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‘Most of the Days is Really, Really Good’:

Narratives of Well-Being and Happiness among Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the UK and the Gambia

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Signed:

Abstract

This thesis demonstrates resilience and the ability to enjoy life despite hardships. While most studies of refugees and asylum seekers focus on issues of trauma and ill-health, this thesis attends to both positive and negative experiences that people experience due to a forced migration. Drawing on forty interviews as well as ethnographic observations, this thesis uses narrative and ethnographic methods to investigate the most salient factors contributing to well-being and happiness among African refugees and asylum seekers in two different urban environments: Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the UK and the greater Banjul area in the Gambia. I argue that through the stories these people told me about their lives, well-being and happiness can be subsumed under three main themes.

The first theme of growth and meaning is one that features prominently in post-flight narratives. I show how people make sense of their lives and turn the negative experience of flight into something positive, meaningful and purposeful by using the concepts of posttraumatic growth and sense of coherence. The second theme of relational well-being is used to highlight the ambivalent role that various social relationships – families, friends and the wider community – have on an individual's happiness. The third theme is temporal well-being. Specifically, I compare the two groups to explicate how perceptions of the passage of time in the present affect well-being and what the implications of an imagined future are for present happiness. Finally, I show how religion links these three themes together.

This research primarily contributes to well-being and happiness studies where anthropology is underrepresented and to migration and refugee studies where it brings an ethnographic and narrative approach. Its interdisciplinary nature, and particularly the emphasis on qualitative methodologies, complements research in social psychology and sociology whose approaches to happiness and well-being tend to emphasise quantitative methods. This emphasis on quantitative methods risks missing the context and nuance that qualitative research adds. I argue that it is not only the methods which make the contribution of this research valuable, but also the multi-sited and comparative nature of it which offer unique insights in how diverse individuals strive for well-being and a good, happy life

Lay Summary

Current research on happiness and well-being – the 'good' in life – is expanding rapidly. While much of it focuses on the middle class in North America and Western Europe, this research focuses on an entirely different group: African refugees and asylum seekers. Refugees and asylum seekers are typically portrayed as traumatised and down-trodden. While they have certainly experienced hardships, this thesis focuses on what factors protect forced migrants' well-being and what sources they see as bringing them happiness. By comparing refugees in the Gambia and refugees and asylum seekers in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the United Kingdom, I seek to highlight how people continue to ensure their own well-being and foster their happiness despite past hardships. In particular, I highlight how people make meaning, find purpose, build and strengthen relationships with close friends, family and the wider community, create happiness in the present and cultivate hope in the future. A special consideration of religion is also relevant to this thesis given the religiosity of my informants.

For Jake

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Acknowledgements

This PhD has been an incredibly journey, testing my own resilience. It has brought me much happiness and a few trials, causing me to reflect on what I want to realise my own "good life". None of this would have been possible without some amazing people along the way and it is to them that I am eternally grateful.

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Introduction

> Sooner or later in life everyone discovers that perfect unhappiness is unrealizable, but there are few who pause to consider the antithesis: that perfect unhappiness is equally unattainable. The obstacles preventing the realization of both these extreme states are of the same nature: they derive from our human condition which is opposed to everything infinite. – Primo Levi

Sandra, an energetic woman in her early thirties, sat facing me. We were in one of the support offices of the West End Refugee Service, located in Newcastle, United Kingdom. Posters offering various services and phone numbers to call for assistance were pinned on boards on the wall, while an old desktop computer sat largely neglected in the back corner. Sandra gesticulated wildly as she talked, occasionally dropping her hands to the white table top and stretching them out before her. She seemed comfortable here, impervious to the impersonal nature of the office. It was not like the other offices which housed permanent members of staff; those were cluttered with knickknacks, personal photos and hand scrawled notes. Instead, this 'desk' was in fact a table, and all it contained was my open notebook, a recorder and occasionally Sandra's hands.

She was discussing her life and some of her key experiences thus far. I laughed with her as she related her most ridiculous moments, my eyes filled with tears as she related her sorrows. As she told her story, I sensed that it was coming to the present-day where her situation remained unresolved. She was a refused asylum seeker in the UK, meaning she was at the mercy of friends and acquaintances (as well as a few charities) to meet her basic needs: food, shelter, clothing. It was an unenviable situation, and I sympathised with her. She had just finished explaining how she was given accommodation in Newcastle as an asylum seeker, only to be kicked out when her application was refused. Now she lived with an older British woman who attended her church. I was expecting a rather bleak conclusion, given the difficulties she had faced and continued to face for the foreseeable future. She surprised me, however, when she glanced out of the window at the overcast autumn sky and turned back to me with a smile tugging at the corners of her mouth. "I'll tell you the truth," she began

thoughtfully. "This journey is one of the most weirdest things I've ever – I don't know when it's gonna end, how it's gonna end, but – it's like most of the days is really, really good," she declared. I stared at her, taken aback. "Really?" I asked incredulously. "That's amazing, you've been through so much…" my voice trailed off as she laughed. She told me that I sounded like her former roommate and friend who sometimes visits from Manchester. "She always asks me, 'How can you sleep so peacefully when you're going through all of this stuff?' and I'm like, 'It's by the grace of God that I have managed to still kind of like, have a smile although all of this crazy crazy things are happening,' ya know?" She paused a minute, reflecting. "It's – I didn't know that I could go through something like this and still be okay. Not okay, but positive," she emphasised.

After our conversation had ended and we had gone our separate ways, her words swirled through my head as I put on my coat and left the converted two-story house that was the office of the West End Refugee Service (WERS). As I walked past the Afro-Caribbean barber shop and carefully picked my way down the uneven pavement near the patch of grass generously called a park, I tried to tease apart why I was so surprised. I was studying well-being and happiness; why was I taken aback? Isn't it intuitive that the good experiences exist along with the bad, and that's why people keep going physically, mentally and spiritually? The confident, self-assured voice ran through my head, repeating *most of the days is really, really good*. I mulled this phrase over as I rode the metro back to my house.

This thesis concerns itself with what makes life 'really, really good' – to paraphrase Sandra's – in spite of, or alongside, the macro and micro traumas and hardships that accompany life as a forced migrant. The focus, therefore, is on how people who are recognised as refugees or asylum seekers (including those whose applications for asylum have been refused) create and find this 'good' in their lives, both personally and interpersonally. While I use the term 'well-being' frequently, I have not given a specific definition and instead leave it rather broad, commenting on the themes that my informants highlighted as important to their understanding of well-being and happiness. While initially I had not intended to leave the notion of well-being so unbounded, I found that during the course of my fieldwork I stopped thinking about it as *thing*, as some type of fixed state or achievable goal, but rather as a continual *process* during which people strive to keep well and happy. This approach is not

without precedent; Atkinson (2013:138-139) argues a similar position, noting that "wellbeing is always and necessarily situated and relational" and that "thinking of wellbeing as a process may challenge the contemporary dominant approach to wellbeing, specifically making a case against calls for a tighter definition of the concept." It is this process, and the broad conceptualisation that it necessitates, that is the focus of the thesis.

The processes involved in striving toward the goodness in life are fluid and forever changing. As Jackson and Piette (2015:9) note, "Truth and understanding, like well-being, is never securely possessed, and human existence always implies a vexed, imperfectly realized relationship between what is given and what is aspired to, what is within and outside our reach, what can be comprehended and what cannot." They further go on to state that, "We live not in stable states, with fixed identities, but experimentally – *en passage* between different narratives and worldviews, as well as different modes of being…" This thesis provides insight into this imperfectly realised relationship, between a former life which cannot be returned to and a present and foreseeable future over which their control is severely limited. This thesis provides but a snapshot during this journey and, in the process, reveals the sources of strength and determination for humanity in general.

The following sections lay out the *who* and the *what* of this research project. The first section looks at who the thesis focuses on. This includes migrants – and specifically asylum seekers and refugees – that come from the African continent. Next, I explore the literature that brings together the "who" and the "what": refugees and asylum seekers and well-being. The literature on this subject is largely one-sided but nevertheless lays the groundwork for the rest of the thesis. Following this discussion, I turn to wider discourses on migration and well-being – the "what" – and the importance that other disciplines have had on developing ideas related to well-being and migration. Finally, I end with an overview of the three key well-being themes that shape this thesis and a brief introduction of the chapters to come.

Migrating in the 21st century

Overview

Migration is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, "humankind has always been characterized by mobility," (Salazar and Smart 2011:ii). This mobility, Salazar and Smart note, "has been the rule rather than the exception and migration, including across current borders, central to livelihoods and survival," (2011:iii). The difference today, however, is that this mobility "needs to be framed in relation to the global political system of nation-states, who set and control the parameters of (trans)national movements and prefer relatively immobilized subject populations," (Salazar and Smart 2011:iii). These increasingly restrictive parameters have led, particularly in a European context, to a type of 'new racism', most notably in relation to Muslim migrants and to asylum seekers (Brettell 2015:424). "Fortress Europe" is a common phrase being used today to denote the hardening of borders around the European Union even as the borders between states within the EU become increasingly permeable (Diener and Hagen 2012). In their informative and accessible *Borders: A Very Short Introduction*, Diener and Hagen note that while Europe is becoming increasingly bordered, some scholars actually suggest that internationalist and de-territorialised strategies are necessary for states to be truly secure and profitable (2012:73). For now, however, the borders remain and are imbued with significant power, for the act of border-crossing has the power of "remaking social categories of belonging" – very much a central concern of anthropology (Diener and Hagen 2012:82).

Anthropologists have been engaging with migration since the post-World War II period and have been at the forefront of many of the interdisciplinary movements exploring areas such as transnationalism, diasporas, citizenship and belonging and notions of illegality (Brettell 2015). They have employed multi-sited methodologies and comparative approaches to explore what is common about the migrant experience and which aspects remain unique to specific groups of migrants (Brettell 2015:426). Furthermore, they have engaged with concepts such as super-diversity (Vertovec 2007) to describe increasingly diversified urban environments. Anthropologists working on issues related to migration and specifically forced migration find themselves in an interdisciplinary field that draws on research from fields such as sociology, psychology, medicine, development and law.

While anthropologists have been interested in migration populations since World War II, the study of refugees as an academic field, complete with research centres, associations, academic degrees and international journals, only emerged in the 1980s (Eastmond 2015:105). Much like migration studies, refugee studies involve a range of disciplines. Most whose work focuses on southern countries (like those in Africa) tend to research themes relating to the anthropology of development, humanitarian assistance, camps or repatriation while those in the north (European and North American countries) instead focus on resettlement, integration and discrimination (Eastmond 2015).

The official category of refugee was only established in 1951, following closely on the heels of the human rights atrocities of World War II. The United Nations created a department specifically to address the needs of refugees: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Shortly after this, the UN defined refugees in their 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. According to this convention, a refugee is one who:

> owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (Martin 1991:1)

Focus on refugees is exploding at the moment. Refugees and asylum seekers are a 'hot topic' both in the media and in academia. The popularity is understandable; the numbers of refugees are currently the highest they have ever been in global history. A record 65.6 million people are displaced worldwide, with 22.5 million of those being registered refugees according to UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) records. They indicate these numbers are on the rise, by ominously adding that "nearly 20 people are forcibly displaced every minute." Of these, less than 5 percent of refugees fleeing their home country seek asylum in the global North (Loeschler, Betts, and Milner 2008). According to UNHCR, "the major refugee-generating regions hosted on average between 75 and 93 percent of refugees from within the same region." (UNHCR 2011:11). The reason behind these figures is fairly self-evident; a large proportion of the global South is simply unable to afford the cost of transporting themselves, and dependents, farther than a neighbouring country or

region. Unfortunately, the 'burden' is not shared equally, with the 48 Least Developed Countries receiving 2.3 million refugees (UNHCR 2011).

Africa

Movement on the African continent is certainly not a new phenomenon. West Africa has historically been characterized by a high degree of mobility (Salazar and Smart 2011:iii) while Paul Richards (2015:302) notes that in the coastal regions of West Africa in particular, a type of 'cultural creolization' took place. This, he argues, explains why many West Africans today maintain an international outlook and a high degree of mobility. He even claims that "it is not uncommon to find street children or unemployed youth in Dakar, Doula, Freetown, or Lagos with a better grasp of politics and world issues than well-educated teenagers in Britain, America, or France," (Richards 2015:302). In terms of searching for a better life, Crisp notes that mobility itself "is a well-established means of coping with insecurity in Africa," (2003:23).

While Africa has always been home to a population on the move, Crisp is right to highlight the links with insecurity as the continent experiences one of the largest forced migration movements. Forced migration can refer to asylum seekers and refugees as well as to internally displaced persons, or IDPs. In this way, then, it makes sense to use the term 'forced migration' to characterise those who felt they had to leave their homes in order to survive. Many countries in Africa find themselves in a curious position: while they represent a safe haven for some fleeing conflict, for many of their own citizens they represent the danger. West Africa, Fawole and Ukeje (2004:1) note, "has acquired the unenviable notoriety as a veritable theatre of violent conflicts, political instability and state implosions." While in terms of total numbers, West Africa has smaller refugee flows than Central or East Africa, the area nevertheless contains both refugee destination countries and generating countries. Current UNHCR figures place those seeking asylum in West Africa (including refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, stateless persons and others whom the UNHCR are assisting) at 2,754,893 (UNHCR 2015:19)[1]. Those who have fled from West Africa, including all the aforementioned categories, number at 2,355,246 (UNHCR 2015:24). These numbers show a population in flux.

[1] West Africa comprises the countries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. (http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/32)

It should be noted that Africa adopts a different definition than that of the so-called 'convention refugee' – which focuses on individual persecution – that UNHCR uses and which typifies asylum cases in places like Europe and North America. In 1969, it was recognised that the narrow definition offered by UNHCR was impractical for the situations occurring on the African continent. Generalised violence was indeed an issue and because of that, it was creating masses of people fleeing their home countries that simply could not be assessed on the one-by-one basis advocated by UNHCR (Milner, 2009). Therefore, the Organization for Africa Unity expanded the definition of 'refugee'. In the OAU's 1969 Convention on the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, a refugee may be recognised by the criteria put forth in UNHCR's 1951 Convention, but remarks that the category of 'refugee'

> shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality. (OAU 1969:3)

Because of this much broader definition, entire groups of people are accepted as prima facie refugees, forgoing the individual assessment heralded by UNHCR. Milner (2009) cites UNHCR figures that place 77 per cent of all refugees in Africa in the prima facie category.

Most of the refugees in Africa are locked in what is called a protracted refugee situation. Though these situations have only recently been defined by the UNHCR since 2009 (Milner and Loescher 2011), they have generally been understood to be a situation in which refugees have been living in exile for more than five years without the immediate prospect of finding a 'durable solution' to their plight (Crisp 2003). These 'durable solutions' refer to voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement. Voluntary repatriation is seen as the most viable solution in Africa. Resettlement remains at the whim of Western countries while local integration is rejected due to the perceived burden on host countries as well as the perceived threat to security (Crisp 2003:4).

These protracted refugee situations remain a serious concern for the well-being of refugees. Milner and Loescher (2011:3) note that nearly two-thirds of the world's refugees are living in what can be called a protracted situation, with the average length of stay in these "states of virtual limbo" reaching twenty years. They write that more

refugees are living in urban situations than camp situations though more is known about the camp situations. Crisp (2003:13) also highlights the difference between camp and urban refugees, and remarks somewhat optimistically that "a review of the situation of long-term refugees who have settled outside such camps and settlements would almost certainly be more positive in tone." All of those I spoke with were urban refugees, and of these, most of them (in both the Gambia and in the UK) lived in a protracted refugee situation. The chapters of this thesis will explore their situations and look at how well-being is maintained and where happiness and positivity can be found.

One issue with focusing on refugees and asylum seekers, regardless of where they are located, is the tendency to see them as a homogenous group with the rather negative terms I discussed above (dejected, dispirited) and neglecting to see them as individuals capable of, and experiencing, a full range of emotions ranging from really bad to Sandra's 'really good'. The tendency of Western media is to either paint them in a conniving manner (liars, cheats, etc.) or to infantilize them, depicting them as children in desperate need of help. Indeed, Malkki critiques much of current refugee literature, claiming it "locates 'the problem' not first in the political oppression or violence that produces massive territorial displacements of people, but within the bodies and minds of people classified as refugees," (Malkki 1995:8). Refugees, then, are seen as a people somehow 'broken,' removed from the broader sociocultural context in which they find themselves.

Zymunt Bauman (2004:77) also situates refugees more broadly; he locates them within the wider globalisation process which treats them instead as "human waste, with no useful function to play in the land of their arrival." One expert on the history of refugee flows, Peter Gatrell, echoes these rather dismal remarks by stating that refugees are "habitually portrayed as if they are without agency, like corks bobbing along on the surface of an unstoppable wave of displacement," (Gatrell 2016:9). To this end, many also tend to pathologise becoming a refugee. I have done my best to avoid these simplistic and overly patronising portrayals by attempting to portray those I spoke with in all of their human complexities. To be sure, the themes I discuss in my chapters are certainly not unique to refugees; they rather speak more broadly to human tendency as a whole.

To focus on well-being and happiness is not to discredit the very real challenges and hardships that many asylum seekers and refugees faced and may still be coming to terms with. I certainly don't want to trivialise the experiences that made them seek asylum in the first place, nor do I want to detract from the pain in their stories. Rather, many of these stories and observations can be said to represent a journey toward living well and being in a state of well-being. Indeed, most of my informants saw this life (and the asylum process) as a journey. While a journey has its ups and downs, it is not made entirely of troughs and peaks. This thesis demonstrates what factors lead to these troughs to make life in general good.

Locating Well-Being in Refugee Studies

Much of the research looking at health and well-being in refugee studies tends to be pathological in nature – that is, it focuses on the negative effects and experiences that forced migration can have on people and communities. Indeed, as Tribe (2002:245) notes, one of the dominant themes in the literature on refugees and mental health is that in which "anyone who has been through the experiences of an asylum seeker and has lost so much must be 'damaged' or traumatised." Summerfield (in Tribe 2002) echoes this finding, noting that refugees are often portrayed in terms of suffering and vulnerability to the neglect of other characteristics such as resilience and agency, while Siriwardhana et al (2014) concede that forced migrants do face an increased risk of developing mental disorders.

To be sure, refugees not only have to contend with the hardships of their recent past but must also endure potential suffering due to resettlement programs and may face racism, which Bhugra and Jones (2001) see as particularly pathogenic in terms of mental illnesses. Echoing this sentiment is Cheryl Benard who notes that, "refugees are never genuinely welcomed by the population of the host country who fear them as competitors," and who therefore rely on "prejudice, rumour, and irrationality" to undermine the refugees' sense of belonging, possibly furthering stress and thus illness episodes (Benard 1986:621). This general unwelcome feeling is hardly surprising. Loescher et al (2008) report direct impacts on state security, from armed factions basing themselves in refugee camps and conflict following the refugee migration to nearby states, to refugees straining already high tensions between states. Indirectly,

refugees are in competition with citizens for jobs, social services and resources. Furthermore, the consequence of large populations with few creative or productive outlets heightens the risk of general insecurity, crime, drug abuse and prostitution (Loescher et al 2008).

While refugees and asylum seekers have certainly experienced hardships before, during and after flight, a focus on these experiences misses other aspects of experience. Tribe (2014:245) acknowledges that "becoming an asylum seeker is always a major event in an individual's life," while hastening to add that "it is not the defining characteristic but rather a part of the whole." Liisa Malkki (1995:510) is similarly quick to point out that "we mustn't assume that refugee status in and of itself constitutes a recognisable, generalisable psychological condition." She also stresses that while all refugees experience what is termed 'forced migration,' they do "find themselves in qualitatively different situations and predicaments" (Malkki 1995:496). These differences in situations and predicaments also lead to differences in experiences and interpretations, particularly when it comes to well-being.

Research on migrants (especially refugees and asylum seekers) and well-being – whether that be in psychology, sociology, economic or anthropology – remains underdeveloped. Typically, any foray into the world of positive well-being among refugees and asylum seekers ends with a discussion on resilience and coping. Indeed, as Frydenberg (2017) notes, "resilience" is quite the buzz word at the moment and, for the first time in positive psychology, has surpassed coping to become of the most highly researched areas within psychology. White (2010:167) cautions that this individual focus on resilience may be a way to shift the need for more programmes and policies to merely changing how one feels about the world. Yet what most researchers focus on, and that which has garnered resilience so much attention, is a common yet unexpected finding: most people do not suffer lasting and adverse consequences as the result of a traumatic event.[2] In fact, being resilient is seen as "more ordinary than extraordinary" and other factors are far more detrimental to one's well-being than a traumatic event, such as social and economic disruptions (Barber and Doty 2013:237), though of course these factors may be traumatic in themselves or

[2] The type of trauma is significant here, with Helliwell et al (2017:11) noting that certain conditions, such as major disability and unemployment, may not be conditions that individuals can fully adapt to, meaning they continue to negatively impact upon well-being and happiness.

precipitate such traumatic events. It is worth mentioning here that a 'traumatic event' is "an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's personal integrity" and includes learning about a family member or close associate who has undergone one of these (Gold et al 2005:688). This definition is not, however, without its critics, both for being too broad and not broad enough (Gold et al 2005:688). In this thesis, I endeavour to reserve the use of 'trauma' to refer to criteria such as these or when drawing on studies that employ the term. Yet regardless of the specific definition of trauma or hardship experienced, other researchers echo the unremarkable nature of those deemed 'resilient' (for example, see Bonanno 2004; Almedom and Glandon 2007; Westphal and Bonanno 2007; Bensimon 2012, Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani 2012).

While researchers examining the concept of resilience agree that it does in fact exist and represents the norm, they are less in accordance with what exactly resilience means. Barber and Doty (2013) cite a study that found at least eight different definitions of resilience currently in use within various literature relating to trauma, while Frydenberg (2017:2) cites a summary on resilience that includes 73 definitions for resilience. Bensimon (2012) condenses the various definitions of resilience and notes that they typically fall under three main categories: recovery, resistance and reconfiguration. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004:4) state that, "resilience is usually considered to be an ability to go on with life after hardship and adversity, or to continue living a purposeful life after experiencing hardship and diversity." The most one could hope for with resilience, then, is returning to the previous baseline of functioning one was at before the traumatic experience. It is important here to make a subtle distinction between coping and resilience that can often be obscured by researchers. Coping, according to Frydenberg (2017:2-4), tends to be a process (such as thoughts, feelings and actions – generally seen as 'coping strategies') that bring about the outcome of resilience, which is the ability to 'bounce back' after a setback.

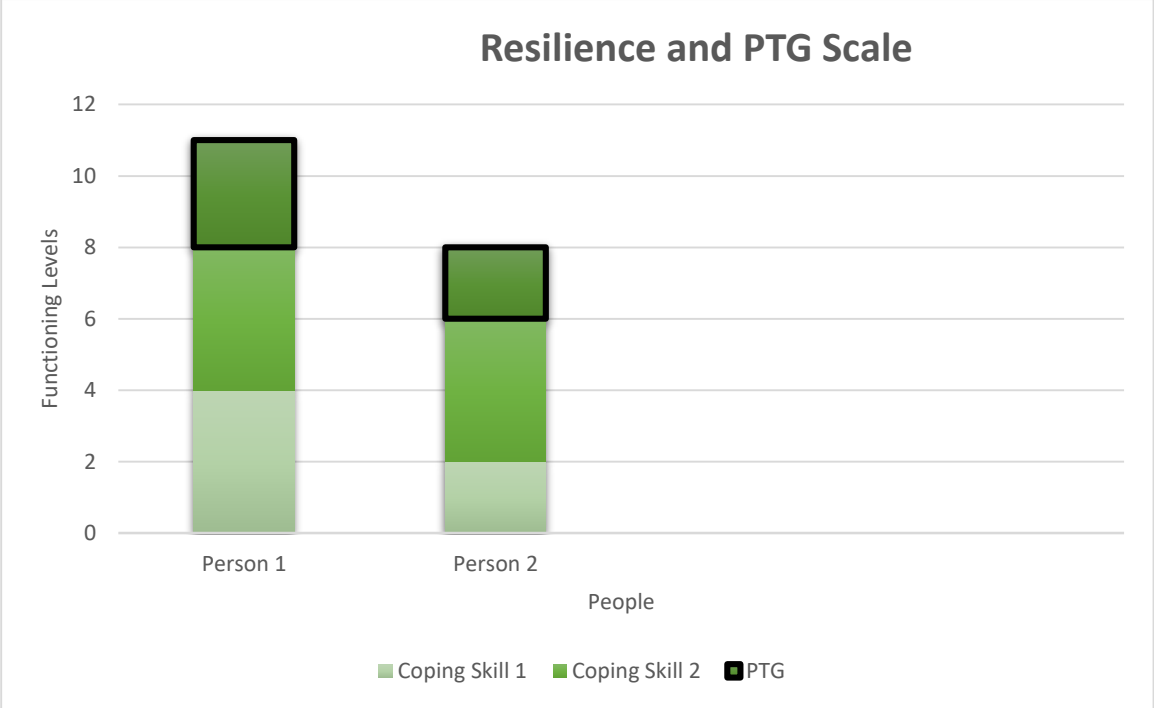


Figure 1 shows the related concepts of coping skills, resilience and posttraumatic growth. The lighter shades of green each denote a specific coping skill, which when added together leads to one's resilience. Person 1's baseline level of functioning before the traumatic event(s) was an 8. The dark green outlined area above the 8 demonstrates their posttraumatic growth. Person 2's baseline level was lower at a 6. They, too, experience posttraumatic growth, though at a different level and with a different level of coping skills to return them to their baseline of 6.

