. It is such implications that ultimately I wish this dissertation to draw attention to. I have sought to highlight that discrimination cannot be overcome purely through the condemnation or abolition of racist language, or indeed race as a discourse. Rather, such a socially constructed approach in fact disguises the paradoxical reality that “we know that there is no such thing as race, yet processes of racialisation continue to structure unequal power relations and reproduce inequalities” (Dwyer & Bressey, 2008: 6). This highlights why an embodied, phenomenological privileging of the body is essential as a way to uncover the reality of the lived experiences of many refugees and asylum seekers, and indeed other bodies subject to discrimination. As has been revealed, feelings of dislocation, loneliness and marginality are common denominators among refugees and asylum seekers. State practices towards asylum seekers enhance such feelings, preventing the formation of an alternative identity outside that which is labelled ‘asylum seeker’. However, if refugee status is achieved this sense of marginality continues to be held in place through everyday societal barriers.

Asylum seekers and refugees are made visible so that they can be made invisible, which means they have to struggle harder to ‘re-make’ themselves as visible, worthy subjects. However, it has not been my intention to depict a marginalised group of victims. Lori, for example, is a nurse. She is not marginal. She is also proof that achieving a more stable sense of belonging is possible, but the process of achieving this is much harder than someone who is both born in the ‘corporeal norm’ and is accepted by the national narrative. This dissertation seeks to show the importance of making such invisible barriers to belonging visible. In the same way that the ‘over-recognition’ or visibility of asylum seekers and refugees works *negatively* to powerfully discipline the body, a similar visibility should be *positively* inscribed upon the currently all too invisible practices which create such ‘over-recognition’. Indeed, the task is to not just “make visible the practices visibility”, (Alcoff, 1999: 25), but to make visible that which is *in*visible, for this is what holds in place phenotypically defined ‘natural’ differences.

7.2 Limitations and Future Research

Initially the diversity of the group concerned me in terms of age, gender, country of origin, legal status and length of residence in the UK. However, approaching this from an understanding that there are benefits to difference, as "the breadth of transnational cultural, historical and political understanding… contribute[s] immeasurably to the richness of…data and depth of analysis" (Pratt, et al.: 100). I believe that this actually added to the project: a range of experiences was communicated, which was particularly important for the exhibition as it spoke more of the general issues that affect the lives of asylum seekers and refugees. The small number of participants who turned up to the exhibition perhaps suggests that the participants did not feel that the project was their own enough from the start for them to feel an overall sense of ownership. This could either be interpreted as reflective of an inadequate participatory approach, or reflective of the lives that many of them lead which can be unpredictable and restrictive.

It would be interesting, considering the results that were drawn out, to use a postcolonial lens, to develop notions of barriers to belonging further, as postcolonialism attempts to disrupt binary ways of thinking about the world, challenging hierarchies and the erasure of sovereignty, whilst unlearning our own privilege (Spivak, 1988). Thus postcolonialism could help to reveal the origins from which the Western 'somatic norm' stems from. However, phenomenology has provided an important philosophical framework for bringing to the surface what may normally go unnoticed. However, Heidegger's belief that there is an essential nature that can be revealed (1962, in Manen, 1990) could be contested by a poststructuralist approach which "suspects all truth claims" (Richardson, 1993: 517, in Kesby et al. 2010). Indeed, it would be foolish to suggest that in the name of phenomenology this dissertation has revealed the very essence of what it means to be an asylum seeker or refugee, as this would reductively distil the diversity of lives and experiences that people in such positions go through.

The project has managed to positively impact the lives of some of the young people. Sisay was inspired by our interview and walk and she focused on it for her oral GCSE English exam and achieved an A grade for the presentation. This dissertation has managed to exist in its own right, outside the institutional setting it was conceived in, through the example of Sisay and as well as the exhibition. In many ways this is perhaps the most successful aspect of the project as it shows a commitment to the principals of PAR by extending research into action, "motivat[ing] audiences to change both the way they think and how they act in the world" (Cahill & Torre, 2010: 205).

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