George Bonanno (2004:20) highlights this focus on being able to 'bounce back' by expanding on the categories in which people are resilient. He states that, "large numbers of people manage to endure the temporary upheaval of loss or potentially traumatic events remarkably well, with no apparent disruption in their ability to function at work or in close relationships, and seem to move on to new challenges with apparent ease." Resilience, then, allows a person to return to their previous baseline of functioning. People can be okay following a traumatic experience. Many of those I spoke with exhibited what Bonanno (2004:26) called one of the 'unexpected pathways to resilience' which was positive emotion and laughter. People can use these coping skills to smile, relax and laugh about themselves and aspects of their experience that others may find uncomfortable.

This was certainly my experience during fieldwork. During one memorable incident, I was sitting on a couch covered with a vibrantly-coloured blanket in the living room of a Congolese asylum seeker along with two of his friends – one a

Rwandan refugee and another a Congolese refugee – chatting about their experiences as some of the first black Africans dispersed to Newcastle. The man whose house we were at was the victim of racism by his neighbours. They had called the police on him several times, claiming he was a drug dealer and selling out of his house. The man in question sat quietly on a chair, drawn into himself and staring at the floor, upset at his treatment by the police. They had broken into his home and broken the door handle off before ripping open his couches and chairs to look for the supposed drugs (hence why they were covered in blankets). Finally, they had seized his laptop. Though they found no traces of drugs, his seized belongings had not been released to him nor had they reimbursed him for any of the damages caused by the false report. Paul (the Rwandan) and Kakengo (the Congolese refugee), explained the situation to me as the other man spoke mainly Lingala. They used this incident of racism as a segue into a discussion of what they had faced when they first arrived. "If you hear racist remark," Kakengo told me, "you just pretend to not hear them. Just laugh and walk on," he added, while beside him Paul nodded vigorously in agreement. "They just want a reaction from you," Kakengo said, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Kakengo then launched into a story about how he was out one day and saw his friend. Because his friend was running, he decided to run alongside him, asking why he was running. This story must have been one that both Kakengo and Paul knew, because barely had he started before both men threw their heads back and laughed heartily. I found their mirth infectious and began to smile with them. "Then I looked behind and I see a group of white kids – there were about 25 of them!" he exclaimed, with Paul throwing himself against the back of the couch and slapping his knee while he rolled with laughter. "We had to run until we reached a police car!" he finished, laughing hard. I stared at them, the smile frozen on my lips, and shifted uncomfortably.

Perhaps Paul felt my discomfort at this 'funny story' and tried another story to bring me in on the joke. "One day I was walking with Mr. X [a refugee friend from Cameroon]. The neighbour there was very racist. He sent his dog out to attack us!" he said with a chortle. "So I stared the dog straight in the eyes – I didn't back down! The dog went back to the neighbour without harming us," he continued with a grin. "The neighbour said it was because of my African voodoo!" he exclaimed, while beside him Kakengo's shoulders shook with mirth. "So you know what I did?" he

asked, “I told him if he sent the dog again, I’d use my voodoo and send a lion!” With this, the two men erupted into peals of laughter.

These stories relayed to me certainly had the power to deeply impact on the two men who shared them with me. They could have seen danger everywhere in their new ‘home’ and felt extremely unsafe, spending their time indoors and fearful of neighbours. Instead, however, they tell these stories to themselves and others while laughing about them. Bonanno (2004:26) highlights research similar to this in which “positive emotions can help reduce levels of distress following aversive events both by quieting or undoing negative emotion.” These levels of distress are particularly reduced if one has contact with and support from those in one’s social environment, even when the ‘aversive event’ is something as traumatizing as surviving childhood sexual abuse (Bonanno 2004:26). Michael Jackson (2002:170) notes that in the telling of stories, people “universally have recourse to comedy as a way of coping with adversity, and [it is] why laughter is so close to tears.” In Nigeria, a paradox exists where despite the difficult lives that many in the country face, most of its citizens report a rather high ‘happiness’ score (Agbo et al 2012). The authors of this study felt, like Bonanno, that happiness had a role to play in mitigating potentially harmful negative experiences. They noted that the reporting of happiness “is not only therapeutic, but also serves as a strategy developed to adapt to the situation,” (Agbo et al 2012:303). It appears as if this strategy of using positive emotions coupled with social support could be the case for the exchange I witnessed. These men were not alone in experiencing incidents of racism – racism was (and to a degree still is) prevalent in the North East of England. Rather than become fearful of British citizens, they instead chose to laugh at the lengths people would go to in order to scare or intimidate them. They imbued these potentially damaging experiences of racial targeting with laughter and mirth, thus robbing them of their negative power. In the face of blatant racism, these men were certainly resilient.

As the above vignette demonstrated, factors contributing to or hindering resilience are varied. Siriwardhana et al (2014) conducted a systematic review of twenty-three studies (ten qualitative, thirteen quantitative) on resilience and mental health outcomes of conflict-driven forced migrants. They found that resilience was most commonly associated with family and community cohesion, family and community support, individual personal qualities, collective identity, supportive

primary relationships and religion (Siriwardhana 2014:10). Individual studies corroborate these findings to a large degree; for instance, Schweitzer et al (2007) echoed the importance of social and family support, spirituality and religious faith among Sudanese refugees resettled in Australia. They added, however, that positive coping was also associated with the capacity to make meaning of their situation and noted the positive effect that comparison with others (who were perceived as being worse off) had on one's overall ability to cope. Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani (2012) conducted research among Zimbabwean and Somali women living in the UK; they too found that strong social networks with whom one could speak openly with were important, as was practicing one's religion. Their study, however, adds another element that has yet to be discussed: the role of positive self-talk and positive thinking. These were found to be a central coping strategy employed by the women interviewed.

Other research focuses on the impediments to being resilient rather than examining the factors that cause it. For instance, Siriwardhana et al (2015) remark on the factors leading to lower resilience scores among internally displaced Muslims living in Sri Lanka; these include poverty-related factors such as financial debt and an absence of food security, as well as social isolation and low levels of social support which may be as detrimental as fleeing itself. Woods and Pulla (2016) add that other methods of coping remain largely ineffective if one does not have sufficient financial support, noting that the environment in which refugees find themselves in does matter. In a study on refugees and asylum seekers (Somali, Congolese and Mozambican) living in South Africa, Greyling (2016) found that one of the most important factors affecting the well-being of asylum seekers and refugees was the granting of 'refugee status' because of the protection and rights it confers – not having this status hindered one's well-being (2016:245). The importance of this status is its relationship with employment. Being employed has a large effect on well-being; secure employment and the resources that such additional income made available to individuals appeared to be the biggest factor impacting the expected well-being of this group. Greyling, however, issues a word of caution that I also found to be true among my informants in both countries: being employed outside of one's specific field of training (particularly if they have studied at the tertiary level) and being underemployed can have a significant negative impact upon well-being, despite the access to an income (Greyling 2016:244).

In addition to employment, the political situation of the country in which one seeks asylum – the 'where' – remains crucial for refugees not just in terms of being recognised as a person in need of protection, but also as a person deserving of state support and welfare. Woods and Pulla (2016) see this 'where' as a potentially life-and-death situation. For example, while the authors discuss the resilience of Bhutanese refugees resettled in Australia, they note another study that focuses on the high rate of suicide among this group of refugees in the United States (Woods and Pulla 2016:107). They attribute the resilience of the refugees in Australia to the support they receive during and after the resettlement process. It should be noted that this is not simply a comparison between high-income and low-income countries; rather it stems from the quality of welfare provision for refugees. Thus, where one finds oneself is crucially important when it comes to coping and resilience.

Despite the plethora of resilience and coping studies, Jayawickreme and Blackie (2016) remark that the popularity of this concept has yet to make a meaningful impact on forced migration studies beyond the handful of studies mentioned. They state, "There is little insight on how most refugees continue to function adaptively in the wake of extreme situations, and on which resources and strengths facilitate such functioning, mainly because of the focus on concepts of loss, separation, stress, and trauma, which emphasizes what is lacking for refugees to experience well-being," (Jayawickreme and Blackie 2016:59). Siriwardhana et al (2014) hold a similar view. They highlight the need for more qualitative evidence on resilience amongst those forcibly displaced. While any qualitative studies will contribute to this underdeveloped area, they note the need for those set in resource-poor settings. My own research fits into both of these areas (Western settings and resource-poor settings) and seeks to help fill this gap.

Well-Being in Wider Discourses

The focus on the 'goodness' of life as a research topic is becoming more and more prominent within anthropology. Joel Robbins (2013:457) writes about this trend, highlighting the change from an anthropology focused on a "suffering subject" to "a new focus on how people living in different societies strive to create the good in their lives." Robbins notes, in particular, that this notion of 'the good' sits comfortably with discussions of time, change and hope. He sees these three themes as being "about the

ways people come to believe that they can successfully create a good beyond what is presently given in their lives," an idea that I will expand upon in more depth in this thesis (Robbins 2013:458).

Well-being studies are becoming increasingly popular, yet some studies focusing on this aspect of experience have been around for quite some time. As Mathews and Izquierdo (2009:2) point out, well-being typically comprises both a subjective and an objective component while happiness – consisting of just a subjective component - constitutes a part of well-being, meaning it is much narrower in focus. Happiness, however, remains more common in everyday conversations. Other terms that mean essentially the same as well-being and happiness include quality of life, subjective well-being, hedonic well-being and 'the good life'. Note, however, that some authors do distinguish between these concepts. For instance, subjective well-being is concerned with how happy people are, both in and with their lives, while psychological well-being concerns itself more with fulfilment and what constitutes optimal psychological functioning (White and Eyber 2017:123-135). Though these two camps do exist, they both fall under 'well-being research' and their findings will be considered in this thesis.

Notions of 'the good life' and happiness were topics worthy of the likes of Plato and Aristotle, with the latter seeing happiness as being closely tied to a just political community and relationships with others, particularly friends (Friese 2015). Aristotle believed that happiness, which he called eudaimonia, was central to a worthwhile life and the highest good (Mason and Tiberius 2009:63). The importance of happiness was not lost to the ages, as the movements in the United States and Europe attest. Indeed, the US Declaration of Independence lists "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as fundamental rights, while the utilitarian movement saw as its goal "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" (Veenhoven 2015:524).

The more modern focus on well-being and happiness has been pioneered by psychologists. Rather than focusing on pathologies, they began noting and commenting on the strengths that people had and the remarkable resilience of the human spirit. Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist and a World War II concentration camp survivor, remains a central figure in this movement. Though he wrote about his new theory prior to incarceration, it wasn't until after he was liberated from the camp that

it became a popular field in its own right. He describes this theory, called logotherapy, as a "meaning-centered psychotherapy" (Frankl 1984:120). "Logotherapy focuses rather on the future, that is to say, on the meanings to be fulfilled by the patient in the future," he explains (Frankl 1984:120). Much of psychoanalysis, he reminds us, is oriented toward the past. He splits sharply with this and focuses on what is to come. Frankl (1984:121) asserts that "this striving to find meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man." He remarked on the resilience that an individual possessed even under the most dreadful of circumstances and uses logotherapy as the explanation for how such a thing is possible. If one has a reason to keep going, then one will.

Much like Frankl, and those who come after him, I was not interested in pursuing research on pathology or 'negative' well-being. Instead, I am adopting an approach to examine what makes or keeps someone well. Most of the literature around this idea falls under the broad heading of 'positive psychology'. Though it predates the classification of a distinct field of psychology, Tedeschi and Calhoun's (1995) notion of 'posttraumatic growth' (or PTG) is relevant here. They understand PTG as positive change(s) an individual experiences in the aftermath of a traumatic event (Calhoun and Tedeschi 2013). Though PTG was introduced several years before positive psychology, it has recently gained traction in psychology and certainly fits within this field. I engage with PTG in far more depth later on; suffice it to say that I found this concept invaluable in working with individuals who have undergone a trauma but have found meaning through the experience and perceive themselves to be stronger as a person because of it.

'Positive psychology' as a distinct field was coined by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2000) and focuses on human flourishing rather than human distress. Their primary purpose in introducing this term was to shift psychological focus from mental illness to "the positive features that make life worth living," (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000:5). Among these features are characteristics such as hope, creativity, wisdom and spirituality. This field consists of three levels; the first is "well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)," (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000:5). For positive psychology, then, the overall aim is "to identify the factors that promote optimum well-being in individuals in the form of positive experiences (e.g., happiness) and traits (i.e., optimism) and in societies in the

form of positive values, institutions, and citizenship," (Jayawickreme and Blackie 2016:58). The centrality of these subjective experiences in this psychology field has spawned a multitude of studies. Indeed, as others have taken up this idea and pursued in it in their own work, they have noticed that, "it makes sense to focus on what is 'going right' as well as what is 'going wrong,' (Biswas-Diener and Patterson 2011:125). This positive focus can be interpreted as a gaze toward what makes life meaningful.

Positive psychology has taken off considerably since the release of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's paper. Its proliferation since then can be seen in in the Foreword to the Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology (2009:xviii) in which the editors boast of several thousand journal articles, advanced degree programs and research centres around the globe on the subject, among a host of other achievements in the field. Yet it is not only psychologists who have engaged with this topic. Sociologists, too, have taken well-being and happiness as a topic worth researching. In the late 1970s, Aaron Antonovsky – a self-proclaimed "anthropologically oriented sociologist" – came onto the scene with his book Health, Stress, and Coping (1972:2). His model, salutogenesis –literally the origins of health – is one I also draw on heavily. His approach to health and illness echoed strongly with the approach I sought to undertake in regards to my own research. That is, rather than focusing on why people become ill, is it not more astounding that people remain well at all, especially after suffering through a trauma? Yet despite the popularity of this positive focus in fields such as psychology and sociology, it remains relatively underdeveloped when looking at non-Western populations.

Some limited attention to this question of wellness exists among African populations. For instance, in the 2017 World Happiness Report, the chapter analysing African data is titled 'Waiting for Happiness in Africa'. Given this rather ominous title, readers are unsurprised when it is revealed that Africa remains the least happy continent in the world (Møller, Roberts, Tiliouine and Loschky 2017:85). Though the authors admit the "paucity of data on African happiness," they nevertheless speak about Africa's "happiness deficit," (Møller et al 2017:89). Lived poverty, lack of sufficient infrastructure, poor governance and insufficient investment in a burgeoning youth population combine to negatively impact on Africans' perceived happiness. All, however, is not bleak. The authors comment on Africa's "astonishing resilience" and

remark on future optimism as a critical "coping skill perfected by African people," (Møller et al 2017:108). In this sense, then, Africa represents a kind of paradox.

Helaine Selin and Gareth Davey's (2012) *Happiness Across Cultures: Views of Happiness and Quality of Life in Non-Western Cultures* proves valuable in highlighting the research to date on happiness on the African continent and West Africa in particular, though it should be noted that out of forty-three contributing authors, only five were anthropologists. Agbo, Nzeadibe and Ajaero (2012) in their chapter also explore this apparent African paradox using the case study of Nigeria. Like Africa in general, Nigeria scores quite poorly on certain developmental indexes given widespread poverty, corruption and lack of electricity and running water. Yet despite these measures, the authors note one survey in which Nigerians are listed as 'very happy' and score well above many countries that have significantly better infrastructure in place. This leads Agbo et al (2012:307) to ask the question: Can people report high levels of happiness in the absence of things that are supposed to make them happy? Their answer is yes. They believe that evolutionary psychology may explain this paradox in that Nigerians could have evolved to experience positive affect and even happiness as a way to counter their harsh and difficult living conditions (Agbo et al 2012:303). Happiness, then, was an adaptive mechanism. The authors cite another study by Cohn et al (2009:361) that states, "happy people become more satisfied not simply because they feel better but because they develop resources for living well," (Agbo et al 2012:304). Perhaps the most important of these resources, they note, is religion. The importance of religion cannot be overstated; they argue that "the degree to which it influences happiness among Nigerians may be greater than other indices, such as economy, freedom, and development," (Agbo et al 2012:306). Nigerians, then, have adapted to their environment – using religion as a crucial resource – to the point where they report high levels of happiness. More recently, in December of 2017, Nigeria has dedicated itself to the happiness of its citizens. Imo State elected a 'Supervisory Commissioner for Happiness and Purpose Fulfilment' (Akinwotu 2018). Though this may be seen as a welcome step in taking happiness more seriously, many critics denounce this appointment.[3] It remains to be seen

[3] Critics are quick to point out that the governor of the state, Rochas Okorocha, appointed his biological sister, Ogechi Ololo, to this position, thereby casting doubt on the legitimacy and future impact of the post.

whether this post will make any meaningful difference in the life of citizens of Imo State.

A similar finding as Nigeria was reported about another West African country: Ghana. In 2006, a report was circulated which listed Ghana as one of the 10 happiest countries in the world despite its status some two years before as a Highly Indebted Poor Country (Dzokoto 2012:311). This finding sparked much excitement and debate within the country. Vivian Dokoto suggests that Ghanaians in general are very optimistic and tend to respond favourably on questions pertaining to well-being. Much of Dzokoto's analysis falls under 'happiness economics' where she finds that income and monthly household expenditure were not significant predictors of happiness. Instead, factors related to the parental, occupational, conjugal, and domestic domains and the status derived from them impacted happiness far more (Dzokoto 2012:323). Furthermore, echoing the Nigerian study above, Dzokoto attributes Ghana's relative happiness with the ability to cope with the everyday hardships of living in a nation with high poverty. She claims that "negative life events may sometimes be normalized" and that expression such as "life is war" and "life is a struggle" are common (Dzokoto 2012:317). For many Ghanaians, then, life is about coping and persevering despite the hardships.

Poverty Studies

Some useful and relevant work on well-being comes from poverty studies. Biswas-Diener and Diener's research has been particularly illuminating for my own. They conducted a study which examined the subjective well-being of three groups of people: homeless persons on the streets of Calcutta, India; homeless persons in Fresno, California; and a tent camp of homeless people in Portland, Oregon. Their results were rather surprising. "While all three groups reported high levels of satisfaction with self domains (such as morality, intelligence and physical appearance), the street homeless of Calcutta reported not only the highest level of life satisfaction, but were also the only group to score in the positive range despite their relatively poorer access to basic necessities like food, clean water and medical care (Biswas-Diener and Diener 2006). While these findings were surprising to the researchers, they were quick to point out that all three groups reported high levels of negative affect, indicating that unpleasant emotions scores outweighed pleasant ones. Thus, while being homeless does have a

detrimental impact on one's well-being, one cannot overlook the qualitatively different experiences that this condition engenders.

Themes relating to resilience and coping also arise in poverty research. Given the material conditions in which many refugees and asylum-seekers live, this research is especially pertinent to my own research. Here as well, positive psychology has provided a framework through which life experiences can be understood. Biswas-Diener and Patterson (2011:126) claim that poverty can best be understood as "a unique set of material circumstances that exposes people to violence and social stigma and presents obstacles to fulfilling basic needs but which also fosters resilience, engenders compassion, and presents opportunities for happiness." This idea is also echoed in refugee research. For instance, one study examining the experiences of Somalian and Zimbabwean women in the UK found a large portion of the refugee and asylum-seeker population "manage to endure the temporary upheaval of loss or potentially traumatic event remarkably well," (Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani 2012:88). Taking this one step further, Biswas-Diener and Patterson make the claim that not only are people managing, but that "most people are happy" (Biswas-Diener and Patterson 2011:129).

Economics

Even economics and public policy have thrown in their lot with happiness and well-being studies, spurring on a 'happiness economics'. Bhutan, quite famously, has done away with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a tool with which to gauge the country's progress and replaced it with Gross National Happiness, though the degree to which happiness is the target remains debatable as most policies still target economic growth (Thin 2012:81). Other countries are following suit, with United Arab Emirates appointing a Minister of Happiness charged with "establishing the happiness, satisfaction and positivity of citizens as a national priority," (Lambert and Hussain 2016:2)Economists – most notably Richard Easterlin – have turned instead to look at the relationship between happiness and increases in various resources such as wealth, work and health, both at the household and the national level. He noted that these three resources were common threads that people drew upon when talking about happiness, leading him to comment that "most people everywhere spend most of their lives doing the same types of things," (Easterlin 2001:467). One of the main focuses of economists, however, concerns the connections between income and happiness. It

stood to reason that an increase in income led to an increase in happiness (Sirgy 2012). Further research into this found that while wealthier individuals are in general happier than poorer individuals, an increase in income does not, on average, lead to an increase in happiness, particularly in relatively wealthy countries (Bartram 2011:9). The so-called 'Easterlin paradox' was uncovered when researchers found that certain countries had much higher levels of reported happiness than what one would expect given their incomes and other development measures (such as Nigeria) where others had lower than expected levels of happiness (such as Ukraine) (Bartram 2010:346). In fact, in a paper by Polgreen and Simpson (2010), none of the top five countries the list in terms of 'average happiness' is among the wealthiest nations.[4] The majority of research on well-being and happiness comes from sociologists, psychologists and economists who frequently use large bodies of quantitative data at the expense of qualitative methods.

The focus on large-scale quantitative datasets lends itself easily to economic analyses. It is little wonder, then, that economists engaging with migration have focused on material or consumption changes and the effects of these on well-being. Douglas Massey (2015) notes five of the most common motivations for migration: material improvement, risk management, symbolic gratification, social connection and threat evasion. While he acknowledges that less attention has been paid in the literature to threat evasion, one of the most popular topics has been on migration for material improvement (Massey 2015:452). Specifically, much attention has been paid to the happiness of migrants moving from relatively poorer to relatively richer countries. Bartram (2010) and Hendriks (2015) both take up this call from the happiness economics perspective mentioned above. They seek to answer the question, 'Does moving to a wealthier country make people happier?' The findings they come up with do not paint a rosy picture. While certainly some immigrants experience an increase in happiness, this is not true for all, or even most, migrants. Bartram (2010:351-352) writes, rather bleakly, that according to the happiness research published on the topic, "immigration might erode happiness for some rather than enhance it: it might increase the gap between aspirations and achievement, it might

[4] The top five are (in order): Colombia, Tanzania, El Salvador, Venezuela and Vietnam. The ranking comes from the World Values Survey Sample from 1981-2004. Therefore, while certainly some of these may have changed positions, the fact remains that the high placement of these countries in term of happiness is at odds with other factors; namely their GDP.

place migrants in a lower (or at best unchanged) relative position, and it might feed expectations about the joys of consumption that remain unfulfilled." Hendriks (2015), in his analysis of 38 publications, two forthcoming papers, and four working papers on happiness and migration, is similarly negative. He comments on the migration from a less developed to more developed country, noting that most do not become happier because of a mixture of "psychosocial hardships in the host country, such as the absence of significant others, cultural disparities, linguistic limitations, and social degradation," (Hendriks 2015:362). The negative impact of migration on happiness does not stop with the migrant herself. Several studies also point to the negative impact felt by the family left behind, even when one accounts for the increased income due to remittances (Bartram 2010:348). Even the International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2013 World Migration Report on Migrant Well-Being and Development spent an inordinate amount of time exploring the link between income and happiness. Perhaps, however, the dearth of research on the topic is to blame for not exploring well-being and what goes right and for whom. Hendriks remarks on the lack of diversity of studies, noting that well-being has become increasingly popular in sociology, while "exploring migrants' happiness has been a less considered theme in migration journals than one would expect given the specific interest of migration journals in improving migrants' lives," (Hendricks 2015:349). Yet not all is negative. A sliver of positivity comes from the work of Helliwell et al (2017: 11-12) who comment on studies that demonstrate migrants experience "average levels and distributions of life evaluations that resemble those of other residents of their new countries more than of comparable residents in the countries from which they have emigrated." They draw upon work in the IOM's World Migration Report (2013:97) in which "some research conducted into developing and developed countries suggests that the happiness scores for migrants and non-migrants are very similar" yet note that the research on this topic is mixed, indicating the need for more studies into this subject, particularly in relation to forced migrants as they may "carry heavy burdens from their country of origin (IOM 2013:100). Though studies on this subject remain scarce and contradictory, Frank et al (2016:1670)'s work among 43 immigrant groups living in Canada indicates that not only do most of these groups have a higher level of life satisfaction than their source-country populations, but that in general, "sharing the same general living conditions and freedoms as the Canadian-born population results in similar life satisfaction levels for most immigrant groups" (2016:1676). Findings

such as these challenge the dominant narrative and demonstrate clearly that more research could benefit this area of study.

Anthropology

Anthropologists are only relatively recently engaging with positive concepts such as well-being and happiness – hence Robbins's article commenting on this turn toward "the good". Yet some anthropologists express unease at this change in focus, fearing "complacent traps" of sentimentality in this turn to the good and worrying that the difficult lives that some people live will be trivialised (Kelly 2012:213-214). Though this is a valid concern, more are concerned with the lack of anthropology's engagement with the subject. Even Mathews and Izquierdo (2009) and Thin (2014) comment on the silence of anthropologists in the field of well-being and happiness, while Thin notes that titles purporting to focus on issues related to well-being – he gives the examples of *Anthropology of Welfare* and *Contentment and Suffering* – tend to wholly ignore any focus on positive aspects of life in favour of the negative. Yet anthropologists seem to be engaging with happiness and well-being themes in small pockets. The subject lends itself readily to anthropologists, for "happiness is culturally imagined, socially constructed, interactively discussed, compared, and narrated, and highly contagious," (Thin 2014:13). It is this socially constructed aspect of well-being that interests many anthropologists. For instance, Kathryn Linn Geurts (2002) argues that subjective experiences and perceptions are culturally shaped based on her fieldwork among the Anlo-Ewe people of south-eastern Ghana. For Geurts, a state of well-being is dependent upon ensuring that their experience and perceptions are similar with the experiences and perceptions of those around them. Other anthropologists also comment on the social aspect of experience and well-being.

One notable anthropological emphasis on the importance of well-being among Africans is Michael Jackson's work with the Kuranko of Sierra Leone. He writes about well-being in situations of hardships in West Africa, noting that "well-being emphasises social over physical or psychological health," (2011:24) echoing the centrality of the social and legitimising the position of anthropology to engage with these concepts more fully. During his fieldwork, he chose to engage with well-being by asking people what were the sweetest and the hardest experiences of their lives. Jackson's understanding of what it means to be well recognises that more than a bare minimum is required; indeed, he recognises that "we do not live by bread alone" and

therefore well-being includes the "need for our lives to be worthwhile," (2011:60). Through his interactions among the Kuranko, their answers to his questions and the time he spent with them, he discovered that Kuranko well-being is "less a reflection on whether or not one has realized one's hopes than a matter of learning how to live within limits." Well-being, then, is closely related to "how one endures the situation in which one finds oneself in," (Jackson 2011:61). This focus on one's attitude toward a situation echoes closely Frankl's (1984) work in the WWII concentration camps. He notes that, "everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way," (Frankl 1984:86). Upon closer examination of the metaphors the Kuranko used for wellness, Jackson posits that "wellness is likened to wholeness or wealth, a matter of being full or fulfilled (rather than empty), energized (rather than exhausted), moving (rather than stuck), having (rather than taking)," (2011:94). These metaphors appear to be relatively common. He concludes by stating "happiness consists in knowing how to make the most of what one has rather than staking everything on the chance of something else," (Jackson 2011:197).

If it seems like well-being and happiness studies incorporate a variety of disciplines – they do. The interdisciplinarity of these studies should not be seen as a weakness. Instead, it provides us with a rich and nuanced view of what factors play a role in making a wide range of stakeholders – from individuals to entire nations – happy and well. While certainly disciplines such as anthropology are latecomers, they can contribute vastly to the underdeveloped qualitative side of happiness and well-being. In this thesis I seek to adopt what Thin (2014:14) calls the twin strategies of all happiness scholars: "pursuing transdisciplinarity on the one hand, while on the other hand trying to ensure that their home discipline doesn't continue to make itself look silly and isolated by ignoring happiness scholarship." This research is my part to ensure that anthropology fully engages with this field.

Well-Being in this Thesis

This thesis is organised around three well-being themes. These themes were not predetermined; rather, they emerged through the research process. Though many paths to well-being exist, it is significant that the paths articulated can be construed in this way. The three avenues to well-being mentioned by my informants, and which

structure not only the next section but the entire thesis, are existential wellbeing, relational wellbeing and temporal wellbeing. In this section I will give a brief overview of some of the key literature pertaining to each theme. Each theme is then described more fully in the thesis, with two chapters devoted to each type of well-being. For now, the focus is on the theoretical discussions driving each section while the chapters providing illustrative examples from my fieldwork.

The work in this thesis is influenced by that conducted by Borwick et al (2013). In this study, the researchers used a salutogenic lens to explore the well-being of refugees from Burma who have been resettled in Australia. They situate their research as one of a few qualitative studies on the subject of well-being of refugees and offer it as a way to address this gaping methodological gap. Using semi-structured interviews, they explored how the participants they spoke with made meaning from their experiences and what they identified as their sources of strength. The findings highlighted four key themes that a majority, if not all, of the participants spoke about. These were interpersonal relationships (including family, friends and the community); existential values (particularly in relation to freedom and safety); a sense of future and agency; and spirituality (both in terms of a belief in God as well as the social network that arises from active membership of a particular religion) (Borwick et al 2013).

While Borwick et al's research is useful and informed my own, there are some distinct differences. Firstly, though Borwick et al used qualitative methods in their study, they are not anthropologists, and their research consisted only of a semi-structured interview with participants from a single country of origin. My research pairs interviews with participant observation over a longer period of time and includes informants from a wide range of backgrounds. Furthermore, their four themes do not evenly map on to my three. While their interpersonal relationships theme does resemble my relational well-being, the same cannot be said for the other themes. Their existential values include experiences of safety and the importance of independence and freedom (2013:95) while my existential theme focuses on meaning-making and finding a sense of purpose. The sense of future and agency they note as a super-ordinate theme does relate to one of my chapters (Chapter 7) which focuses on hope for the future, but it does not relate to the mobility lens I use nor does it speak to my overarching theme of temporal well-being. Finally, I do not include what they term a 'spirituality' theme. While religion was important for my informants, discussions on

this topic were largely subsumed by broader themes, particularly existential well-being.

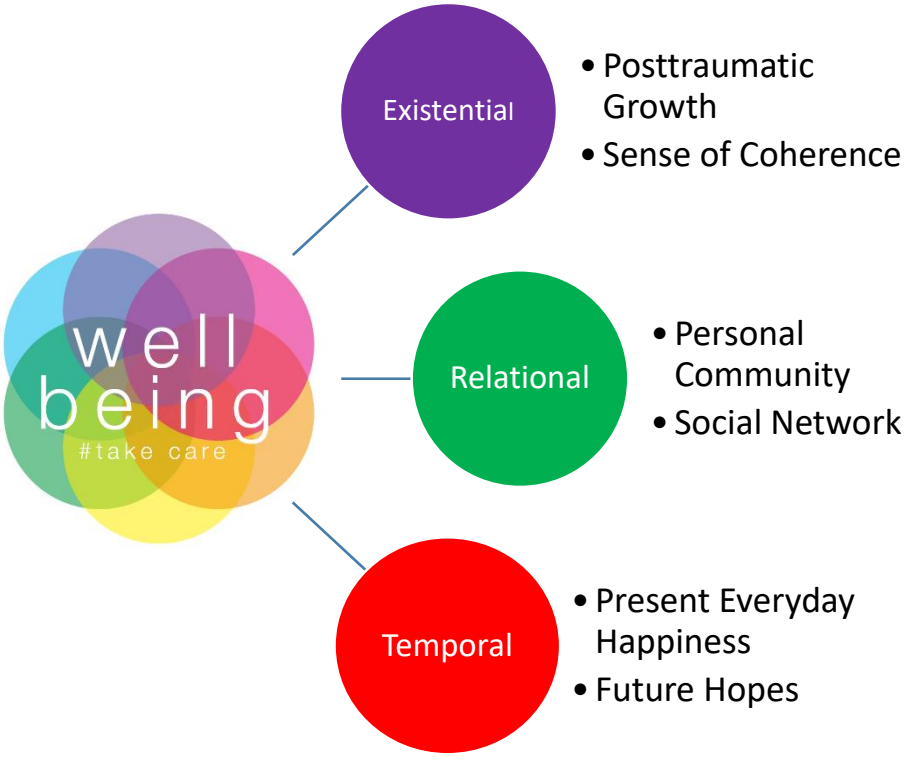


Figure 2. The three key themes of the thesis and each of their corresponding sub-themes.

Existential Well-Being

The first of the themes mentioned by my informants relates to existential well-being. Other researchers, such as Borwick et al (2013:96) have done work with existential values among refugees. They describe these as "experiences relating to aspects of living that make life valuable, meaningful, and worth living." Existential well-being, then, derives from this drive to find a sense of meaning in purpose in one's life. To outline this idea more fully, I draw upon two related notions – posttraumatic growth and a sense of coherence – to explicate this theme more fully.

Sense of coherence (SOC) and posttraumatic growth (PTG) go beyond the discussion of resilience and coping that typifies studies into the well-being of refugees. As Peter Gattrell notes in his book, *The Making of the Modern Refugee,* "the 'bland language' of humanitarian intervention, with its talk of 'survival' and 'coping', does

scant justice to the depth of [refugees] cultural imagination and practices, or the intensity of the adventures during their trek across difficult terrain," (Gattrell 2015:251). He remarks that instead, some refugees he spoke with "mobilise[d] images of being adventurous, tough and independent, rather than marginalised, displaced and helpless," (Gattrell 2015:251). This idea of framing forced migration as an 'adventure' is echoed in Sébastien Bachelet's work on irregular Sub-Saharan *sans-papiers* in Morocco. In discussions with his informants, he notes that they choose to refer to themselves as 'adventurers'. While my informants did not use these terms, many did frame their experiences of forced migration and resettlement as a journey. This framing of their experiences allowed them to make sense of hardships endured and to incorporate the personal changes they experienced to their sense of self.

The salutogenic model draws upon thinking of health and disease (or 'dis-ease') as existing along a continuum (Antonovsky 1996). It looks at a human being in a holistic way. Rather than focusing on a particular disease or illness, the gaze is directed toward examining health promoting factors (Borwick, Schweitzer, Brough, Vromans, and Finch). Developing this theory further, Antonovsky posits that a sense of coherence (or SOC) is crucial. This SOC construct is a "generalised orientation toward the world which perceives it, on a continuum, as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful," (Antonovsky, 1996:15). The SOC, he argues, is not a culture-bound construct, thus making it universally applicable.

A central component of SOC, meaning, also plays a pivotal role in other discourses of well-being. One such discourse revolves around eudaimonic well-being as opposed to hedonic well-being. Ryan and Deci (2001) describe the two forms in the following way. Hedonic well-being is synonymous with happiness and concerns itself primarily with subjective well-being and positive affect. Eudaimonic well-being aligns itself more closely with psychological well-being and looks at a person's broader functioning. Though different researchers define it in a different manner, it is the stance of McGregor and Little (1998) that I will employ here: eudaimonic well-being is a combination of happiness plus meaningfulness. It is this notion of meaning and meaning-making which I draw upon for my research, especially in the first two chapters. Clearly, the two viewpoints on well-being are not mutually exclusive. It does appear, however, that eudaimonic well-being is more broadly defined and thus sits better with this topic of research.

As mentioned, resilience denotes a return to the baseline functioning one was at previously; posttraumatic growth recognises a return to this baseline *and then surpassing it.* Bensimon (2012) is quick to differentiate resilience from posttraumatic growth. He asserts that resilience is a personality trait, while PTG is a mode of adjustment to traumatic events (Bensimon 2012:783). Typically, this adjustment involves a recognition of the ways in which one has somehow personally benefitted from surviving the trauma experienced. The definition of PTG describes it as "the experience of positive change that the individual experiences as a result of the struggle with a traumatic event," (Calhoun and Tedeschi 2013:6). It is this transformative element that makes it distinct from other positive concepts – like sense of coherence mentioned above – and further distances it from resilience (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). This term was coined by Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun in the mid-nineties. To date, there are a plethora of studies and examples with various populations around the world to show the existence and importance of this concept, especially in the field of psychology and, most relevant for me, in the context of working with refugees.

Posttraumatic growth (PTG) as an idea, and a pervasive one at that, was spawned by a conversation Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) relate about a man called Jerry. Jerry was in a terrible automobile accident that left him paraplegic at the age of 26. When speaking with him about this experience that many would consider to be one of the worst that could happen to a person, Tedeschi and Calhoun realised that not only was Jerry moving on with his life despite the change (as a resilient person would) but he claimed it was, in fact, one of the best things that had ever happened to him (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1995). He felt that he was previously living a destructive lifestyle that may have ultimately ended his life. This accident had changed him and his priorities, allowing him to lead a fuller, more enriching life. This story is their segue in to expanding on the not-uncommon experience of posttraumatic growth.

Relational Well-Being

Social relationships are crucial to well-being and happiness. The centrality of these relationships permeate not only well-being studies, but research on posttraumatic growth and resilience as well. For instance, a study examining the effects of posttraumatic stress and growth among traumatised psychiatric outpatients with a

refugee background in Norway found that weak forms of social support, coupled with a loss of social ties and loss of social network, reduced one's coping capacity and thus hindered PTG while fostering a sense of PTSD (Teodorescu et al 2012). Another study among Israeli residents forced to relocate found that a person's sense of belonging to the community was an important resource that facilitated coping (Nuttman-Shwartz et al 2011). This portion of my thesis, then, will focus on the ways in which these social relationships are constructed and maintained, and the effect that they have on an individual's well-being and happiness.

Types of social relationships can be split into two groups. The first group contains those individuals who are closest to a person and with whom one has strong ties: friends and family. The second group consists of those with whom one has weaker ties and refers to the wider social network and community. Relationships with both of these groups of people can be fraught with ambiguities and contradictions. The effects of these relationships on feelings of well-being and happiness will be explored. This first part of this section aims to address the dearth of literature in the anthropology of friendship. Within anthropology, the debate on what counts or constitutes friendship is still a highly debated topic. Killick and Desai claim that though an overlap may exist between friends and family, maintaining an analytical distinction between the two is key "since it is this aspect that appears to be of crucial importance in giving its moral force in so many societies around the world," (2013:2). This book remains one of the few ventures into the world of friendship by anthropologists; it should be noted, however, that only one of the studies focuses on friendships in Africa and none in West Africa. This similar lack of research among friendships in general and among friendships in sub-Saharan Africa in particular occurs in other disciplines. For instance, in psychology the handbook titled *Friendship and Happiness across the Life-Span and Cultures* (2015), does not feature friendships from sub-Saharan Africa (with only one comparative study including Algeria as the only African country) in any of the nineteen chapters. The authors note that even "many of the theoretical arguments focus on close relationships in general and rarely specifically highlight the importance of friendships to happiness," (Demir et al 2013). They call for more research into friendship, and in particular note the usefulness of observational methods along with a focus on understudied ethnic and cultural groups.

The wider community, has a similarly conflicting role. Belonging was clearly an important issue, as was forging relationships with various types of communities: the ethnic/national community to which one belonged, the host community and the wider refugee community. While relationships between an individual and these varying types of communities acted as a form of social capital and contributed heavily to many stories of happiness and well-being, they were not unproblematic for all. Social comparisons, discrimination and the pressure of those from one's home country were often cited as factors inhibiting one's well-being.

The interplay of these various forms of well-being can be highlighted through an example. Recall the study among the three different homeless groups in Calcutta, California and Oregon (Biswas-Diener and Diener (2006). In this study, the authors found that pavement dwellers in Calcutta reported the highest levels of life satisfaction despite their relatively low access to material resources. The authors offer two possible explanations for why this might be so. The first of these relates to the wider community in which the pavement dwellers find themselves. For instance, they remark that not only was the state in which Calcutta is located communist (meaning that people are likely to sympathise with the poor rather than persecute them), but that high rates of homelessness in the community led to less social stigma (Biswas-Diener and Diener 2006:200). The second explanation they offer looks at the macroeconomic conditions of Calcutta – because competition for jobs was fierce, lack of employment was not seen as the failing on an individual's part. For this reason, the homeless in Calcutta frequently stayed together as a family unit rather than becoming estranged as was more common with their American counterparts (Biswas-Diener and Diener 2006:201). Both of these explanations likely play a part when it comes to the subjective well-being of these populations. What the authors want to draw attention to, however, is the "possibility that we are less psychologically vulnerable to material deprivation than previously thought, at least in comparison to social needs," (Biswas-Diener and Diener 2006:201). They further clarify their position by stating, "Good social relationships […] are not only important to subjective well-being but may also to some extent avert the psychological costs of material deprivation," (Biswas-Diener and Diener 2006:202). For asylum seekers and refugees who experience drastic changes in their material circumstances, social relationships can be crucial in their

stories of happiness. The benefits, however, do not extend to all individuals in all circumstances.

Temporal Well-Being

The third main theme I wish to highlight from observations and discussions with my informants is temporal well-being. Many of their relationships – both with themselves and with others – were shaped by constructions of time. Time is felt and experienced differently by different people and at different times in their lives. Managing this effectively can promote happiness and well-being, while an inability to adjust to different tempos and rhythms can inhibit this sense of positivity. The relationship with time and well-being could already be seen with the aforementioned chapter in the 2017 World Happiness Report called 'Waiting for Happiness' in Africa. This 'waiting' hints at not only a temporal inequality – as in who has to wait, who doesn't and why this should be so – but also indicates the political manipulation of time. Laura Bear (2016:488-489) draws attention to temporal inequalities by stating, "Anthropologists in their fieldsites have increasingly encountered temporal insecurity or conflicts in time as a crucial element of experiences of inequality." She further positions anthropology's usefulness by suggesting "A focus on the varying ability to plan a life across classes, genders, and racial groups has much potential," (Bear 2016:489). Thus, the experience of time highlights present inequalities which directly affect one's life plan. This future-oriented focus became a central theme in my informants' narratives.

Ringel (2016) suggests that this orientation to the future reflects a sense of temporal agency. Thus, in addition to highlighting inequalities, an engagement with time can foster or rebuild a sense of agency (Bear 2016). Bryant (2016:14) understands the relationship with the future as more than merely expecting something to occur; rather, she prefers to use the term 'anticipation' to denote "the act of looking forward that also pulls me in the direction of the future and prepares the groundwork for that future to occur." These practices of regaining a sense of lost agency and laying a groundwork for the future are referred to as 'time-tricking'. Time-tricking refers to "The many different ways in which people individually and collectively attempt to modify, manage, bend, distort, speed up, slow down or structure the times they are

living in," (Moroşanu and Ringel 20016:17). Individuals make the time they are in through their actions (Munn 1992). Bear (2016:496) notes that "time tricking occurs because people are trying to regain a sense of ethical agency in settings of spatiotemporal inequality and conflictual experience." This thesis will look at various methods of time tricking employed by individuals as well as expand upon notions of temporal agency and its relationship to well-being.

Anthropologists have recently been engaging with this notion of 'time' as it relates to processes in the asylum system in the UK. Since the industrial revolution, the culture of the UK has given value to speed itself. This speed, in turn, becomes equated with the "pursuit of goodness and the betterment of life," (Cwerner 2004:72). The deliberate speeding up or slowing down of temporal experience by a state – such as what occurs during the asylum process – then falls under the purview of the political manipulation of time. Some researchers, such as Melanie Griffiths and Sarah Turnbull, focus on the experience of time in immigration detention centres. Here, Griffiths notes four distinct experiential temporalities that her informants reported. These include sticky time (long, slow time), suspended time (one that can decelerate into stagnation), frenzied time (fast time rushing out of control) and temporal ruptures (tears in people's imagined time frames) (Griffiths 2014:1994). Not all of these experiences were inherently negative. For instance, Griffiths reports that some experienced the temporal suspension they experienced due to waiting for their asylum claim decisions as a liberating experience where they were free from other social and religious expectations. While Griffiths is careful not to paint too rosy a picture, she does remark on the array of temporal experiences and highlights that these experiences differentiate asylum seekers from others who share the same physical space due to the politicisation and manipulation of time. These engagements with time remain largely understudied, yet some research does exist on the asylum process itself that examines the experience of 'waiting' which is described below.

While the effects of changes in time and the psychosocial impacts of waiting tend to focus on the negative aspects of this experience, even this time can be viewed in a more positive light. Rebecca Rotter (2016:81) remarks on the highlights the discrepancy between what people say (i.e. empty time spent 'doing nothing') and what they do in practice (i.e. engage in a variety of present and focus-based activities). In this way, then, time spent waiting is not always an empty or wasted interlude, but

rather has the potential to be productive or otherwise useful in some sense. While she is quick to point out that using time in a productive manner does not excuse the real harm this politicisation of time causes, it does not have to be couched as solely a negative experience. Many of my informants were similarly marginalised – perhaps even victimised – by this particular form of time politicisation, yet I agree with Rotter's assertion that though this time may be unwanted or unwarranted, it does not have to represent a passive meaninglessness.

Not only does the perceived duration of time affect well-being, but the quality of time itself is also crucial. While most research on refugees – and on armed conflict in general – focuses on the extraordinary experiences and circumstances of individuals, it does not look at the everyday, ordinary lives that people actively try and construct after the extraordinary experience. Tobias Kelly's (2008) research examines this 'ordinary' in the midst of 'extraordinary' as he details the lives of Palestinians during the second *intifada*. Though violence permeated everyday life, the focus for most people was on living as ordinary a life as possible. As Kelly (2008:370) reminds us, "[…] the vast majority of people do not actively participate in armed activities, but rather attempt to live what passes for ordinary lives." This focus on maintaining an 'ordinary' life did not point to passivity; rather, Kelly remarks on the lengths people would go to keep up 'ordinary' life. For instance, he highlights a scenario in which a bride, en route to her wedding, was stopped at an Israeli checkpoint. Typically, this meant that passengers had to get out of their cars and walk through the brush around the checkpoint. The bride refused and her driver was force to take a back route, delivering a very dusty bride to her wedding much later than anticipated (Kelly 2008:360). This steadfast, moralising drive to continue to live the ordinary parts of everyday life even in the midst of conflict heavily shaped the narratives and experiences of these Palestinians. This emphasis on the ordinary, on being 'normal', came out in my fieldwork as well.

Chapter Summaries

As mentioned previously, this thesis is organised around three main themes, with two chapters for each theme. The first chapter sets the stage for the following chapters. Specifically, it details my methodology, focusing firstly on the importance

of narratives to my study and then detailing the rationale as well as the general setup of my field sites.

The next two chapters look at more internal processes that are tied to notions of meaning and purpose. Chapter Two explores themes that can be broadly subsumed under a posttraumatic growth model. I look at the ways in which people describe how they have not only found ways to cope, but actually feel that they have grown beyond the level that they were at prior to their flight in a certain area, proving a meaningful framework for a difficult experience. Chapter Three uses Antonovsky's sense of coherence to look at how individuals make their lives comprehensible, manageable and meaningful by putting their energies into finding a sense of purpose.

Chapters Four and Five look at sources of relational well-being. Chapter Four focuses on personal communities that people have and from which they draw strength, joy and a sense of belonging. These relationships fall under the category of immediate family and friendships. Chapter Five examines these social relationships at a broader level, looking at the impact various social networks have on the well-being of people I spoke with as well as their relationship with the various organisations that are taxed with helping them.

The next two chapters look at sources of personal enjoyment and aspirations by exploring the relationship with time. Chapter Six concentrates on sources of everyday happiness and delves heavily into how leisure time is structured and the importance it plays. This leisure time, I argue, carries with it the danger that is boredom. Chapter Seven, then, gazes into the future to look at the hopes that people have. I use mobilities as a template for examining the themes associated with these aspirations, which are often tinged with a nostalgia for an idyllic past.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, links the previous ones together. It does this specifically through the use of religion. Religion appeared in different forms among my informants and, rather than forming a separate theme, instead formed a sub-theme in each of the aforementioned areas. This chapter shows how people spoke about religion and how it was understood in relation to other major areas of life.

Chapter 1 Narrative Inquiry, Well-being and Place

The impetus for this research project came about when I was presenting my Master's research on refugees and mental health to an assembled group of migration and well-being enthusiasts at an international conference in Tel Aviv. The topic of my research was mental health (focusing heavily on illbeing) among female refugees I had interviewed in two charities in the Newcastle area of England. At the end I had included a snippet of something that had surprised me: though I focused on what was going wrong, several had changed the tone of the interview and instead talked about what was going right. I included this both in my Master's dissertation and also in my talk because it surprised me somewhat and, I felt, reminded myself and hopefully others that an individual did not conceive of her life as simply a series of negatives. During question time, a woman whose talk I had previously attended picked up on this (albeit brief) positivity and told me how her grandfather was a refugee who had been resettled in Canada. In her interactions with him, especially as a youngster, she never saw a broken down, beaten man. The remainder of his life, after fleeing Europe, was spent surrounded by his wife, loving children and doting grandchildren. He pursued his interests and lived a full, varied life. Why was he defined by his act of seeking asylum, and why was any subsequent analysis of his well-being couched solely in negative terms? This exchange remained foremost in my mind as I began finalising my proposal for my doctorate research. Why are refugees and asylum seekers so often portrayed as downtrodden, dejected and deeply dispirited? Why does one event forever colour and shape the rest of their life's narrative? Having neglected to ask these questions sooner, I decided that this was the direction I wanted to take for this research. To do so and to engage with these questions more fully, I determined that a narrative approach was essential coupled with observations.

This chapter situates my research methodologically. First, I demonstrate the benefits of a narrative approach and how this approach strengthens my research before examining the links between narrative and agency, particularly as this relates to refugees. After situating my methods in the literature, I situate my fieldsites. I begin with a detailed description of my three fieldsites and my role in each. Next, I address the challenges, risks and benefits of multi-sited fieldwork. Finally, I end the chapter with a list of key persons throughout the thesis.

Well-Being and Narratives

> I did imagine that our time in Ethiopia was temporary. I lived with the assumption that the day would come when the group I arrived with would walk back to Sudan together, when the fighting was done, and at each village we would drop off whoever lived there, until our line of boys dwindled down to the Gone Fars, who would return home last. I would walk the longest but I would find a way home soon enough and I would have many stories to tell.
>
> Valentino Achak Deng in *What is the What*

Many scholars believe language to be the most important and distinctive feature of humanity. Gadamer, borrowing from Friedrich Hölderlin, underlines this as being the prominent experience of being human. For him, language usage is crucial because dialogue is what we are (Gadamer 1996:166). Through the medium of language, then, experiences and knowledge become sedimented (Gadamer 1996). This language, in the form of a narration, bind all humans together. As McAdams notes, "human beings are storytellers by nature," (1997:27). This storytelling tendency, he continues, is found in every human culture and, indeed, indicates that we are "born with a narrating mind," (McAdams 1997:28). George Lakoff and Mark Johnson write extensively on the subject, particularly in regard to metaphors. The close link between the human mind and language is inherent in many of the 'primary metaphors' in use in everyday language. For instance, one of the first of these metaphors to form comes from equating knowing with seeing, often found in phrases such as "I see what you mean." White and Epston (1990:34) term this privilege of sight over the other sense as 'ocularcentrism'. More complex metaphors, which frequently consist of several primary metaphors combined, are also laden with cultural meanings. For instance, one in which many Western cultures are familiar is the metaphor of 'A purposeful life is a journey.' This metaphor not only structures how one conceives of his or her life, but also prescribes a set of actions one must undertake to achieve this purpose (Lakoff and Johnson 1999:61). Engaging in language, then, is not a neutral activity as we use and manipulate language to ascribe meaning to our experiences and constitute lives and relationships through it (White and Epston 1990:27).

Storytelling, as Valentino's quote above demonstrates, orients people toward their lives and provides a useful way for framing experiences through the medium of language. Valentino's stories represented his experiences in a way that not only made sense to him, but made sense to those who were listening. Harry Farmer and Manos Tsakiris posit that individuals possess a 'narrative self', or NS. The stories we tell about ourselves provide the basis for a stable concept of identity over time (Farmer and Tsakiris 2012:125). Furthermore, these stories represent a temporal grounding. McAdams (1997) uses the term 'personal myth' to describe "a special kind of story that each of us naturally constructs to bring together the different parts of ourselves and our lives into a purposeful and convincing whole," (McAdams 1997:12). These personal myths combine elements of a remembered past, a perceived present and an anticipated future (McAdams 1997). The stories arising from these personal myths take on a structured form: beginning, middle, end. "Human experience," explains McAdams, "is storied because of the way most of us comprehend such human actions as being organised in time," (1997:30). Thus, through the process of storytelling, an individual engages in a selection process that organises time by structuring and packaging the events in stories. "The success of this storying of experience," White and Epston (1990:10) remind us, "provides persons with a sense of continuity and meaning in their lives, and this is relied upon for the ordering of daily lives and for the interpretation of further experiences." Some scholars, however, reject any linearity inherent in storytelling as a natural occurrence (see, for instance, Strawson's 2004 essay *Against Narrativity* in which he argues that while storytelling may be a diachronic self-experience, it denies those who are episodic in nature and therefore do not conceive of a self as something that was there in the past and will be there in the future). I do not find that these rejections hold up in practice and agree with the assertions of scholars like McAdams, Gadamer, White and Epston (among a host of others) that narrativity and story-telling are part and parcel of the human experience.

One can see the importance of storytelling when one is prevented from fully telling a story. Several researchers have noted the effect that interviewing and interpretation have on an asylum narrative. Rebecca Rotter (2010:73) comments that during the substantive interview, many are discouraged from contextualising their stories because this is seen as irrelevant or as upsetting the appropriate chronology. Gibb and Good (2014) similarly remark on the unnatural dialogue fostered by the

asylum interview. In their study, they found that asylum seekers are forced to answer in short phrases or sentences to ease translation (Gibb and Good 2014:392). Story-telling in such a non-intuitive way fragments the narrative and prevents many asylum seekers from saying what they want to say. These disruptions to a storytelling flow can confuse an asylum seeker who is forced to start their story at what they feel to be the wrong place, out of chronological order, which prevents them from linking a sequence of events that is important for their story.

The importance of narrative in understanding, and to a degree creating, experience cannot be overstated. Put quite simply, "Narratives are effective means of making sense of experiences," Baumeister and Newman (1994:676). White and Epston (1990:9-10) situate us within the social sciences by reminding us that many social scientists argue that "in order to make sense of our lives and to express ourselves, experience must be 'storied' and it is this storying that determines the meaning ascribed to experience." Crucially, stories are not so concerned with objective truths and facts, but rather centre themselves on creating a sense of meaning (McAdams 1997). These stories "do not establish universal truth conditions but a connectedness of events across time," (White and Epston 1990:78). The most important feature, the authors contend, is that they have 'lifelikeness' (White and Epston 1990:78). This does not mean that individuals tell stories with the intention of being duplicitous. Rather, stories of events are not objective 'out there' memory documents that remain impervious to the effects of time and experience. Truth is highly dependent upon many factors. Lakoff and Johnson assert that "What we take to be true in a situation depends on our embodied understanding of the situation," (Lakoff and Johnson 1999:102). Different understandings of society, for instance, can lead to different social truths, particularly regarding contested topics such as justice, rights and democracy. Seen in this light, there can be more than one kind of truth; in fact, there seem to exist many truths in a given situation (Gendlin in Frie 2003). These multiple truths certainly shape the many memories that give rise to a coherent sense of self and provide meaning to lived experiences.

Memory is culturally shaped, and one structures one's life according to prescribed cultural guidelines (Grima 1992). Using this logic, it would not be uncommon for narratives, drawing upon memories of experience, to be shaped by different social situations (Farmer and Tsakiris 2012). That we often have "multiple

and often conflicting memories" is widely accepted by those researchers engaged in a narrative methodology (Farmer and Tsakiris 2012:127). As Jorge Luis Borges, as quoted in Daniel (1996:13) remarks, "Already a fictitious past occupies a place in our memories, the place of another, a past of which we know nothing with certainty – not even that it is false." McAdams (1997:28) adds that "in the subjective and embellished telling of the past, the past is constructed – history is made," highlighting how singular, objective truths do not exist in practice. Just as an objective truth is a fiction, so is an objective memory. Whether this past is individual or part of a collective, it cannot be said to be factual with any degree of certainty. "An interview can elicit aspects of that myth, offering […] hints concerning the truth already in place in the mind of the teller," (McAdams:1997:20). What remains crucial, then, is that what is said is perceived as a real past and protects the illusion of a continuous self.

The fluidity of storytelling and memories, rather than being detrimental, can instead be seen as not only useful but instrumental in creating a sense of agency. In the telling and retelling of stories, "persons are reauthoring their lives," (White and Epston 1990:13). More specifically, "persons give meaning to their lives and relationships by storying their experience and that, in interacting with others in the performance of these stories, they are active in the shaping of their lives and relationships," (White and Epston 1990:13). This action in the form of storytelling can be seen as a "vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances" which is particularly useful for individuals such as refugees and asylum seekers (Jackson 2002:15). Benedicte Grima (1992) describes the power of storytelling for women with few opportunities to exercise their agency which, in this case, means acting in an exemplary manner both socially and morally. Among her work with the Pashtun women of Pakistan, she remarked that narratives served a purpose by expressing the highest values in that society which was then shared communally and individually (Grima 1992). For instance, storytelling narratives were used to describe a single illness event. In the retelling of an event, a woman emphasised how she exemplified proper behaviour by becoming so overcome with distress or grief over an injured son that she ran out of the house without her veil on, something that was a direct violation of proper conduct. In this context, however, it demonstrated an even more important cultural value: the love and devotion of a mother to her son (Grima 1992:40). These single event narratives could then be woven into a

life story. Jackson (2002:36) writes that in telling difficult or painful stories with others, one "reclaims some sense of agency, recovers some sense of purpose, and comes to feel that the events that overwhelmed one from without may be brought within one's grasp." The purpose of telling these life stories that Grima details was not only to understand or cope with the event, but was socially constructive as well; they were to publicly detail the series of *ghams*, or hardships, that the woman had endured. The more *ghams* in her life, the more hardship and suffering she experienced, the more 'beautiful' her story. These 'beautiful stories' commanded the female community's respect and provided the woman with social standing (Grima 1992:166). They served to unite the community by providing a platform for which to share and support each other in a difficult environment. They also served the dual purpose of expounding proper cultural conduct within social situations.

Linking storytelling with agency seems especially pertinent when working with groups of individuals such as refugees. Much of the focus on the experience of refugees focuses on negative experiences brought to life in a narrative form. Negative memories are certainly highly relevant to refugees. Some even claim that it is "dangerous to remember," (Kleinman et al 1997:84). Veena Das's (in Kleinman et al 1997:84) informants, who suffered through the Partition in India and Pakistan, elaborated further, comparing remembering to "poison that makes the inside of the woman dissolve, as a solid is dissolved in a powerful liquid." Others claim the opposite. Agger (1992:5), when speaking of her work with refugee women, notes that "some stories are so disturbing that they must be told in order for them to lose their destructive power." She further adds that "One of the most important elements in a healing process is to come to possess your own story and thereby create your own narrative." This sentiment has certainly pervaded popular opinion and been championed by the psychologists Eugenia Weinstein and Elizabeth Lira. They comment on the way a 'testimony' provides the opportunity for an individual to tell his or her story in a cathartic way, relieving symptoms, and providing a channel through which aggression at the transgressors can be diffused, particularly when these testimonies are used directly against torturers (Agger 1992:9). These narratives thus function as a coping strategy, where Jackson claims "in telling a story we renew our faith that the world is within our grasp," by which he means they contain the ability to

be understood and made into something meaningful. In this line of thought, narratives represent action and, consequently, agency (Becker et al 2000).

I myself witnessed a few examples of the power storytelling can have in the form of a testimony. While one of the examples features in Chapter 2, the other occurred with a figure I've already introduced earlier: Paul, a Rwandan refugee. Paul worked with WERS as the full-time support worker. He also did a community outreach component. WERS had as one of its yearly objectives to reach out to a certain number of schools in an effort to change the perception around asylum seekers and refugees. During the 2014-2015 period, WERS visited twelve schools and two universities in this capacity, reaching approximately 1,700 people (WERS Annual Report 2015:9). Paul was responsible for these visits. He would go to a classroom and, over the course of perhaps an hour or so, recite a brief history of his life, revealing how he'd spent much of his youth in various refugee camps in DR Congo and Tanzania because of his ethnicity. As one of the WERS staff members told me with a heavy sigh: "He is half Tutsi, half Hutu and hated by all." His family resettled back in Rwanda when his father deemed it was safe for the family (which consisted of four wives and over twenty children) to do so, though Paul was bullied mercilessly because of his wealthy father, his accent from having grown up outside of Rwanda, the rumour that Tutsis have tails. Paul became a successful young man, studied at the University of Kinshasa, and married. It was just before the birth of his first child that the conflict erupted. I heard his story while seated in a classroom with Year 8 children (between the ages of 12 and 13) and their teacher. The teacher had silent tears rolling down her cheeks as he revealed the moment he walked into his own compound to find the gate hanging open and his pregnant wife missing. He then ran to his father's compound and saw the hacked bodies of seventeen of his family members strewn about. "My family has been finished," he said, his voice the only sound in the full classroom. He told the rapt students how the border between Rwanda and DR Congo had been blockaded and he rammed it because "I know I'm going to die," he admitted, "but not by machete." And die he nearly did – after reaching DR Congo he was forced to hide away, and the lack of water (because so many bodies were polluting the lake) and other resources nearly ended his life. He was, fortunately, reunited with his wife sometime after, and got to meet his first born who, though born prematurely from the stress, was alive and well.

He returned to Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, and became quite successful in the government after a relative was appointed president. This relative calm, however, was short lived, and he was arrested and tortured until he signed a confession that he was plotting to destabilize Rwanda. In his calm, strong voice he told the classroom what he thought his final request would be: "kill me somewhere they can find my body." Fortunately, as he thought he was being sent away to be killed, he was actually being smuggled into Uganda and it was there that he paid smugglers to bring him to Europe. While his hope was to go to Italy, a country he knew well and had studied in previously, he was abandoned in London. The brutal beatings he had received in Rwanda had left him unable to walk. This story ultimately had a happy ending: he ended up a refugee in Newcastle, safe, and was allowed to bring his family over to join him in 2003.

I spoke with Paul after his talk about how he feels telling this story, over and over to various audiences. He admitted that at the talk he'd given the previous week, "I don't know why, something just came over me and I had to leave and go be sick." Sometimes, the memories overwhelm him to the point that he becomes physically ill, even after years of telling the same story. He confided that he couldn't tell this story for a long time. He would become too upset, he would shake and cry, vomit. Now, despite the occasional violent reactions to the memories of his past, "I can't cope, mentally, if I don't tell this story – I need to share this pain." While certainly some people may avoid personally sharing their stories to avoid reliving a traumatic time in their past, this need to tell his story at risk of becoming physically ill is also echoed in the literature. Jackson (2002) recalls a Mozambican man who had been shot in the face by police and left permanently blinded. The man told his story to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and after, when asked how he felt after sharing his experiences, he replied with, "I feel what has been making me sick all the time is the fact that I couldn't tell my story. But now I – it feels like I got my sight back by coming here and telling you the story." (Krog 1998:31; cited in Jackson 2002:58). This man seems to be describing a similar experience as Paul. These two men appear to be validating McAdams's claim that, "Simply writing or performing a story about oneself can prove to be an experience of healing and growth," (McAdams 1997:32). Giving voice to these painful memories dispelled some of the power they had over an individual, and allowed them to unburden some of the weight they felt in carrying them

around. Stories such as these have the power to "mend us when we are broken, heal us when we are sick, and even move us toward psychological fulfilment and maturity," (McAdams 1997:31).

While it is important to note that sharing a 'flight' story such as this will not be possible or beneficial for everyone, allowing a person to construct their own narratives about their lives may be a useful exercise. For instance, Sonja Linden set up a project called "Write to Life" for the organisation Freedom from Torture. The purpose of this project was to allow refugees and asylum seekers to record their stories as artists, not simply victims. Out of this project came the organisation ice&fire who "explores human rights stories through performance"[5]. Ice&fire currently tour around the UK performing their Asylum Monologues. These stories are collected from refugees and asylum seekers. This first-hand testimony is then performed by 'professional communicators' as Christine Bacon, the Artistic Director, states.[6] This is to ensure that these stories are told and heard, particularly when it may be too difficult for the person who experienced it to tell themselves. Though the story is told through an intermediary, it remains important for an individual who feels the story must be told. It is because of this link with catharsis and a sense of agency over one's story and life (regardless of who told it) that I saw a narrative approach as essential when examining people's stories, both the good and the bad.

In addition to their power to foster a sense of agency, narratives provide an interesting lens through which to further engage with refugees and asylum seekers. As Jackson (2002:79) quite aptly notes, "Many anthropologists have been troubled by the inordinate amount of quantification, objectification, and technicism in the field of refugee studies – the apparatus of statistics, graphs, tables, category terms, and authoritative generalisation that are brought to bear, in the name of both humanitarianism and the public good, on the so-called 'refugee problem'." Borwick et al (2013:3) find similar discontent with the methods used in refugee studies, noting that the "voices of refugees are largely absent from the literature on refugee mental health." Instead, they argue for a language-based approach like in-depth interviewing to more fully understand how people construct meaning about their world, themselves and others. This 'quantification and objectification' in the form of statistics and graphs

[5] http://iceandfire.co.uk/about-us/
[6] http://iceandfire.co.uk/project/asylum-monologues/

also dominates much of the literature on well-being, particularly where psychology is most prominent. As White and Eyber (2017:137) remark, "Both PWB [psychological well-being] and SWB [subjective well-being] are governed by the culture and institutions of statistical research" which tends to favour closed questions or statements in the form of a Likert scale that "are highly limiting and disciplining to respondents." Yet despite this quantitative focus, some psychologists, such as Calhoun and Tedeschi (2013), advocate for the benefits of a narrative approach, particularly when it comes to concepts such as posttraumatic growth. For instance, they argue that "narratives of trauma and survival are always important in posttraumatic growth, because the development of these narratives forces survivors to confront questions of meaning and how it can be reconstructed," (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004:9). After constructing this meaning and articulating posttraumatic growth, an individual can then proceed to live with "a sense of eudaimonic well-being" (Tedeschi and Blevins 2015:374). Similar to this position, others concede that a narrative approach allows for one to include the otherwise neglected positive adaptation in refugees (Schweitzer et al 2007). Not all memories, even those experienced by refugees or survivors of violence, must be bad. Happiness and well-being stories are also interpretive and meaning-making through their very telling, creating agency. Thin remarks that "ideal selves are cultural constructions, not pre-existing entities, and they need to be actively constructed through personal fictions that are sharable with other people," (Thin 2012a:321). Narratives remain a fruitful yet neglected approach when looking at factors of well-being and growth among refugees and asylum seekers.

Methodology

While interviews and participant observation were my primary methods of data collection, it is important to note how I arrived at the three themes of the thesis through these methods as well as what these methods looked like. My informants were told at the outset that I was interested in hearing their stories, both "the good and the bad". Though this thesis revolves mainly around 'the good', I in no way intend to trivialise the 'bad' or imply that it was not a topic of discussion. I include portions of these stories where appropriate to illustrate the complexity of experiences.

The number of interviews conducted in the UK and the Gambia were the same. This was not done intentionally at the outset, but rather resulted from a mix of

individuals having other engagements or merely not showing up at the allotted time. The number of interviews, therefore, was twenty in each location, bringing the total to forty interviews across the two sites. The number of interviews conducted in Cameroon was only five, but often included a couple who both added to the discussion. This was due to interviews being conducted in the informant's home where their spouse was often present. Conducting home interviews was the preference of RESPECT staff and because of this, I went with another volunteer from the organisation who needed to gather information for RESPECT purposes and could double as a translator if needed. The interviews conducted in the UK and the Gambia were done on an individual basis. These interviews mainly took place in the office of WERS or GAFNA as this was the preference of staff members in the respective organisations.

The process of identifying individuals to interview is outlined in my ethics section but I will briefly describe it here. I was aware of the multiple roles I played in each location as well as the confusion my presence could bring. It was therefore necessary to meet with potential interviewees several times before I invited them to a formal interview. This extra contact allowed me to feel comfortable and confident that my role as a researcher was properly explained and helped to ensure that the individual did not confuse me with others in the area (namely a UNHCR resettlement officer in the Gambia). Beyond multiple encounters to ensure that they understood my research, I did not include or exclude individuals. It could be said that the informants self-selected in a way. They were the individuals who felt comfortable and confident enough to approach me multiple times and who could communicate in English. In a few cases, informants were recommended to me by a staff member of the organisation due to the person's willingness to talk to researchers. This type of referral, however, was quite rare. Typically, I spoke with a wide variety of people, and those with whom I had had several periods of regular contact were then invited to interview. The criticism that those who make up my informants do not represent the majority could be levelled, but I did not limit my research to just formal interviews. I observed and engaged with people in various settings to ensure that the interviews were not skewing my research.

In terms of analyzing my data, I transcribed all interviews (which varied in length from thirty minutes to three hours) verbatim and coded the topics discussed. I

did the same with conversations drawn from my field notes. I then began grouping topics into themes for chapters and noted the ways in which these chapter themes related to one another. It was at this level that I noticed the ways in which the chapters themselves could be grouped and speak to even broader themes within the well-being and happiness literature. While I was guided by previous work on the subject of well-being, I was not rigid in these categories and instead let the topics narrated inform the analysis. Though the themes discussed in this thesis are not exhaustive, they do represent what the majority of people spoke about, both formally during interviews and informally during our 'chats'.

Fieldwork Settings

Cameroon

This research is multi-sited. Initially it was meant to focus on a single country: Cameroon. I spent three months (January 2014 – April 2014) in the capital, Yaoundé, working with an organisation called RESPECT (Refugee Education Sponsorship Program Enhancing Communities Together) Cameroon. I attended RESPECT Cameroon meetings and interviewed several families during my first months. RESPECT Cameroon was an affiliate of a large organisation based in Canada. They recognised that many refugee children had experienced interruptions to their studies because of conflict and forced migration. Their focus, therefore, was on helping refugee children reintegrate into a school system by offering lessons to facilitate this process. During my time with them, the focus was on funding this project in Manjou, a tiny town outside of Bertoua in the East Region. At that time, nearly two thousand refugees a day fled from the Central African Republic into Cameroon, many remaining near the border. It was anticipated that after my initial three months in Yaoundé learning about the organisation and becoming more familiar with Cameroonian customs, I would be based in the East Region. Due to the difficult fieldwork conditions and lengthy bureaucratic procedures, however, I did not return to Cameroon. I chose instead to switch my focus to a place where I knew I would not encounter similar difficulties. I was familiar with several refugee organisations in the North East of England because I had worked with them previously. Therefore, I turned to the West End Refugee Service, or WERS, located in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the United Kingdom. I had previously worked with them during my Master's research due to

their openness to working with both students and researchers. This period of research stretched from September 2014 to September 2015. Though my time in Cameroon was brief and I only interviewed five families, I have included ethnographic data from this period of research when I felt it meaningfully added to the discussion.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne, WERS

The United Kingdom currently has a population of over 65 million. According to UNHCR, the UK hosts 117,234 refugees and 37,829 asylum seekers (UNHCR 2015:18). These refugees and asylum seekers are heavily focused in the south of the country, particularly near London, yet these patterns are changing due to the UK's dispersal programme which sees newly-arrived asylum seekers being sent to the less populated (and typically more deprived) areas of the country on a 'no choice' basis (Allsopp, Sigona and Phillimore 2014:13; Burgess 2010:129). One such part of the country is Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Newcastle is located in the North East of England and, according to Newcastle City Council[7], the population as of 2010 was 292,200. While the number of asylum seekers and other migrants is on the rise, the population still consists of 88% white British, which no doubt affects people's sense of belonging and incidents concerning discrimination. Despite the ethnic makeup of the area and the fact that it has not only a high proportion of the population out of work and on benefits (over 15% of the working age population) and that it is ranked the 40th most deprived local authority, the council is quick to point out that Newcastle is one of the safest cities in England (Newcastle City Council).

West End Refugee Service is a charity that has been in the west end of Newcastle (typically where asylum seekers are dispersed and where immigrant and minority populations live) since 1999. As its 'Objectives and Activities', WERS states that it

> has developed into one of the major support agencies for asylum seekers and refugees in Newcastle upon Tyne, offering a range of integrated services which complement the statutory package of government support. WERS' programme of activities have been designed to address the social exclusion, poverty, disadvantage, poor health and worklessness of its client group. Services are tailored to provide wrap-

[7] See their website, including links to relevant databases, here https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/statistics-and-census-information/equality-statistics-research-and-information

> around support from the earliest days following dispersal, right through the asylum process and beyond, as those with permission to stay in the UK focus on entering the labour market and becoming more established within their local communities. WERS' strength lies in its focus on one-to-one working and individualised support packages (WERS 2016:34)

The work WERS does is varied. Their office is open from Monday to Friday with the mornings being reserved for drop-in support work and clothing store 'purchases' (all goods are donated and given free of charge, though one cannot exceed a certain number of items per week) and the afternoons for specific meetings and programmes, such as meeting the local MP, Time to Talk sessions, outreach to those unable to attend the drop-in sessions and one-to-one job mentoring. The support work sessions are open to all and consist of one paid member of staff and several volunteers. Clients come with a broad array of questions and concerns, ranging from trying to understand various gas and heating bills and rearranging job centre appoints to finding a local lawyer, getting a food back voucher and, if a refused asylum seeker with no other support, receiving a hardship allowance of £15 a week for an individual or £30 a week for families. During my time as a support work volunteer and a researcher sitting in with other support workers, it seemed as though the majority of clients (and certainly the weekly clients) came to receive the weekly sum from the hardship fund. This was not surprising: WERS notes that destitute and refused asylum seekers are the single largest category of clients, and in their 2015-2016 Annual Report they remark on the significant increase of destitute clients up from 151 in 2014 to 191 in 2016 (WERS 2016:23). The support that WERS offers is crucial to their clients. They remark that during 2015-2016, there were over 5,400 contact episodes between support workers and clients.

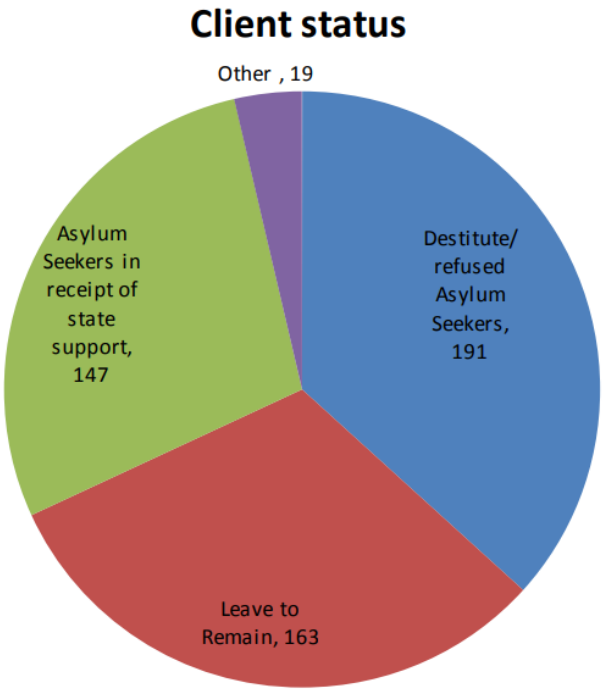


Figure 3: Immigration Status of WERS clientele
Source: WERS Annual Report 2015-2016

WERS is relevant in the political climate of the UK. The Joint Committee on Human Rights came to the conclusion that the UK government is "practising a deliberate policy of destitution" (2007:110) with the double agenda of "forc[ing] 'failed' asylum seekers back to their country of origin, and deter[ing] potential asylum applicants from coming to the UK," (Allsop et al 2014:6). This situation is made all the worse because, as Allsop et al (2014:12) highlight, the majority of asylum applications have been initially refused (67% in 2011). Of these 67%, 75% of them lodged an appeal with a success rate of 22% for the period ranging from 2004-2011. For 2011 in particular, the most recent year they cite, 28% of these appeals were successful, meaning nearly a third of those who lodged appeals should have been granted refugee status at their initial application. These refusals and subsequent acceptances create chaotic situations for these individuals and force them into poverty and destitution (not to mention the severe consequences on their mental health and well-being) for no reason at all.

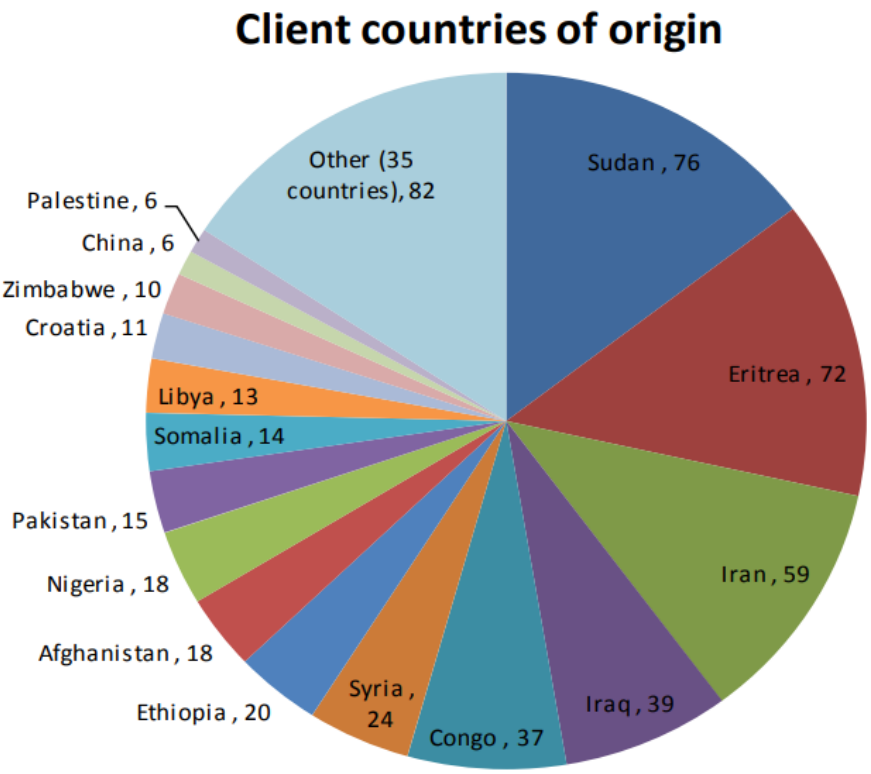


Figure 4: Nationality of WERS clientele
Source: WERS Annual Report 2016

While I envisaged condufcting research only in the UK, when the opportunity presented itself to extend the geographical parameters of my research to include a comparative aspect I seized it. The Gambia became a possibility during my work with WERS. I followed in the footsteps of many anthropologists (such as Martin 1994; Marcus 1995; Falzon 2015) in that, during my time with WERS, I worked both as a researcher and a volunteer for the organisation. In this case, I acted as a volunteer support worker and a befriender. During one of the outreach support days, I went with another volunteer to conduct a home visit with one of the clients. This client lived quite far from WERS which explains why the only paid support worker was unable to visit. Fortunately, this client lived close to where I did in North Tyneside. We arrived at the pre-arranged time and were ushered into the living room by a rather short, grinning woman in her early fifties. The house was decorated with a variety of assorted knick-knacks which crowded all available space, from the window sill to the table to the various pictures and paintings on the wall – a large African inspired painting in vibrant reds and oranges and yellows, complete with a large tree and several animals

in black stood next to a small woven tapestry featuring a bagpipe player with some embroidered facts about Edinburgh scrawled onto it. The sweet smell of incense enveloped the room while the TV glowed with scenes of dancing in a distant land. She gave us each a cup of sugary, milky tea and we asked her the questions necessary to WERS's assessment. Though the woman offered us dinner, we were unable to stay. She asked when we would be back to visit again – would next week work?

With WERS's permission, I ended up visiting with this woman at least once a week for the next year. She even invited me to her wedding where she had a matching *asobi* made for me in the Gambia and sent over. *Asobi* is a garment that is made of the same fabric as another garment, ensuring they match (Saine 2012: 139). This is a common practice among many different ethnic and national groups on the African continent. Not only did our dresses bear the same colour and pattern, but they were also made in the same style, ensuring we truly matched. This woman, Olimatou, was a very proud Gambian. She spoke often of her home country, taught me to make several staple Gambian dishes, and even introduced me to her sisters back home through Skype. She showed me programs from the Gambia – anything she could find on YouTube. We watched videos of the then-president Yahya Jammeh cutting down rice. I saw her nephew drumming in a band. She played me music and taught me a Gambian game using small pebbles. She urged me to go and visit her country, telling me about her home village, her sister's guesthouse and her previous work as the sole healthcare professional (a nurse) in the refugee camps. She even knew a man who worked at the national office of UNHCR in the Gambia. With me by her side she phoned him to see if he would meet with me. Unfortunately, he was in Senegal, his wife told us, undergoing medical treatment. I decided to go and visit the country anyway – I would see what I could do while I was there.

Though I didn't have any clear-cut ideas in my head at the time, I sensed a possibility in going. At the very least I thought it could prove an insightful and potentially rich thread in examining transnational relationships through the lens of forced migration. I therefore scheduled a month-long trip and flew out of London with her sister-in-law. We were met at the airport by her youngest sister, one I recognised from the many Skype calls. I subsequently met the rest of her sisters (she was one of four daughters), her mother, her two sons, her many nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles and various family friends and extended family. I spent most of my time with

her sister and her sister's family who owned the guesthouse. One evening her sister's husband furrowed his brow and, looking at me curiously, asked me what I was studying. This was my last week in the Gambia. How could I have neglected to tell him! I had told so many people about my research that I just assumed everyone knew. He listened intently, nodding, before having a 'lightbulb' moment. "You know, I think my former mentor could help with this!" he exclaimed excitedly. "He worked with refugees here – I think he still does!" His excitement furthered my own and he offered to call his former mentor to see if he could set up a meeting between us.

This man, his former mentor, greeted me in his office on the first floor of a two-story building that was the home of the Gambian Food and Nutrition Association (GAFNA). He warmly shook my hand and we exchanged pleasantries. He had previously studied in both Cameroon and the UK and had worked with the US Embassy in the Gambia. I explained my research and, fortunately, he seemed quite enthusiastic about it. He requested I send some documents to him – a letter of support written from my supervisor, proof of my student status and a research proposal – which he would then send to UNHCR's regional office to ensure that they were happy for me to proceed. I received a positive reply shortly afterwards and began to prepare to conduct fieldwork in the Gambia through GAFNA.

While the idea of conducting multi-sited fieldwork had always interested in me, it was this series of opportune events that led me to do so. I chose to conduct a multi-sited study because studies on migration and well-being – broadly conceived – are few and far between on the African continent. This number is drastically reduced when one conducts research outside of camp situations. There clearly exists a large gap in this respect. Furthermore, after working with African refugees and asylum seekers in Newcastle, I was curious as to how they compared with those who fled but remained on the same continent. Were they happier or more optimistic because they had reached a Western country? Or did the asylum process in the UK inhibit a sense of well-being, in addition to experiencing higher levels of racism and discrimination? Was it easier to make friends in Africa? Did having the option of legal employment in the Gambia change how they felt about themselves and their future? These and many more questions convinced me that, since the opportunity presented itself, a multi-sited study fit perfectly into my study and the type of questions I was asking.

The Gambia, GAFNA

The Gambia, also known as the "Smiling Coast" of Africa, is the smallest country in continental Africa (Saine 2012:xi) with a population of roughly two million (CIA Factbook 2017). Despite its small size, it remains rather heterogeneous in terms of its population. As noted before, the population of West Africa has been, and continues to be, highly mobile. The main ethnic groups today (in order of percentage of population) are Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Jola, Serahule, Serer, Manjago, Bambara, Aku and Lebanese, though it should be noted that identities are extremely fluid as interethnic marriages are a common occurrence (Saine 2012:17). Despite the diversity of its population, the Gambia is hailed as a "model of cultural harmony and diversity" with Saine (2012:141) even going so far as to claim, "The level of ethnic tolerance that Gambians enjoy is perhaps unparalleled, regionally or even continentally." Others have corroborated this claim (EASO 2017; Conway 2004). Conway (2004:3) even claims that the Gambia is "considered to be one of the most 'refugee friendly' countries in all of West Africa." Indeed, the Gambia has a reputation for being a stable and safe country, as many of my informants pointed out.[8] It was why many of them had chosen to seek asylum in it, even if it did not directly border their country (as was the case with the Congolese, Liberians and Ivorians). The fact that the Gambia has English as its official language was also seen as an attractive feature for refugees both in the literature (Conway 2004:3) and in my own personal research.

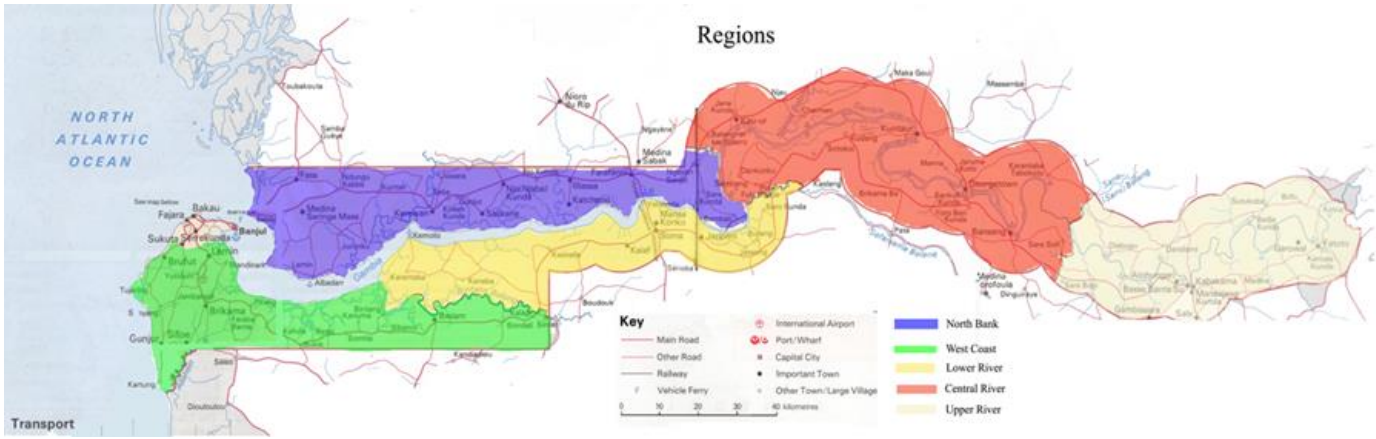
During my time in the Gambia – which consisted of eight months between May 2015 and April 2016 – there were over 11,000 refugees in the country (UNHCR 2015; GAFNA 2014). While this number may initially seem small, it must be seen in a wider context where the overall population stands at approximately two million (CIA Factbook). Of these 11,000 refugees, GAFNA (2014) states that over 9,000 are Senegalese refuges residing in 81 villages, mostly in the Foni area of the West Coast Region. Most of the refugees who cross the border remain in the Foni region because, as Ferris and Stark (2012:16) remark, "families and host communities often generously take in [refugees] as per customary practice and tradition in Africa." There remains, therefore, little reason to move further than this border region. The remaining 2,000

[8] It should be noted that despite this glowing review about the Gambia, it – like many other countries in Africa – actually generates more refugees and asylum seekers than it takes in. In 2015, UNHCR estimated that 11,755 sought asylum in the Gambia while those who fled the Gambia numbered 17,035 (UNHCR 2015:17;22).

of the refugees live in the Greater Banjul Area and consist of Senegalese, Congolese, Liberians, Sierra Leoneans and Togolese. The exact number of refugees, however, is difficult to establish both because many refugees living in the urban area do not register and because of the permeability of the Gambia-Senegal border where many reside and similarly do not seek refugee status (Conway 2004:3-4).

Figure 5: Regions of the Gambia. The West Coast Region is in green.

Source http://www.visitthegambia.gm/map-and-regions



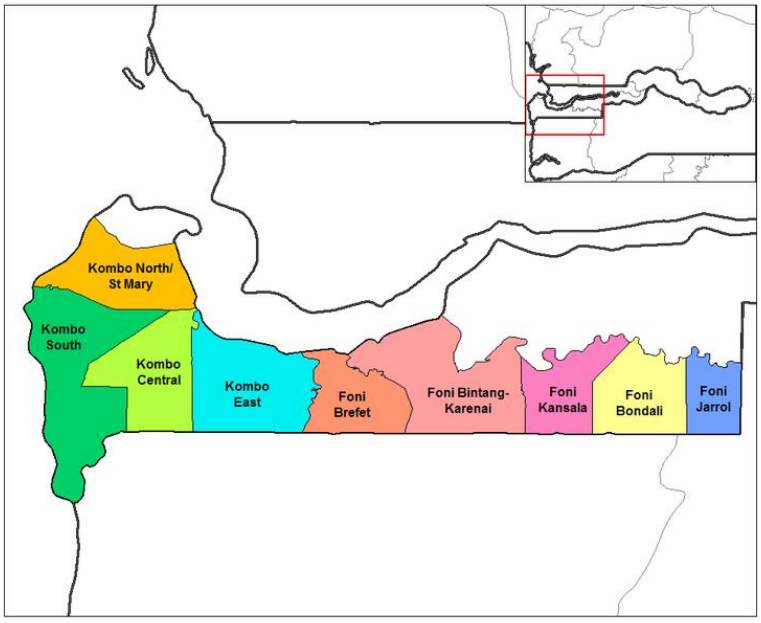


Figure 6. Breakdown of the West Coast Region in the Gambia to highlight the Fonis and the Kombos.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Coast_Division_(Gambia)

Many of the Senegalese fled to the Gambia both because of its proximity to their own country but also because of the interethnic tolerance. The Senegalese in the

Gambia were fleeing what is the longest-running civil conflict on the planet – the Casamance conflict (Ferris and Stark 2012). The Gambia cuts Senegal in two; the Casamance region is the name of the southern region. Some in this southern region, because of the divide and distance (geographically, developmentally and ethnically) with the northern region, started a separatist movement to become independent. While Senegal remains predominantly Wolof, those living in the Casmance region are largely Jola (Saine 2012:11). In April 1990, tensions came to a head and an attack by the newly formed MFDC (Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance) led to the beginning of what Paul Nugent describes as a "low-intensity war" that continues today (Nugent 2007:239).

Figure 7: Map of Senegal and the Gambia, highlighting the Casamance region of Senegal.

Photo courtesy of BBC News

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1896798.

During my time in the Gambia, I worked closely with UNHCR's implementing partner in the Gambia, the Gambian Food and Nutrition Association (GAFNA). GAFNA's name points to its origins. It was originally founded in 1986 to address the rate of malnutrition in the country, particularly among lactating mothers and their children in the rural areas (hence their logo) (Conway 2004:5; personal communication). In 2001, however, they entered into a partnership with UNHCR and continue to be their implementing partner in the Gambia as the regional office is based

in Dakar, Senegal. Though previously the Gambia had refugee camps (such as the one that Olimatou worked at), I was told that because refugees preferred to live among the host population these were disbanded and, in the case of the Bambali refugee camp, taken over by the government to be used as army training camps (personal communication). Nearly all of the refugees in the Gambia, then, lived in either the urban area surrounding Banjul (often referred to simply as 'Serrekunda') or in the rural villages closer to the southern border with Senegal. I chose to focus my research on refugees living in the greater Banjul area; this choice was based on practicality. Not only had I had rented a house in the greater Banjul area, but many refugees also came to the various workshops GAFNA held as well as to the office for private meetings and the counselling drop-in sessions, with 2012 recording 2,854 refugee visits to the centre (GAFNA 2012). The refugees in the urban area also mainly spoke English, while those in the villages tended to communicate primarily in Jola or Wolof and were spread out in 81 villages (GAFNA 2014). The urban refugees were also more diverse, coming from a range of countries and backgrounds, whereas those in the villages were Senegalese farmers. Those in the urban areas seemed a better fit, not only for accessibility reasons but also because their diversity and experiences seemed to align more closely with those I had spoken to in the UK. I did attend some workshops and events in the rural areas, which I draw upon when they are particularly illuminating, but my research was confined primarily to the urban areas.

Figure 8: GAFNA logo

The Gambia offers an interesting comparison to the UK because of its relatively lax asylum process and refugee system. Zanker (2018:76) notes that the Gambia is "a country with fairly advanced legal refugee protection mechanisms and well-developed forms of self-settlement." Most simply present themselves and register with the Gambia Refugee Commission in Banjul, who are charged with documenting refugees and refugee protection. The intense interrogation and long waiting periods that many asylum seekers describe in the UK and which can cause significant distress are largely absent in the Gambia. The Gambia Refugee Act of 2008 ensures that refugees are entitled to benefits such as an identity card, travel document, the opportunity to engage in wage-earning employment or self-employment, freedom to move freely within and to settle anywhere within the Gambia and to have access to social amenities available to Gambian citizens (Gambia Refugee Act 2008:23) While these may seem like a standard set of human rights, Crisp (2003) notes that throughout much of Africa, these are rights that are by and large denied to refugees. In fact, Jamal (2000) comments rather bleakly that the right to life is bought at the cost of almost every other right. Because refugees do enjoy these rights in the Gambia and are allowed seek out employment opportunities, many of GAFNA's activities were aimed at income-generating activities.

GAFNA was exceptionally organised when it came to refugee affairs within the country. WERS, by comparison, spent much of its energy helping those who had fallen through the gaps in the asylum system at the governmental level and had to liaison with the various NGOs and charities in the area to ensure people were receiving help when and where they could. GAFNA, rather than signposting and working with and between many organisations, was the main point of contact for refugee assistance and activity (with the exception of the Gambia Refugee Commission and its protection role). They ran a plethora of refugee-focused events, based around sensitisation messages (urging people to get tested for HIV/AIDS, discouraging the practices of wife beating and female genital mutilation); training workshops (leadership training, tie and dye and batik training, canning techniques); and income-generating assistance (building milling machines, drilling bore holes for gardens, building bakery oven,

beekeeping). Their focus on promoting these trainings and livelihood projects is "to enhance the socio-cultural well-being of refugees whilst promoting their acceptance by host communities," (GAFNA-UNHCR 2011:28). To assist in this, many of the projects in the rural villages involved a mix of refugee and citizen populations, a popular strategy in use by UNHCR to avoid possible conflicts (UNHCR 2015).

In the urban areas, each refugee group (organised by nationality) voted in a refugee leader who held regular meetings and reported back to staff at GAFNA, highlighting any issues raised. These leaders also called their fellow nationals to attend workshops and greeted any new arrivals. In the rural areas, GAFNA had installed three members of staff – called Community Development Assistants – who oversaw relevant meeting and trainings with their respective village clusters. These CDAs frequently came to GAFNA's head office in Bakau to speak with other staff members and to submit various reports.

Conducting Multi-Sited Fieldwork

Multi-sited fieldwork is becoming more common, especially in mobility and migration studies (Falzon 2015:103). Yet this type of fieldwork comes with many challenges that must be addressed. Firstly, though interest in multi-sited field studies is increasing (Marcus 1995; Marcus 2012; Falzon 2015) others reject its usage in anthropology (Hage 2005; Candea 2007). Ghassan Hage (2005:465) even goes so far as to posit, "I do not think that there can be such a thing as multi-sited ethnography." Instead, he contends that if one follows a group of people (such as a family or community) to different locations, then one cannot be said to be engaging in multi-sited research. The field, as it were, remains a single site: "the site occupied by the transnational family" (Hage 2005:466). While I appreciate his stance on this subject, my fieldwork did not end up following a single family through and across different geographical spaces – I did not, as Marcus (1995:105) phrases it, "follow the people". The two fieldsites were not, of course, chosen at random; my proximity to and previous relationship with WERS in the UK prompted me to turn to them while my deepening friendship with Olimatou led to my eventual arrival in her home country of the Gambia. And, though I lived with her family and maintained close ties with them throughout my fieldwork in the Gambia, I did not focus my attention on that relationship as such. Therefore, my research does not align with what Hage

experienced. In this sense, then, my research was well and truly multi-sited. Though I focused on African refugees, those I spoke with in the UK were overwhelmingly from East and Central Africa, while those I spoke with in the Gambia were mainly from West Africa.

Another main critique of multi-sited fieldwork concerns issues of depth. As Falzon (2015:106) remarks, the lack of perceived depth (or 'thick description', to use Geertz's famous description) is "thought to be a key flaw of the multi-sited fieldwork." This issue is one that I seriously wrestled with when I made the decision to conduct research in another location. I believe this issue is what led Hage to reject multi-sited research, and led others like Burawoy (2003:673) to claim anthropologists are "bouncing from site to site" where they "easily substitute anecdotes and vignettes for serious fieldwork." To avoid falling into this trap, I engaged in two practices. The first was to extend my fieldwork period. I conducted fieldwork between the UK and the Gambia between September 2014 and April 2016. With the exception of a pilot study in the Gambia to see if research there would be feasible, I remained in one fieldsite for the duration of my research rather than 'bouncing' back and forth between the two as Burawoy calls it. Remaining in one place for an extended amount of time allowed me to immerse myself in the local environment and engage with my informants on a day-to-day basis.

The second strategy, in addition to extending the length of fieldwork, was to do as Falzon suggests: "maximize the dividends in each site, given the limited time" (2015:106). To be sure, it helped that I had previously worked with WERS and that I was familiar with the country in which I was doing research. Though I am a US American citizen, I have lived in the UK for many years and have family members who also live in the UK. Marcus (2012:28) comments that when conducting multi-sited fieldwork, it is better to "develop ethnography from an embedded perspective which often entails fieldwork that begins at home." Though I did not conduct anthropology at home, it was in a very familiar environment to me.

While I had come to understand more about the Gambia through my frequent meetings with Olimatou, it was not as familiar to me. Instead, the organisation I worked through – GAFNA – provided me with an invaluable opportunity. Julia Elyachar (2015) highlights the important and beneficial role that NGOs play when it

comes to anthropological research. Firstly, English is the "lingua franca of the NGO world", saving a student from investing heavily in language study. Secondly, NGOs provide information about local conditions and "provide ethnographers with a ready-made set of introductions to informants" (Elyachar 2015:856). It was this last point that was crucial for my research. Because I had a somewhat condensed timeline for conducting research, it was crucial to be able to meet potential interlocutors as soon as possible. GAFNA facilitated my entry into the refugee community, broadly conceived, of the Gambia. They introduced me not only to refugees in the community, but also to UNHCR and Gambia Commission for Refugees staff members. They gave me unfettered access to their monthly and annual reports and records which allowed me to rapidly increase my knowledge of the goings-on at the local level. Being based in their office allowed me to meet people as they came in as well as ask for any information or clarification from staff members. Several times I found myself called into conferences and various meetings just so I could 'understand and learn better'. Without their support and unfaltering openness, I would not have been able to make this research multi-sited in any meaningful way.

It should be noted that working with NGOs (as is the case with GAFNA) and charities (as is the case with WERS), especially when done in a multi-sited fashion, one "find[s] oneself with all sorts of cross-cutting and contradictory personal commitments," (Marcus 1995:113). Marcus goes on to cite a medical anthropologist, Emily Martin, who at various stages of her research was an AIDS volunteer, a medical student and a corporate trainee. In terms of the 'hats' I wore, I was at various times a support worker, befriender, student, researcher and volunteer across the two sites. These forays into what Marcus (1995:114) sees as the necessary activism inherent in ethnographers of multi-sited spaces occur, and I certainly was no exception. Being involved in refugee organisations certainly did make me feel like I was "doing more than just ethnography" and had indeed taken on an advocacy position (Marcus 1995:113-114).

Many challenges, limitations and risks associated with multi-sited fieldwork exist and they are valid enough to warrant the attention I have devoted to them in this section. Issues of time and depth remain two of the largest, and I spent a significant amount of time considering these and find the best way to negotiate them. In spite of these efforts, I recognise that some will still caution against multi-sited research.

Nevertheless, I feel that the benefits of conducting multi-sited research are many. It allows for comparisons and contrasts to be made at a general level while still remaining cautious of overgeneralisations (Nadai and Maeder 2005). Many studies use multi-sitedness when it comes to transnational migrants and their families (such as what Hage uses) and certainly some studies may explore a refugee or asylum seeker's family across transnational boundaries. Comparing and contrasting two groups of refugees and asylum seekers resettled in different countries is an underexplored area that my research addresses. While vast differences exist among these two groups as well as between them, similarities prove all the more striking. Furthermore, as many of my informants highlighted (and which will be further expanded upon in Chapter 5), many refugees and asylum seekers are aware of and occasionally speak about belonging to a larger 'global refugee community'. By engaging in multi-sited research, I not only shed some much-needed light on the topic of refugee and asylum seeker well-being, but also allow for comparisons and contrasts to be made among refugees and asylum seekers in different countries of asylum.

In addition to the multi-sited aspect of my research, I spoke with a broad range of people from different countries, backgrounds, educational attainment, immigration status and socio-economic statuses between my two fieldsites. To represent just one aspect of this diversity visually – country of origin – I have included Figure 1 below where blue countries signify the countries of origin of my informants. Because of this diversity of my informants I had to ensure that I chose appropriate methods – in this case, a narrative method – for researching well-being and happiness among people with different backgrounds and experiences.

Figure 9: Country of Origin of Informants

Countries highlighted:
Angola
Chad
Côte d'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Eritrea
Gambia
Kenya
Liberia
Nigeria
Rwanda
Senegal
Somalia
Uganda
Zimbabwe

Special Ethical Considerations

Because my research involved those deemed vulnerable adults, it was necessary to ensure that I critically reflected on any potential ethical issues that could arise. The largest consideration was ensuring that I clearly communicated my position. This was necessary for two main reasons: firstly, it was important that they understood my role as a researcher and what the purpose of this research was. Secondly, I had to make clear distinctions between my role as a researcher and any other roles I had during my time working with WERS and GAFNA. My time at WERS had the most potential for confusion since I did take on different roles such as support worker and befriender. While I anticipated some confusion, I was generally surprised by the ease with which my multiple roles were understood. WERS was in the habit of bringing in researchers and students to learn about refugee and asylum seeker issues in the area. Many of these students and young researchers also took on additional roles such as I did. My position, therefore, was not without precedent and many of my informants found it easy to distinguish between my roles. To avoid any confusion, however, I was in the habit of explicitly reminding them when I was conducting research, what it was for and if they were happy for me to include them. Furthermore, interviews were

conducted only after I had met a potential informant several times to ensure that they were fully aware of my position.

My positionality with GAFNA proved to be more problematic. While I did not take on as many additional roles (mostly assisting facilitators in running workshops or taking photographs for GAFNA to use in their reports), my position was poorly understood. I was the first student researcher to work with GAFNA. Furthermore, it was generally assumed that white people worked for the regional UNHCR office based in Dakar, Senegal, leading many to confuse me with a Canadian woman who was in charge of resettlement interviews. The staff at GAFNA introduced me during workshops and various meetings as a student researcher, but I did find it necessary to often repeat my purpose and role when meeting people. It was for this reason that I found it necessary to continue the practice I had set up at WERS where I met a potential informant several times before arranging a more formal interview. It was imperative to ensure that I was not confused with UNHCR staff and that informants understood that they would not directly benefit (particularly in the form of aiding resettlement) from speaking with me. While I did get the occasional request to speak with the US Embassy to facilitate resettlement or the request for more immediate, material goods (such as mobile phones or laptop computers) from those who had not met me before, those I spoke with regularly and subsequently interviewed did understand my position and understood that I had no effect on resettlement processes and was not in the positon to help them financially or materially. I did, however, offer to help in other ways. For instance, since I had internet access, I was happy to look up scholarships for those wishing to study in Europe or North America, and I also assisted in filling out various forms. I felt these requests were a way to help those I was working with and, importantly, were something that I was able to provide for anyone who asked me. This was also my position in the UK. While I did not receive requests for financial or material assistance, I was approached by one informant to proofread his personal statement to a local university which I obliged.

List of Key Persons

It is worth mentioning here that this thesis is organised more along thematic lines than a direct comparison between places. While a 'Gambia' versus 'UK' comparison does make sense (i.e. when people feel a certain way or have certain resources at their disposal because of the country of asylum), sometimes it makes more

sense to organise people according to what they highlight as important. For this reason, it can seem to the reader like I am jumping back and forth between countries. To try and aid the reader in following some of the persons that I make multiple references to in both countries, I have created a list of key persons found throughout this thesis for easier reference.

Table 1. Key Persons in the Thesis

Olimatou	Olimatou is a refused asylum seeker from the Gambia who lived in North Tyneside and frequented WERS. I stayed with her family during my time in the Gambia.
Paul	Paul is the Rwandan man who lives in the UK and works for WERS.
Kakengo	Kakengo is a Congolese refugee in the UK who works as a chef and sings in a band in his free time.
Sandra	Sandra is a refused Zimbabwean asylum seeker. She studied in the UK prior to her asylum claim and lives with church members.
Evette	Evette is a Congolese refugee living in the Gambia with her teenage son. She is a clever businesswoman and entrepreneur, striving to create a better life for her son.
William	William is from the Casamance region of Senegal and had previously studied law. He is the refugee leader for the urban Senegalese and lives with his three daughters, wife Binta, and his wife's brother and sister in the Gambia. None of them had a steady income.

Mariam	Mariam is a young Eritrean women living in the Newcastle area. She has oscillated between an asylum seeker and a refused asylum seeker since I've known her. Though she came alone, she has integrated into the Eritrean community in Newcastle and has a friend who lets her live with her.
Grace	Grace is a refugee from Côte d'Ivoire who lives with her husband (a French teacher) and two sons in the Gambia. She is a deeply religious person and became a close confidante.

Chapter 2 Positive Changes as a Result of Forced Migration

I was at the West End Refugee Service, or WERS, covering a support worker's shift when the idea of growth first came to my attention in a meaningful way. My hair had been braided in the African style by one of my informants at her house the previous evening. She had begun by gently stroking my hair before grabbing a section, curiously asking if it would braid easily. Between the loud drum beats of the West African music she always played and the flowing conversation about her family back home, I had scarcely realised what was going on before fully half of my hair was braided. There seemed little else for it but to let her happily continue.

It was in a climate of appreciative grins and surprise exclamations at my 'African lady hair' that I carried out the support work for the day at WERS. I was standing by the large grey filing cabinet in the kitchen, skimming my next client's file to familiarise myself with the person's case and to anticipate the reason for their visit when Paul, WERS's only full-time support worker, gave me a sideways glace from where he was reading his next client's file. "Those are very nice braids," he commented casually. "But you know, I think I could do a better job," he bragged in conspiratorial whisper.

I laughed heartily at this statement. I knew Paul as a professional. He always came to work dressed smartly in nice button-up shirts and a suit jacket while the other support workers were invariably clad in jeans. I also knew that he was a politician and a businessman in his home country. Somehow a hair dresser did not fit into this image and I told his as much.

He gave me a small smile and shook his head. He explained that after he fled his home country following a genocide, he took various positions in a neighbouring country doing whatever he could in order to make some money to survive – including working in a hairdressing salon. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "Brianne, believe me, you do things you never thought you could do." With that he snapped closed the client file in his hand, thrust a hip to the side to close to cabinet drawer and flashed me a grin as he sought out his next client.

This brief exchange remained with me throughout my fieldwork. It seemed a rather profound statement to me at the time, despite it being said rather casually in passing. Upon

further reflection and research, however, this idea of being capable of so much more than one was previous aware of is in fact a very common sentiment throughout history – that difficult and trying times allow one to realise his or her full potential. Out of suffering comes growth. This idea dates back thousands of years and can in fact be found in many of the major religions of the world (see Tedeschi and Calhoun 1995 for an in-depth look at suffering and growth through time). This notion of growth, along with resilience, interacts with well-being. Resilience ensures that one can function to meet one's needs and to pursue one's goals, while growth can facilitate a state of being with others by allowing the connection to become deeper and stronger, as well as increasing the amount of compassion one has for others. It also allows for a more satisfactory quality of life by allowing one to appreciate what one has more and to explore new realms of possibility and, perhaps, new life goals that are meaningful and achievable.

Experiences relating to existential well-being are the focus of this chapter. Existential well-being incorporates those aspects of life which makes it more valuable, meaningful and worth living (Borwick et al 2013). More specifically, changes indicating posttraumatic growth (PTG) will be explored in more detail. Research on this topic tends to be heavily quantitative. In order to add to this burgeoning literature, I focus on providing rich ethnographic examples to more fully develop PTG themes. Thus, the vignettes used below demonstrate how different areas of posttraumatic growth were experienced and narrated to me by my informants. Both this chapter and the next draw largely on ethnographic examples to situate my informants – their lives and experiences – in a more grounded way as they navigated their everyday meaning-making and being-in-the-world.

Posttraumatic Growth in the Literature

Posttraumatic growth has spawned a plethora of research with various populations around the world. The definition provided by those who first introduced this term, Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun, describes PTG as "the experience of positive change that the individual experiences as a result of the struggle with a traumatic event," (Calhoun and Tedeschi 2013:6). The concept of PTG states that growth occurs along five different factors that relate to three different conceptual categories. The five different factors are personal strength, relating to others, new possibilities in life, greater appreciation of life and increased spirituality which can be subsumed under the three conceptual categories of changed sense of self, changed sense of relationships with others and changed philosophy

of life (Calhoun and Tedeschi, 2013:7). To date there are a multitude of studies and examples to show the existence and importance of this concept, especially in the field of psychology and, most importantly for my research, in the context of working with refugees.

Research from a wide array of studies demonstrates that this concept is relatively common following a traumatic experience. It should be noted, however, that it does not *have* to occur, and a lack of PTG does not mean that one is not resilient or otherwise healthily adjusted. Furthermore, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and PTG are not mutually exclusive, and people can in fact exhibit signs of both, indicating that they are somewhat separate experiences (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). Nevertheless, studies ranging from breast cancer sufferers to sexual assault survivors highlight that the concept of PTG is more than merely an abstract hypothesis.

Most relevant for my research is that which draws upon the experiences of those who have survived various conflicts, ranging from refugees and internally displaced persons to prisoners of war and those who were forcibly relocated. In a study of former refugees and displaced people in Sarajevo, conducted by Powell, Rosner, Butollo, Tedeschi and Calhoun (2003), they found that even amongst those exposed to the most extreme traumatic events, growth was still possible and, indeed, reported. Interestingly, refugees reported higher levels of growth than those who remained displaced internally. While one can speculate on the reasons for this outcome, the authors themselves posed no explanation for why this was the case.

A more recent study, conducted with Congolese refugees living in camps in Uganda, corroborated the experience of growth following traumatic experiences (Ssenyonga, Owens and Olema 2013). This study was less relevant in that, though it claims that research is lacking among those refugees who do not end up with PTSD in Africa, it mainly examines what factors impact rates of PTSD, rather than a focus on PTG. Nevertheless, the authors conclude that resilience and posttraumatic growth offer protection against suffering from PTSD in a developing country, and specifically African, context (Ssenyonga et al 2013).

Two PTG concepts, in particular, appear frequently in the literature. The conversation I had with Paul, told at the beginning of the chapter, demonstrates this transformation idea integral to PTG, and fits one of the categories within the PTG model – namely, it rings true with the personal strength factor within the changed sense of self

category. The other most common finding is a change in spirituality. This means that one has become more religious and it is because of this that a person was able to find the strength not just to move on, but to improve their lives (see Shaw, Joseph and Linley 2005; Kroo and Nagy 2011; Feder et al 2008). Tedeschi and Calhoun note that increasing religiosity fulfils many purposes, including gaining a sense of control, bringing comfort, increasing intimacy (with God), and finding meaning (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1995).

Special Considerations when using PTG

While the consensus is that PTG does exist among trauma survivors, including refugees, specific demographics involving growth among refugees is sparser and is frequently inconclusive. For instance, while some studies show women typically report more posttraumatic growth than men, others find that gender has no impact on PTG (Chan, Young and Sharif 2016). Similarly conflicting evidence exists for age. While the majority find that younger refugees report more PTG, one study shows the opposite for IDPs (Bhat and Rangaiah, 2015). To bring together the wide range of studies and findings, Chan et al (2016) have recently created a review of the literature on posttraumatic growth among refugees. They highlighted that the most important factors related to PTG are available social support, adopting problem-focused coping, using positive religious coping and the presence of hope and optimism (Chan et al 2016). Many of these topics appear in later chapters.

One problem for my research in relation to PTG studies is that they are based on quantitative data collection, rather than qualitative. Indeed, Tedeschi and Calhoun created the PTGI (Posttraumatic Growth Inventory) where items are listed on a six-point Likert scale. This is surprising given the emphasis that Tedeschi and Calhoun, the architects of the posttraumatic growth concept, place on narratives. They even go so far as to say that, "the development of the individual's personal life narrative and posttraumatic growth may mutually influence one another," (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). In other words, including the trauma in a life narrative can reframe the experience and facilitate factors associated with growth. While they tout this mutually reinforcing process in a clinical setting (Calhoun and Tedeschi 2013), it is rare to find studies that took a qualitative approach to growth. One study examined narratives of growth among Tibetan refugees in India, confirming the presence of PTG in narratives among this sample of refugees and noting that this method allowed for an individual to discuss his or her own understanding of positive self-transformation without limiting their possible topics (Hussain and Bhushan

2013:206). Another recent study focused on Cambodian refugees resettled in the US. The authors note that, "the process of meaning-making and trauma reconstruction includes trauma-disclosure and the sharing of narratives, which leads to outcomes of PTG," (Uy and Okubo 2018:14). They firmly recognise the importance of creating a new personal trauma narrative, noting it "can be vital in the process of becoming empowered in the spirit of healing and overall psychological recovery," (Uy and Okubo 2018:14). Clearly, the importance of narratives for not only resilience but growth is crucial, lending support for the importance of qualitative methodology for this topic.

A further special note must be made about posttraumatic growth. While I find it a useful construct that emerged during many of my interviews with informants, it is clearly not without its problems. The largest critique comes from the premise that only trauma can produce growth and neglects to recognise growth from other hardships and suffering. Perhaps a more inclusive term – such as post-suffering growth – would better capture the range of experiences of individuals and any accompanying changes if they do occur. As it stands, the basis of posttraumatic growth is that it must first be preceded by a traumatic effect. This event must then be severe enough to have caused a sense of traumatization by the individual. The types of trauma and accompanying traumatization are assumed to be directly life-threatening (as is the case with those who survived various types of violence, natural disasters or severe accidents such as car crashes). It has also been described amongst those who have experienced life-changing illnesses (such as cancer). Extrapolating these assumptions to my informants implies that they must all have experienced traumatic events that they perceived as such and which thus allowed the possibility for posttraumatic growth. This simplistic notion overlooks some key facts. Firstly, being a refugee does not mean that one is necessarily traumatized. Secondly, it overlooks the type of events that may cause trauma or hardship. While the assumption is that trauma arises from a threat to life, many of my informants – and indeed many refugees – felt the loss of social ties or financial stability more deeply (which would be covered by a concept such as post-suffering growth), and these losses accounted for their stressors in the present rather than the temporary threat to life that some, though not all, experienced. The idea that a life-threatening trauma necessarily precedes narratives of posttraumatic growth is not corroborated by all research. For instance, those living with chronic health conditions – such as rheumatoid arthritis – have similarly reported growth (Tennen et al 1992). While this stream of research is far less developed than those experiencing adverse

and traumatic events, it nevertheless demonstrates that different types of hardships can impact on stories of growth without the need for a deep traumatization.

Additionally, individual differences play a significant role in the expression of PTG. In Jayawickreme and Blackie's (2014) article analyzing posttraumatic growth, they note that datasets often ignore the ways in which individuals differ in their reactions to traumatic life events. They cite two studies – one among rape survivors and one among leukaemia patients – in which overall PTG is reported, while individually some report decreases in growth over time. These individual differences become effectively erased when a majority report some type of growth. Jayawickreme and Blackie (2014:318) suggest that perhaps the construct is generally useful, but credit individual differences with differing levels of maturity and experience of past trauma which may facilitate proactive coping.

Finally, it should be noted that expressing growth does not mean that an individual is somehow more resilient or better adjusted. "*Posttraumatic growth is common, but it is by no means universal,"* (Calhoun and Tedeschi 2013:13, emphasis in original). They further go on to cite figures which place the presence of some form of grown between 30% and 90%. This large gap indicates that PTG is by no means universally shared by all who have undergone a form of hardship or trauma, and furthermore highlights one of the limitations of using this concept among populations – its variability between and among both researchers and those they work with. Furthermore, experiencing and narrating PTG does not exclude the possibility of also experiencing and narrating PTSD. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) and, more recently Acquaye (2017), remark that PTG and PTSD remain largely independent of each other and may, in fact, be reported by the same person at the same point in time. Joseph and Linley (2005:273) remark that it is entirely possible that "growth may leave them sadder, but almost inevitably wiser." In terms of my informants, then, PTG is not a necessary ingredient to their life stories, and reporting instances of growth does not exclude a possibility of sadness or necessarily point to a preceding trauma. Absences of PTG in life stories does not mean that a person is less adjusted or less happy than their counterparts who do. Similarly, after so carefully outlining how refugees and asylum seekers are not merely passive victims helpless in their situation, I would not wish to then paint them as individuals who are inevitably traumatized by implying that PTG is a fact of their lives. Categories of posttraumatic growth appeared in several of my informants' narratives and, given the proliferation of studies around this concept, I found

it useful to engage with this topic in an area in which it is relatively understudied – namely, among refugees and among those in an African context.

Narratives of resilience and growth

Given that my methodology revolves around narratives, it is important to ask how people speak about the two concepts elucidated above: resilience and growth. First, I am going to return to the notion of 'resilience'. I agree with the literature in that a majority of people are resilient. This has certainly been my experience in working with refugees and asylum seekers in all three of my fieldwork sites. In fact, one of the things that so interested me about asylum seekers and refugees was their resolve to move on with their lives and maintain a sense of purpose and dignity. Though many claimed that the only option was to flee their home country, clearly they were exercising a form of agency in that they not only fled the boundaries of the country, but chose (to varying degrees) their country of asylum. When speaking of growth among refugees resettled in Norway, Teodorescu et al (2012) invoke the action meditated growth theory as a framework for understanding the results of their research. Specifically, they use this theory to frame how "migration can be seen as an act of conscious decision-making and as an action of growth based on the developing cognition to change one's life for the better," (Teodorescu et al 2012:10). Thus, it may be that those I spoke with just happened to be resilient. It may also be that refugees and asylum seekers are able to exercise their agency (which in turn fosters resilience and growth) more so than other populations experiencing a traumatic upheaval (see the displacement induced development and resettlement literature).

While most of those I met appeared to me to be resilient, it seemed that many of the most resourceful individuals were living in the Gambia. The UK was complicated in that the potentially lengthy asylum process inhibited the ability to on, forcing many into a seemingly indefinite state of 'waiting' (see Griffiths 2015 and Rotter 2010), while most of those I spoke with in Cameroon seemed to still be processing their situation before finding meaning in the situation and possibly growing from the experience. The Gambia was, therefore, in a situation to allow those seeking asylum to continue with their lives. The process of obtaining refugee status is relatively quick and straightforward. Furthermore, it does not restrict the rights of refugees to the extent of the other two countries. Refugees are granted free movement and the right to look for work as outlined in the 2008 Gambia Refugee Act, even if discrimination means that securing employment is

challenging. Refugees in Cameroon are allowed to pursue employment, but due to the sheer number of citizens and refugees, the situation is much more complicated. I will speak more about employment and its benefit for well-being in a later chapter. Suffice it to say that the Gambia provides a relatively safe, secure environment for refugees to exercise their agency and begin forging ahead with their lives.

The notion of growth, however, does not appear in my other two field sites in the same way that it does in the United Kingdom. One possible explanation could be the well-documented brutality of the asylum system in the UK, often referred to as a traumatic event in and of itself. During one of my days at WERS, I began chatting with a man who was not a current regular client. During our brief exchange before he was called to meet with his support worker, he made a comment that stuck with me. With an agitated wave of his hand and a frustrated sigh, he said, "Here, they are very clever. In my country they beat you, but white men – they torture your mind!" This sentiment reflecting the perceived hardships of the UK asylum system was mentioned by nearly every single person I with whom I spoke. This man's comment seemed appropriate to sum up the feelings those in the asylum process have about the system.

While initially it might seem puzzling that multiple traumatic experiences can exhibit growth, it is in fact noted in the research that for growth to occur, the trauma must be significant enough to shatter assumptive worlds, as Ronnie Janoff-Bulman (1992) puts it. So perhaps those in the UK have been exposed to more challenges and hardships, allowing for a greater possibility for growth. In my discussions with those I met, the two most common areas of growth reported in the studies (changes relating to personal strength and spirituality) were also the two most common areas that I heard. In addition, increased compassion for others, particularly in the form of wanting to help and ease the suffering of others, was also present. It is important to note that growth in multiple areas is possible, as will become clear below. The following examples highlight how people spoke about these changes, and how they were able to see improvement within themselves and between others due to the difficult experiences they endured.

Personal Strength

I was covering a support worker on holiday when a woman I had spoken to briefly the previous week arrived. We greeted each other jovially, and I was pleased when it turned out that I would be getting her number. I called her to my office where I proceeded to fill out the relevant forms for her weekly support, and began my usual 'support worker' line of

questioning, asking how she was and what she was planning on doing later that day/week. This type of informal chat was standard as every client has a file. While it is sufficient to write down that you gave them their weekly support, all support workers are encouraged to comment on the well-being of their clients, particularly if there are any issues or problems they seem to be struggling with.

At this line of questioning the woman, Sandra, threw her arms wide and collapsed her upper body on the table with a big sigh. "I want to move out from where I'm staying," she said. As a refused asylum seeker, she had no recourse to public funds – this included homeless shelters, meaning she would effectively be homeless and would run the very real risk of sleeping rough in the streets. Why would someone actively choose this route?

"The woman I live with works so hard," she began by way of explanation. She told me how the woman works three different jobs to make ends meet. This story highlighted the real issue: she was unable to work and thus felt like she was somehow a burden on this kind-hearted, hardworking woman. "Sandra," I ventured, "Do you realise that she'd be paying the same amount of rent whether you're there or not?" She looked genuinely taken aback by this thought. I went on, explaining that her bills would still cost the same, and gently reminding her that it's most expensive to cook for one person. "She probably enjoys the company that you provide," I added. She pondered this for a moment and appeared to be satisfied with this explanation. I had helped her to find a way to stave off her feelings of guilt and shown her how she was useful. In this way, then, she was able to justify to herself why she could continue to live where she was, even though the woman was not a relative and, thus, had no obligation to care for her.

"Do you miss your home?" Sandra asked suddenly, gazing out the window. She was referring to the United States. I typically made it a point of explaining that I, too, was a foreigner in this country as a way of bonding with others. Generally, this led to our mutual bewilderment at the Geordie[9] language and a try or two at "Why aye man!" in our best accents. This line of questioning was new to me. I explained my situation in more detail before ending with "I think that maybe I've changed, and they've all…" I began, "Stayed the same," we finished together, Sandra nodding along vigorously. She understood. She said she felt the exact same. She told me that when she was living with friends in Manchester, before her move to Newcastle, she was always very talkative. Now her friends

[9] People from Newcastle are referred to as 'Geordies', with 'Geordie' representing their particular accent.

asked her what happened, why she did not talk as much anymore. She just shrugged and said, “I don’t feel like it anymore.” I was sympathetic to her, saying that I thought it was normal to have such ups and downs, to change back and forth. She agreed that she was probably just on a down. Her stomach rumbled at that moment and I offered her some food to eat, but she declined, explaining that she was on a diet. We ended our chat and agreed a time to meet the following week.

As the conversation flowed beyond the everyday, ordinary topics of movies and television series (Sandra was somewhat of aficionado, especially when it came to South Korean and Filipino telenovelas), I began to learn to more about the process she went through to be sitting across the table from me. She came from Zimbabwe on a student visa and had been in the UK for seven years up to that point. Her student years were full of friends and a fierce commitment to her managerial position at a fast food chain. During this time, she became increasingly stressed because not only had her visa run out, but her brother was also diagnosed with cancer and passed away. Though she admitted that life became very difficult for her during this time, including turning to excessive amounts of alcohol to cope, she recognised that life passes through various stages. “As I look back I see…I know bad things happen, it’s difficult, but it is a phase. And I always ask myself, ‘What am I learning?’ as I go through these difficult things,” she explained. She tried to focus on the new insights, the hidden meanings and opportunities that each hardship brought her rather than becoming overwhelmed.

True to a post-traumatic growth model, she highlighted how these periods of difficulties actually allowed her to gain new skills of which she was previously unaware. She had experienced a changed sense of self, particularly in the form of realising her personal strength. Growth, big and small, was mentioned equally. She amazed herself even with what might be considered mundane tasks. “I didn’t know that I can manage to budget!” she exclaimed, highlighting how she learned to adapt to the meagre £15 a week she received in support from WERS. She claimed that before she put in her asylum claim she “loved money.” Now, she felt that God was teaching her a lesson, that He was saying to her, “Now you see how life is when you don’t have money.” In another example, she mused on the reason for suffering, indicating that perhaps these trials were given to her so that she could help others go through theirs. Helping others allowed her to ‘cope’ with her situation and remain positive.

While the situations described above are more related to changes in self-perception, her hardships also positively impacted her relationships with others. Being a refused asylum seeker effectively made her homeless. Yet she became close with some church members who invited her to stay with them in Newcastle. Because there was no other alternative available at the time, she accepted the offer. She was now a very active member in that church. "I thank God for those people," she told me, "because also they push me to do things that I would not usually do, like standing in front of people, or even like giving an announcement, I would never do that but she [friend she lives with] just pushes me like, 'Go, do it!'" Through these new relationships fostered by her rejected asylum claim, she finds she is capable of doing things she never previously entertained.

New Possibilities

Others also commented on how their experiences led to a positive change in who they are as well as adopting a changed philosophy of life, in particular in the domain of new possibilities. Yasir's situation was complicated. His family moved to Dubai from Somalia before he was born. Though technically born in Dubai, he was not considered a citizen and therefore was listed as a dependent on his father's visa. His mother passed away when he was very young which left him with only his father on whom to rely. After his father passed, he was unable to stay in Dubai due to immigration rules and was sent to live with his closest family member, an uncle in the Netherlands. Yasir was only thirteen years old at the time. He described his relationship with his uncle as one fraught with conflict. He claimed he "couldn't cope" living with them and all they did was "fight fight fight after fight". He eventually severed ties with his uncle and, after filing a claim in the Netherlands that was subsequently thrown out due to a criminal conviction that he claimed his friend had committed, came to London. His rationale for coming to the UK was that his friends told him it was the next country. He applied for legal status to remain in the country but was subsequently denied. He became increasingly worried about his precarious status and found himself homeless, resorting to couch surfing with various friends and acquaintances. He found a church that could house homeless refused asylum seekers in Sheffield for a single night at a time, but he still lacked access to monetary support. To help in this aim, he agreed to be an 'off the books' tester for new and experimental drugs. He claimed those legally participating in the study received up to £4,000 but he was not entitled to such an amount. Instead, he was given doses of the medicine for £300. He explained that the researcher told him she would give him lower doses since she claimed

to ‘care about him’ and one of the possible side effects included blindness. After severe reactions that led to hospitalisation (but, thankfully, did not include blindness) he was forced to withdraw from the study.

Since he could no longer make money from volunteering for drugs trials, he was again both homeless and broke. His friends offered to get him a job selling drugs but he declined this offer and found a position at a take-away restaurant instead. He became deeply involved in alcohol abuse during this time. “Me, I was loving it,” he explained. “I enjoyed drinking, cause like when you got…problem, too stressed, maybe you drink to enjoy, to chill, cope at it, but I used to drink…to go home just like, [drink] a bottle of vodka, a bottle of whisky.” This excessive drinking served as his coping mechanism for the harsh realities of life on the streets as someone without any legal documents. Substance abuse, including alcohol, is frequently cited in the literature as a common coping mechanism following a trauma (Calhoun and Tedeschi 2013) and, indeed, alcohol abuse was also cited by Sandra in the previous example. For Yasir, “I get drunk and go to bed,” he said of his former routine. “So I don’t feel no pain, no stress, no sadness.” His addiction became so bad that a charity in the Sheffield area would call the police if they were unable to give him money. Without this money, he would be unable to purchase more alcohol and would then turn violent. Yasir knew he was on a destructive path, but he felt helpless as to how to change it. “I tell her [charity worker] ‘I don’t want to drink, but I have to drink. I’m homeless, I’m illegal here, five times they refuse me in the court!’ Then, when I come back, they arrest me, the immigration, for working.”

The charity that Yasir received support from ended up enrolling him in a residential facility to help him detox from the alcohol. He felt better when he came back and began attending a gym. He was still without a job though, and the idea of selling drugs was becoming ever more tempting. Just when he was about to cave in and sell, a friend found him a respectable job as a plasterer and welder. He was again arrested by immigration authorities for working illegally and was sentenced to sixteen months in detention facility. Surprisingly, Yasir said that detention was good for him, echoing the astonishment of Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) when their client, Jerry, claimed that an accident that left him paraplegic was one of the best things to happen to him because of his life’s destructive trajectory up to that point. As Yasir explained it to me, “God is great, like sometime you think, bad thing happens, but saves [you] from something worse. It was very good for my life. They opened my case.” Being detained meant that they had to look into his history,

thereby opening his previously closed case and allowing him to put in a fresh claim. Opening this claim meant he was again entitled to housing and explains how he ended up in Newcastle. He has since won his claim, which the Home Office is appealing. The first two appeals by the Home Office determined that their case was not strong enough and Yasir's lawyer told him that the final appeal did not look to be any better. Yasir could see a potential end in sight. "My hope's come back," he explained.

In addition to his newfound hope, he acknowledged that becoming sober and then being placed in detention turned his life around. "I'm a changed man now," he said frankly. "Before I went to detention, I would make friends and that, but we're not gonna laugh like that. You will never see me laughing for nothing out of stress. But now, I know that life is good." When encouraged to explain how life was good now, he replied with "I got guaranteed tomorrow is gonna be good for me, I will get my status, get a girlfriend." While he did not enjoy his sixteen months in detention and described it as a prison, what it did for him in terms of giving him another chance to gain legal status in the UK was invaluable. He earned certificates for courses undertaken while in detention, reigniting his passion to return to schooling at the earliest opportunity. His hope was back, and he found not only his outlook on life changed, but also his relationships with others, allowing him to connect with those around him on a deeper level.

In both of the previous examples, the informants had been living in the UK for a significant amount of time (seven years and eight years respectively). This idea of positive change, of growing as a person, could be seen by some as being perpetuated by a 'Western' model of the world. It was not, however, relegated exclusively to those asylum seekers in the UK. As mentioned, little research has been conducted on growth among those in a developing country context – even less so on refugees residing in such countries. This notion, however, was echoed by those I spoke with in the Gambia, as the following example will show.

Changed Relationships

Evette, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, expressed growth during our talk. In particular, her individual growth changed not only herself, but changed her relationships with others. She had experienced a very trying series of hardships, all of which impacted her. She was a university student, studying nutrition, when she was forced to flee from the violence that erupted in DR Congo in 2001. She told me that the Senegalese president at the time sent a plane to Kinshasa to evacuate all of the West Africans living in

the country. She fled with her Gambian friends and, after landing in Dakar, Senegal, they took a car to the Gambia. This initial pain of leaving her family weighed heavily on her mind. "Sometime when I go enter in the toilet I go take shower, I start to shout to myself, crying. I say 'Where is mother?!' things like that. 'Where is my father?!' Then after I used to…I get mental problem." After suffering from this 'mental problem' for some time, she decided that she could not continue this way. She decided to attempt to change her way of thinking. Her technique was "Let me make myself like I'm home." She willed herself to accept this place as her new home, to make herself comfortable and to not focus on the life she had left behind. This technique worked for a time.

While the stress of the flight impacted negatively on her well-being, the stress became overwhelming when she experienced another loss. Shortly after giving birth to a baby girl the child died. Because she had delivered the baby at home, she had sent her daughter with some nurses who took the baby in a taxi to the hospital. She claims that the nurses left the window down and did not cover the baby's head with a blanket, resulting in her death a short time after arrival at the hospital and before Evette could see her again. The father of the baby was a white British man, and Evette's eyes shined as she told me how her baby had the most beautiful light skin. The tragic loss of her daughter was only exacerbated by the sudden death of her partner to cancer a mere few months later.

According to Evette, "This make me change." She recalled how she kept thinking about the baby, wondering what she would be doing, how big she would be. She even became so distraught with her poor mental state that she visited several doctors to see whether there was a biological cause for her continuing depressive thoughts. After catching herself thinking about her daughter again, she finally decided, "No, I must avoid these things, thinking about this baby is no good for me." To keep her mind from ruminating on how her baby would be if she were still alive, Evette turned to books. "If I thinking [about her] I take one book, take any book, reading reading…when I finish reading that book, the mind for the baby gone," she explained. This focus on the loss of her baby can be seen in another way. According to Becker (1997) and her work on those experiencing a disruption in their lives, babies can serve as powerful metaphors. "Babies represent life, death, hope, energy, transformation, productivity, and perseverance," (Becker 1997:179). She notes the impact that the death of a baby has on one of her informants, Julia. Julia's world went from ordered to disordered and chaotic with the death of her baby representing not only a physical loss, but the loss of hope as well (Becker 1997:63-64). Based on the story she told

me about this part of her life, Evette's baby also represented hope for her future, and her death signalled a spiral into disorder and chaos which included the death of Evette's spouse shortly afterward.

This chaos, fortunately, did not become a defining feature of the rest of her life. She had changed her actions and redeveloped her narrative around this crisis event in her life. As Becker (1997:166) suggests of a personal narrative, "it enables the narrator to mend the disruption by weaving it into the fabric of life, to put experience into perspective." Evette's coping techniques, her conscious striving for wellness and her attempt to make sense of her suffering led to her conclude that for the past five years, she has been better. Now, when she sees others who are experiencing difficulties in their lives, she shares her story with them and encourages them. "If I see somebody stressed," she said, "I will talk with that somebody [and say] 'You will see, *everything* will be okay.'" "So, you help others now?" I asked. "I try, me I try. If I see somebody sad like that, I will talk to them. 'Do this, do that.' You see somebody change. I change a lot of people, just talk with them. I say, 'I had this life before, just leave it.' They listen," she concluded. This empathetic focus changed her relationship with others she encountered. Easing the pain of others allowed her to find a sense of meaning in her own loss. This sentiment is also found in Sandra's account above and was echoed by several of my interlocutors, both in the UK and in the Gambia. It is important to note that this theme, finding meaning in helping others, is common in the literature on PTG. Feeling compassion for others indicated a subtheme of posttraumatic growth in a study of Tibetan refugees in India conducted by Hussain and Bhushan (2013). In particular, their informants noted that supporting others in need related to a more meaningful life, which relates closely to Evette's account.

Spirituality

Spirituality, as Tedeschi and Calhoun call this category, was the most commonly cited example in the literature relating to growth, coping and resilience. Indeed, in Park's (2006:288) article comparing several studies on PTG, she found that the strength of the relationship between growth and religion is one of the most consistent findings. What is interesting about this finding, however, is that growth is not necessarily related only to intrinsic, positive beliefs. For instance, among Proffitt et al.'s (2007:227) sample of clergymen in the United States, greater use of positive statements along the lines of "[I] tried to put my plans into action together with God," were just as useful at predicting levels of growth as negative statements such as "[I] wondered whether God had abandoned me."

The authors note that whether the clergymen in their study saw God as a partner or God as testing them, they were able to see the benefits in a crisis which, in turn, could lead to posttraumatic growth. This idea can be seen in the previous example of Sandra; though she felt God was teaching her lesson, she saw the benefits it could bring. This allowed her not only to cope with the situation, but see the way in which it may positively impact her life. Other authors, such as Shaw et al (2005), found similar results when conducting a systematic review on religion, spirituality and posttraumatic growth. They too noted that PTG was associated with both positive and negative coping which are similar to the statements made by Proffitt et al, but also found that intrinsic religiousness factors ('a deep faith in God and a personal relationship with 'Him') were more strongly associated with PTG than extrinsic ones (relating to the 'social and personal implications of being linked to a place of worship') (Shaw et al 2005:4). Thus, while in general it has been assumed that religion is positively associated with posttraumatic growth, emerging literature shows that upon closer examination this association may be more nuanced than previously thought.

The previous papers discuss religion specifically, while Tedeschi and Calhoun use the term 'spirituality' when discussing this concept. Many would argue that these two terms are not synonyms and do describe different situations. Indeed, Eyber (2016:215) remarks that an agreement over distinct definitions of religion and spirituality has not been reached, though she does make an attempt to distinguish between the two in her work on internally displaced Angolans. In general, it seems though spirituality is regarded as containing an element of self-transcendence (Eyber 2016:215). However, it is not my intention here to engage in this debate. Rather, I will follow in the footsteps of researchers before me who use the two interchangeably. Tedeschi and Calhoun remark that they use the terms as synonyms, while Shaw et al (2005:7) claim to use them together "simply given the paucity of research and difficulty of meaningfully untangling their separate relations with posttraumatic growth." For the purposes of this thesis, I only use spirituality when other researchers use this term (which seems the preferred term of Tedeschi and Calhoun), finding religion seems to fit more appropriately with my research. In further clarifying this section, I would like to point out that I did not meet a single respondent who claimed to be atheist or agnostic. To my knowledge, all belong to one of the various branches in Christianity or Islam. Since most were religious, and some very deeply so, it is more difficult to tell if growth occurred, or if their religiosity merely remained the same.

Nevertheless, the following example highlights a *perceived* change in religiousness/spirituality above and beyond what it was prior to the traumatic experience(s).

I met Esther while covering a support worker for the day and saw her regularly over the months. Like most of the people I met at WERS, her story was quite convoluted. Her husband came from Nigeria to the UK to study at Northumbria University in Newcastle. Esther, along with the couple's three daughters, came to join him when he finished his studies in 2006. By 2009, the three-year permit they were on was due to expire, so they applied for their leave to remain. Just before this, her husband had taken up a voluntary job working as the accountant at a church. According to her, this is where their problems began.

Another man worked at the church and wasn't happy with the new accountant. Esther claimed it was because the man wanted to embezzle money and her husband wouldn't allow it. Angered by this turn of events, the man wrote to and rang up Home Office repeatedly saying they needed to deport the man and his family. Esther said they were even told by Home Office that this man was the reason their application for leave to remain was refused.

"Every year we put in maybe two or three applications, every year," she told me dejectedly. "They return it, we put again, they return it, like this. So we're looking at a period of six years." After revealing this unfortunate series of events, she remarked, "So that is how we landed ourselves in this situation." Esther was quick to point out that all was not bleak. "But the good thing in all of this," she rushed to explain, "is that, because we are Christians, we are really really, you know…we fear God, we revere God so much, we forgave him [the man]. It was so hard, myself, my children, even to feed…the best thing is for life to continue. We have to forgive him. So we forgive him even up to now, we don't have any grudges in our hearts towards him." When I expressed surprise at this, she responded matter-of-factly with, "The truth is that the pain has been done, the deed has been done. There is no way it can go back." She continued this line of thought by noting, "The good thing that makes us happy in the midst of this is because we actually forgive him, since we've forgiven him, we just felt, look, life has to continue. There's no need putting him at the back of our mind."

It was at this point in the story that themes related to growth began to emerge. When commenting on how God has helped her and her family find peace, she stated, "If not this

thing happened, these challenges came before us, the kind of peace we are enjoying – I don't think we would have ever enjoyed it. The word of God is there to make you have that peace, it protects." This sense of peace, then, did not merely return to a previous baseline level, it actually exceeded it. She goes on to say, "Even up to now, we are still facing these [problems], we are still going through it, but it's not as tough as the years we've left, it's much better now because we've finally found help." Here she references the specific role that WERS has played in helping her family continue. "We come to this place, you assist, financially, even if it's not much it goes a long way, we get food again from the food back…it's keeping our body moving so we are actually really thankful to God that we were able to find help," she concluded.

This peace she felt was dealt another terrible blow. She became pregnant but she claimed that as a result of the stress she experienced, it was an ectopic pregnancy. She had little choice but to undergo what she termed as 'chemotherapy' to terminate the life-threatening pregnancy. During this time, she claims, "I was so depressed; depression came, it was so hard." Fortunately, she found a way to overcome this heartbreak by turning to religion. "The word of God, you know, I go to church every day, I listened to CDs, I listened to pastors, they preach. My husband is also a pastor, so he preaches. And he helps me so much too. I can say the summary of overcoming the whole thing is just God," she exclaimed, clear awe and adoration in her voice. Now, whenever she or one of her family members is worried, their strategy is just, "hand it to God." Even their financial worries have been handed over to God because, after their last right of appeal was rejected, she was forced to quit her job. She claims that this multiyear process of seeking the right to remain, as well as housing and feeding the family, came to over £75,000. But, according to her, God has answered their prayers by working through people, ensuring that when things become tough, a friendly neighbour will call and put money in their bank account to cover their rent or other necessities. Though she hands her problems over to God, she still noted that, "With all these problems—it's as though we never faced any challenges in Nigeria! But we have," she conceded.

Not all was bleak, and her unwavering faith that has only deepened through these trying experiences surely accounted a great deal for the calm, confident, vivacious woman I had come to know. Like the previous examples, she too found that her relationships with others had changed in addition to her religiosity. "When we found ourselves in this situation [all rights to appeal exhausted] we become more stronger, as a family. We are so

bonded together because we had to push forward. Every day we hold our hands and we say 'Look, we can make it! The journey so far was more tedious than where we are now, it was much much harder. We can't just give up now. When it was tougher we didn't give up, now we can't give up.' We became more stronger." She was convinced of their path and even saw some possible life lessons to be shared with others going through hard times. "God wants to use our own life, whatever testimony will come out of this, because I know definitely we get our stay, definitely. I know it, I feel it," she confided.

More recently, her case had taken an unexpected turn, which is how she ended up at the West End Refugee Service. The family was told, after their rights to appeal had been exhausted, to change and apply for asylum. "Even Home Office said," she added. They pursued this route, against the advice of their friends, and applied as asylum seekers. She had just returned from the interview in Leeds a few days prior to our meeting. "Everything came out so beautifully! The interview was beautiful," she gushed. Though I had never heard anyone describe anything related to Home Office interviews positively, let alone enthuse about the beauty of them, her joy and hope for the future was infectious. "At the end of the day, we had peace," she added, returning again to this idea. "We just see everything working. Our faith is in God. It's God that keeps us going, it's the same God that keeps me smiling. I am certain that he will not let us down," she declared confidently.

I saw Esther frequently over the coming weeks, and even took up her offer to come to her church and watch her husband preach. To my surprise, following his call to bless those struggling under the weight of their asylum or other immigration cases, the pastor launched into his own immigration story. His loud, booming voice reverberated around the small room where approximately thirty people sat on folding chairs arranged in rows. His story followed quite closely that his wife had told me a few weeks previously. He fished out and read a piece of correspondence between himself and the Home Office. In the letter he argued that he had followed the laws, legally, and that at no point was he or his family in the country illegally. His language highlighted what he saw as their being acted upon rather than any result of their own agency. "We've been made to become over-stayers slash illegal immigrants. This is very sad," he added. He claimed that he intended to go back to his home country after his studies, but it was God who told him in a dream that he was meant to settle in the United Kingdom for an assignment. In a bid to avoid the wrath of God, he followed these instructions and applied for visas for his family to join him in the UK. These visas were granted.

He continued in this way – extolling his family virtues while highlighting what good, law-abiding citizens he and his family were. He also claimed that, in their latest rejection letter, UKBA (United Kingdom Border Agency) suggested that they seek asylum instead of a settlement visa by citing fears over Boko Haram. The family thus pursued this type of immigration beginning in September 2014. The initial appointment was cancelled, not through the fault of the family, but due to the restrictive laws in the UK – he was denied permission to take the children out of school for the day, and their presence was required at the appointment as they were also included in the asylum claim. As further proof of the strain the asylum system can put on one's ability to cope, the family received a call demanding why they did not show up for their appointment, and then advised them that they would receive a call to rebook their appointment. By that time (19/7/2015), they had yet to receive this call.

Fortunately, the pastor had the confidence and language skills to pursue a new appointment. Though he was promised a call back three further times, none came. "To where do I go?" he asked plaintively. "To a country I left over 12 years ago? A country where I've now become like an alien, so that we will be slaughtered by the men from the underworld? The only family that I usually go to visit are now here with me. We've made this country our home," he emphasised. He further highlighted the situation of his children – his daughters have spent over half their lives here, and since their arrival in the UK, they have been blessed with a fourth child, a son, who has no knowledge of any home beyond the UK. As he came to the end of the letter, he made a final appeal to the compassion of the British people to look into their hearts and allow his family, who had caused no trouble, to remain. As he finished, the rest of the congregation clapped loudly.

He tucked the letter away and continued with his story, revealing that the immigration authorities finally arranged an appointment and the family went to Croydon. This was March 2015. Each month has a certain 'word' (usually more than one) that the pastor claims God chooses and which characterises what one can expect for that particular month. He reminded the congregation that the word for March 'uncommon favour'. "We went in, and God took over," he told the congregation, suggesting that the month's word did in fact come to fruition. He claimed that the immigration officers were apologising to the family, saying things like, "We don't know why we are doing this to you." Others in the crowd began shouting 'Amen!' at an increasing volume. The man, according to the pastor, gave them ARC cards (identity cards issued to asylum seekers) and

told them he didn't want to see them back there again. "Hallelujah!" he exclaimed amidst laughter from those assembled.

The family was then booked in to do a screening assessment in Leeds in June 2015 (the one Esther mentioned during her interview). "When God is with you, who can be against you?!" the pastor thundered to appreciative murmurs. The month of June was 'the month of repositioning'. "Almost everybody was repositioned," he claimed. "Everybody!" Finally, he got to the crux of the story. "But the thing I want to let you know today, let me cut the story short so that I can share something with you here," the pastor said. "What is the word for the month of July? The month of July is the month of enrichment and perfection," he explained. "I got a letter from UKBA. When I got the letter I opened the letter, and here they put so many reasons why they have to refuse the asylum case. So they refuse." My heart sank. Though he was going to skip reading out the reasons, shout outs from the congregation emboldened him and he read from the paper in his hand. "I'll give you four reasons why they refuse it. Why am I telling you all this? It's so you know that you have a great God," he clarified. He reminded everyone gathered that it was the immigration authorities, not he, who had the idea to apply for asylum. "Remember that," he cautioned. He found the relevant paper in his briefcase and began to read out the reasons for refusal. "He [immigration authority who typed the letter] said 'You claimed to have well-founded fear of persecution in Nigeria on the basis of your religion,'" the pastor began. "'I have considered whether you qualify for a grant of Humanitarian Protection. In light of the above, I have decided that you have not established a well-founded fear of persecution. So your asylum claim is therefore what? Refused,'" he concluded, eliciting clucked tongues and shakes of the head from various congregation members. "Two," he continued, "'I have also decided that you have not shown there are sufficient grounds for believing that you face a risk of suffering serious harm on return from the United Kingdom. So you do not qualify for Humanitarian Protection. Therefore, your claim has been' what?" he called out to the congregation. "Refused!" they shouted along with him, laughing at the absurdity of it all. "Three. 'I have also considered whether the circumstances of your case mean that your removal from the UK will breach the right for family and private life under Article 8. I have decided that you do not qualify for Discretionary Leave to Remain. Therefore your application has been…'" "Refused!" we shouted along with the pastor – we knew this game by now. He was not yet finished, however, as this familiar situation took on a new twist. "In the same envelope I saw that

they refuse everything, and they said I am not qualified for Discretionary Leave to Remain. These same people said a decision has been made to grant you Discretionary Leave. Your claim was decided," he finished triumphantly. Applause erupted from those hanging on to this story as the pastor's voice thundered out, obscured by the erratic clapping and shouts of praise and joy, each trying to top the other. "What God did for you!" he chanted at the top of his lungs. "Nobody will stand in your way! Nobody! Nobody will stand in the way of the Lord!" Loud shouts of 'Amen!' rose up from the congregation while near me someone began sobbing in delight. This story is one of the few that I witnessed that had some type of resolution, at least as far as waiting was concerned.

Growth is more likely to occur when one is free from the traumatic experience. It makes sense that one can only move on when one is no longer facing a particular stressor. If we consider the asylum process in the UK to be a major stressor for people – or even, as some claim, can cause PTSD and a whole host of other side effects that constitute a traumatic experience in its own right (e.g. Silove et al 2000; Burgess 2010)– then it makes sense to expect growth in refugees (those who have the right to remain) rather than asylum seekers or refused asylum seekers (those who do not have the right to remain). What is remarkable about Esther's family is that, though they were refused many times, they anticipated growth not just in the aftermath of it (such as when Esther commented on how they can now experience deep peace after their struggles) but claimed that they anticipated it all along. Whether this result is due to the benefit of hindsight or whether they actively cultivated a sense of hope (this idea is discussed further in Chapter 7), both Esther and the pastor felt that God wanted them to go through this process so that, once it was over, their testimony could inspire others. They could relate to the challenges of immigration, of being good people who felt like criminals when their applications were refused. Indeed, this sentiment was highlighted in that small room in the church where the pastor gave his testimony. He was happy for himself and his family, of course, but most of the congregation was made up of immigrants – some asylum seekers, some not. In gaining the right to remain in the country and share his families struggles and triumph, the pastor was finally able to realise the path that God had laid before him in a dream some nine years before.

Coping Ugly

Though there are many life domains affected by PTG, the sole category under 'changed sense of self' that Tedeschi and Calhoun elucidate is related to personal strength. Furthermore, Tedeschi and Calhoun are quick to point out that PTG does not necessarily speak to one's overall well-being. It is a positive transformation as a result of a traumatic event, but in all actuality, many would prefer to never have experienced the event at all due to the negative implications of it on their well-being (for a curious exception, a study found that the majority of Korean POWs would choose to relive that experience for the growth they gained from it; see Feder et al 2008). They go on to note that while a person may have changed opinions on what is important in life and how to pursue the ever-elusive 'good life', it does not necessarily lead to positive emotions such as feeling cheerful (Calhoun and Tedeschi 2013).

I disagree that PTG is unrelated to well-being. It may, perhaps, be unrelated to happiness (hence why they claim one may not feel cheerful), but is unfair and, I feel, untrue to ignore the positivity and meaning that growth can add. Certainly Sandra recognised what she was learning in the midst of difficulty – while she may not have felt happy about it at the time, she felt proud of what she had learned. It also provided her with new relationships that were meaningful and greatly improved her quality of life. The same can be said of Yasir, Evette and Esther's family. They did not enjoy the hardship experience(s) they were forced to undergo, but recognising the benefits or the positive changes that occurred makes it all bearable (not to be confused, of course, with 'worth it').

I did, however, run into a few people who did not seem to fit with those I just described. Several informants I spoke with had experienced a personal transformation in how they see themselves and relate to others. It was a form of coping and they did appear resilient, for certainly they are going on living their lives in spite of their traumatic experiences. They were different, however, in that their traumatic experiences were not yet over, something they were highly cognisant of and spoke about in great detail. They experienced personality changes that allowed them to continue with their lives, but in a way that was either a bit destructive or which caused them significant distress. First I will share their stories and then discuss how to make sense of them in terms of coping and resilience.

I first met Ella when I was visiting a friend I made at WERS. I went to the woman's house, as I did every week for a bit of delicious East African food and a discussion on how

she and her boys were doing in a new and complicated British system of benefits and education. This week, there was another woman sat on the couch who was introduced as Ella. The two women were from the same country and had become fast friends. Ella was currently taking classes at the local college to learn how to be a hairdresser. We chatted for about an hour, discussing her coursework and mutual friends before she left to go home. Following that initial meeting, I began seeing her weekly at WERS when she came to collect her hardship support as a refused asylum seeker. It was after several of these informal meetings that I invited her to come along and speak about her experiences in an interview.

Though Ella appeared to be a naturally quiet type of person, she exuded a sense of calm confidence. It was only after she began talking that I realised this was not always the case. She came to the UK in 2012 after a brief stay in Holland. She was granted a visa to the UK to study a short course on fisheries. Religion was extremely important to her and she felt, much like Esther and her family, that it was God's will that she come to the UK. "God maybe want me…something is here for me," she explained earnestly. "I don't know what God has in store for me, I just take it day by day." She felt a part of something bigger, and though she was unsure of what purpose she was meant to fulfil, she nevertheless turned to religion as a way of coping with the stress. Her main source of stress was common to those in her position: "It's the asylum process, honestly. It's so stressful," she said with a weary sigh. She elaborated further on what being a refused asylum seeker felt like, comparing herself to an animal. "It's like they put you in a cage, you don't know how to crawl out of that cage. So that's the general situation, but I don't want to see it that way. If you see it that way you don't ever come out of it and you don't know it is going to finish because now, it's been three years…" her voice trailed off into a whisper. The process was dehumanising, and if she allowed herself to think about it too much, then she would never be able to 'come out of it', alluding to an all-consuming depression. She compared herself to her fellow countrymen who, she claims, easily get papers. "So what went wrong?" she queried dejectedly. "I'm not a bad person, why is all this happening to me?"

Clearly Ella was struggling to find meaning in this chaos that she perceived as her life – a life fit for only a 'bad person.' Because she could do nothing to improve her situation (i.e. nothing to ensure she received status), she changed her reactions to her situation. "This process, it really changed me, ya know? So I'm not excited about anything, honestly, I don't know why," she explained. This statement puzzled me. "Are you afraid

to be excited?" I ventured. "No," she countered, "but before…before I was like a very lively person." She widened her eyes and opened her mouth, feigning joy and excitement. "Oh *wow*!" she gasped dramatically. "Nice! Can I have it?!" Her expression turned solemn again. "But now I'm not excited about anything." She remarked that even her friends asked her about her lack of excitement, claiming they've never seen her excited over anything. This was made all the more surprising as Ella was a very busy woman, active in the volunteering community and continually seeking out new courses to increase her knowledge. "What about your courses?" I pressed. "Well, I like these because I'm learning something new," she conceded. This was, however, quickly followed with "But I'm not like, *wow*!" she gasped again theatrically, "I want to do it!" Not even winning an award for her volunteer work could make her feel a sense of excitement.

"Something's gone inside me," she admitted quietly. "It's a shame that it is, but it's how it is. I think I expected a lot of things but…I end up like, how can I say, disappointed," she whispered with tears streaming down her cheeks. After a moment's hesitation, she spoke again. "So I learned to take one day at a time and don't be excited, and it's been three years, which is really really…" she trailed off, searching for the right word, and, unable to find it, continued. "So I'm not like the same person that came – when I first came from back home, you know? Something is gone inside me," she finished with a sob rising in her throat and breaking free.

Ella did concede, however, that the changes she experienced were not wholly negative. "I've become really mature in different ways, ya know? So, there are also positive things because you learn how to – resilience," she declared. It should be noted that Ella chose this word for herself. I had not previously mentioned it in our conversation. She then described what this resilience looked like to her. "Honestly you just reach this point where you say, 'I'm not excited. At the same time, I'm not frightened.' So that really helped me to be relaxed, even at work. Even if it's a stressful situation, you're calm and doing your job." She recognised, however, that this sense of calm was born out of hardship. "You just say, 'What am I stressed about? I mean, my life is more stressful than one situation!' You just done one thing at a time, and calmly, and that's really a positive thing," she concluded thoughtfully. This, too, was a new way of being for her as she admitted that she used to be quite a shy person and the idea of doing something like a presentation would have been a very stressful situation for her. Now she is calm.

While Ella could find some positivity in her experience, she focused quite heavily on what she had lost to be able to continue to live her life as a refused asylum seeker. The other person who mentioned something similar to Ella – some type of 'negative coping' – is called Haroun. I will briefly introduce his case here before offering a possible explanation as to why they exhibited this type of coping.

Haroun came to the UK in 2000. He, like Ella, described himself as an animal, but in a more positive way. He was a student in his home country and relished the opportunity to continue his studies in the UK. "I was like a rat in the college!" he exclaimed with a grin. "I have four to five courses in the college. I do *every* kind of course I saw," he emphasised. He reflected, with an air of wistfulness, on his days spent at the library in Newcastle College. "I had too much ambition, honestly. Too much ambition," he repeated with a weary sigh. During this time, it was possible for asylum seekers to apply for work permits if they had resided in the country for longer than six months without a decision on their case. Because of this, he managed to find a job as a cleaner.

He worked as a cleaner at Newcastle College in the early mornings before beginning his daily lessons as a student. "I never stop you know, I am too crazy!" he exclaimed proudly. He worked hard both as a cleaner and as a student, a fact he was evidently still proud of. He did so well in college that his tutor encouraged him to go to university. He enrolled part-time at Northumbria University. Though he was unable to receive any scholarships or grants to attend due to his status, he was still able to attend thanks to the money he saved from his job. He continued this way happily for another two years. "Then my situation become shambled," he explained. "That was the breaking point for me." He described how, during the asylum interview, he answered 'What do you do at home?' with 'studying'. "I thought studying was a good thing," Haroun admitted somewhat sheepishly. He claimed the judge became angry and accused him of leaving his country to study in the UK. His case was refused. All his subsequent appeals were refused. "My heart was too broken – I don't know what to do. Not only my case, but my future is ended. They kill my ambition. Honestly! They kill it," he murmured despondently, staring a fixed spot on the table in front of him.

To cope with this sudden, drastic change in circumstance, he adopted a change in his outlook on life. "My mind is too set," he declared, "I don't care." I looked at him inquisitively. "You don't care?" I repeated. "I don't care," he affirmed. "About your

situation?" I asked tentatively, seeking clarity. "I don't care," he repeated again. "I've come to the point I don't care. You know, if you pushed to the edge…nowhere else to go…stopped. Even if I get mad or crazy – no point. I've been disappointed in here," he finished. This feeling of being disappointed is the same sentiment that Ella also commented on. Haroun, like Ella, stressed that he was a 'genuine' asylum seeker who would happily return home if that were a viable option. Unfortunately, both stressed, it was not a realistic option.

Haroun was also struggling to figure out how he ended up in this seemingly hopeless situation. "Sometimes I think, maybe, this is my destiny? You never know where your life will be ended, where, what you do. Maybe this is my destiny," he repeated, this time as a statement rather than a question. "If not, why not choose to ask asylum in Africa? Or somewhere else in Europe?" he mused more to himself than to me. His immediate family have never been to Europe before – so why him? Why did he come here? He admitted that sometimes he called his family in the middle of the night when he couldn't sleep. "All my family know that I'm not that kind of person that I am now," he explained, referring to the fierce independent streak that he had had. He boasted that he never had to rely on his parents before. Now things had changed. "I'm useless," he sighed unhappily before attempting to correct himself. "No no, I cannot say myself useless, but I am useless because that's not the way they taught me," he finished. Clearly, he was grappling with several issues related to a dramatic and unexpected change in status. Now, not only was he not able to care for himself through education and employment, but he was dependent on a small charity and his family back home. The way to cope was to insist that he didn't care.

What do these two examples have in common? For Ella, she had lost her ability to feel excitement, effectively numbing herself. While she recognised that she now felt more mature and calmer, which are both positive and speak to posttraumatic growth, the loss of excitability was not seen as a positive thing. It did, however, help her cope with a stressful situation that had remained unchanging for the past three years. Haroun was in a similar situation. Instead of losing his sense of excitement, however, he had lost the ability to care. These changes allowed them both to adapt and cope with their present situation, but it came at a cost that was certainly felt, as Ella's tears showed. While I hesitate to call these specific changes as 'growth', they are not far removed from it. I came across a phrase by Westphal and Bonanno (2007) that I believe perfectly describes this situation: coping ugly.

Coping ugly is a term that describes Ella's loss of excitement and Haroun's inability to care. Westphal and Bonanno (2007) concede that, in normal circumstances, these characteristics could be described as maladaptive. Social avoidance, such as withdrawing from people, being unable to feel emotions and avoiding activities may be associated with post-traumatic stress disorder as Suarez (2013) claims among a group of Quechua women affected by mass violence in Peru. Westphal and Bonanno, however, argue that in the aftermath of a traumatic experience these feelings might actually be considered adaptive. Frankl (1984:39;42) comments that during this his time in a concentration camp, apathy reigned among the prisoners which created a "kind of emotional death" and caused a "blunting of the emotions that one could not care anymore [...] which eventually made him insensitive to daily and hourly beatings." As he remarks of this situation, "an abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behaviour," (Frankl 1984:38). While the circumstances were not as extreme as a concentration camp, the situation that Ella and Haroun were in were perceived as unbearable without changing the only thing they could change about it: their reactions to it. Westphal and Bonanno (2007) do caution, however, that adopting these 'ugly' behaviours come with clear costs in addition to the benefits. Ella's tears over the excitable girl she once was provided testament to that. Nevertheless, these coping behaviours allowed Ella and Haroun to return to a level of functioning that neither felt they could have reached otherwise – Haroun was "too broken" and Ella needed to find a way to "come out of it" before the situation consumed her. These seemingly negative emotions protected their sense of well-being. By lowering their expectations to avoid 'disappointment', they are in a position to ensure that subsequent goals they set are not completely out of their reach. The same can be said about realising a satisfactory quality of life. By recognising that many of their efforts did not result in a positive change in status, they changed their outlook to reflect a more realistic perspective on their current situation. In this way, their hopes cannot be dampened, threatening them with a disordered and chaotic world that could lead to a deep depression (Becker 1997). By not caring or getting excited about anything, they were protecting their well-being and ensuring that they could go on with their daily routines of volunteer work, studies and time spent with friends.

Conclusion

Contrary to what many people believe, refugees and asylum seekers frequently manage to find positivity in an otherwise stressful and potentially trauma-laden experience. This attention to positive experiences and interpretations is not to trivialise what people have gone through. I purposefully made this chapter heavily ethnographic in focus to provide a background on those I discussed in order to talk about growth and resilience not as the whole or underlying experience, but merely as a part of it. Given what people told me about their lives, even I must admit to being initially surprised at the level of resilience most exhibited. Clearly, I am not alone as many researchers and even philosophers have pondered over the puzzle of how most people can go on with their lives and 'be okay' despite a severely traumatic experience. True, this resilience took many forms among my informants – including a paradoxical type that can be best understood as 'ugly coping'. Nevertheless, people were managing as best they could, with many even able to comment on the positive changes experienced as a result of their situation. Posttraumatic growth was certainly not rare among those I spoke with, despite the seeming improbability of it all. Thus, given the possibility of finding positive changes or positivity in general among refugees, it seems more pertinent than ever to look at refugees or 'the refugee experience' (if one can even use such a phrase) through a well-being lens. Anthropology can add much to this topic by using qualitative data in the form of elicited narratives. The next chapter continues with the focus on narratives and their importance in existential well-being. Rather than looking at how individuals discuss changes, however, the focus is on finding meaning and a sense of purpose in their everyday lives.

Chapter 3 Making Sense of It All

Well-being and meaning are intimately linked. This sense of meaning is constantly being threatened by stressors encountered in our everyday lives. Where this sense of meaning is most likely to be completely shattered is after a traumatic event, such as forced migration. The main step one engages in, in everyday life and most certainly following a trauma, is to try and make sense of it all. Many refugees I spoke with commented on how they found, or were trying to find meaning in the hardships endured. They were, essentially, striving to make sense of it all by creating a sense of purpose. This process can be a messy one, but research shows that this search for meaning is part and parcel of the human experience and is vitally important for improving one's sense of well-being. Those I spoke with were no exception.

Meaning in life remains hard to define. This lack of a single, agreed-upon definition leads some, such as John Paley (2000:118), to remark that it is a "concept we should be wary of" because "it omits, and must omit, everything that is informative, problematic, individually nuanced." While his word of caution is not without merit, it makes little sense to abandon the notion of meaning and the importance it plays in people's lives. Engaging with the notion of meaning is crucial as it constitutes an essential part of the "good life" (King et al 2006:179). Grouden and Jose (2015:33) note that meaning is "essential for enhancing personal growth and creating a coherent life course," while Sommer and Baumeister (1998:144) claim that "people need a sense of *purpose* in life." Grouden and Jose (2015) argue that a sense of meaning is crucial for psychological wellbeing and physical health. Similarly, Jackson and Piette (2015:7) comment on the necessity of processing experiences "that threaten to overwhelm us, and give us consolation that life is intelligible, comprehensible, and controllable." Considering the general consensus of meaning in life as important, Steger et al (2013:166) offer the following as a definition:

> Meaning in life is the degree to which people have achieved comprehension (through making sense of their lives and experience, developing a coherent mental model of their selves, the world around them, and their fit and interactions with the world) and have achieved purpose (through discerning, committing to, and pursing overarching lifelong goals, aims, and aspirations).

Comprehension and purpose comprise two key parts of meaning in life. A sense of purpose orients a person to an overarching goal which keeps one engaged and to which one is committed (Steger et al 2013). This sense of purpose is, furthermore, linked with

happiness. As Walker and Kavedžija remark, happiness marks "a starting point for inquiring into what gives lives a sense of purpose or direction, or how people search for the best way to live – even in dire and hostile circumstances." They go further and note that "happiness is often something to be achieved – or not – by living a life of one kind or another," (Walker and Kavedžija 2016:21). Graham (2017) uses the term 'agency' to describe this pursuit of a purposeful and fulfilling life. This chapter adds to what Borwick et al (2013:100) see as the underrepresentation of experiences of existential values and sense of agency in the existing literature.

Many who work with health and wellbeing are cognisant of the positive, and protective, role that finding meaning has on an individual. This chapter adds to the previous and expands upon the notion of existential well-being by engaging with the importance of meaning and purpose through the lens of salutogenesis. For the purposes of this chapter, I am drawing on my informants' discussions about what makes life valuable, meaningful and worth living – essentially, where they find their sense of purpose in life. Much like the previous chapter, this chapter focuses heavily on ethnography to situate them within their personal stories and demonstrate how they talk about their sense of purpose and make sense of their lives and experiences. This is largely done through a focus on narratives. King et al (2006:193) posit that "narratives have been portrayed as instantiations of meaning making" as it can provide insight into how meaning is created from experiences. Similarly, Sommer and Baumeister (1998:145) remark that "life meaning is often represented and related in story form," lending itself readily to studies that are qualitative in nature. It is for these reasons that this chapter focuses on the stories people told about how they came to make sense of their lives and where they located these driving forces in their lives.

Salutogenesis

The main school of thought I am adopting for examining meaning is the one that is put forth by Aaron Antonovsky (1979) in *Health, Stress, and Coping.* He terms this concept 'salutogensis' – literally, the origins of health. Antonovsky considered that everyone, at all times, is surrounded by stressors. These stressors impact upon one's ability to remain well, and subsequently render a majority of the population at the lower end of health. He saw health and illness not as dichotomies, but rather as opposing classifications at either end of a continuum. To explain how one moved up or down the scale, he employed the use of a concept called the sense of coherence (SOC). This construct is crucial in that

it provides a person's orientation towards his or her place in the world. Specifically, he defines the sense of coherence as a "generalised orientation toward the world which perceives it, on a continuum, as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful," (Antonovsky, 1996:15). The sense of coherence is informed by life experiences; how one perceives, or attaches meaning to, these life experiences are determined by the type and strength of one's generalised resistance resources, or GRRs. These generalised resistance resources are defined as "any characteristic of the person, the group, or the environment that can facilitate effective tension management," (Antonovsky 1979:99). He cites that perhaps some of the most important GRRs are things like money or being literate.

Antonovsky posits that his sense of coherence is a cross-cultural construct. That is, it can be found in virtually any context. Indeed, the literature thus far has confirmed the presence of it in varying circumstances among different groups. A systematic review conducted by Eriksson and Linström (2005) found that the concept held up during their investigation which covered thirty-three languages and thirty-two different countries around the world. It should be noted, however, that South Africa was the only African country mentioned in their review of 458 publications and 13 doctoral theses. Though most of these studies have been quantitative in nature, some qualitative researchers have conducted studies on the salutogenic theory and its core component, meaning. As mentioned previously, the study conducted by Borwick et al (2013) used a narrative approach, combined with the salutogenic theory, to explore themes of well-being and strength among Burmese refugees in Australia. A set of existential values was key for his group of participants; among these were factors that create a valuable, meaningful life worth living (Borwick et al, 2013). This process of making meaning is crucial, particularly to refugees who may undergo a series of experiences that seem in complete discordance with the world they knew before. This meaning making is also central to the methodology employed by Borwick et al. Narratives, even self-narratives, allow people to "develop a sense that at least some of their goals and achievements are good and meaningful," (Thin, 2012: 321). The importance of a narrative approach in creating meaning was explored in the first chapter.

Salutogenesis, while a popular concept, appears to be relatively underutilised in practice. Astier Almedom (2005) compiled a chart of all the major theories that can be subsumed under positive psychology as it relates to trauma. She asserts that the SOC concept has been the most influential due to this wide-reaching application, yet I found that

other theories related to positive psychology and the salutogenic model, such as posttraumatic growth, hardiness and locus of control for instance, have produced far more research, especially as it relates to refugee studies. Anthropologists, in general, have yet to meaningfully engage with the salutogenic model in general or the sense of coherence in particular, despite its easy facilitation into the discipline.

It is worth mentioning again another concept related to salutogenesis and one which overlaps with it. Recall the concept of logotherapy, first introduced by Viktor Frankl in 1946. It is rare to find a study on meaning and well-being that does not include a nod to Frankl's work. This theory of logotherapy stems from his work firstly as a psychiatrist and secondly from his own first-hand knowledge of life in a concentration camp. In considering his reflections, he realised that the primary question was not on why or how men died, but rather how and why they continued to live in spite of the severe physical and psychological suffering. In this way, this concept is perhaps closely linked with Antonovsky's salutogenesis model. For Frankl, logotherapy "focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man's search for such a meaning," (Frankl 1956:121). The latter part of this definition shows an orientation toward the future and will be important in subsequent chapters which focus on hope and narratives of the future. For this chapter, however, the centrality of meaning is crucial in that this drive is clearly present in the narratives of my interlocutors.

Employment and a Sense of Purpose

Perhaps the most obvious example of where people find meaning is through their employment. Indeed, if one is searching for a way to make life manageable (i.e. have the resources at one's disposal in order to meet demands), then this is certainly a logical place to start. This link between work and meaning is so strong that Derek Summerfield's commentary on Tribe's article (2002:248) asserts, "The one surely indisputable fact in the literature of involuntary migration is that people do well, or not, as a function of their capacity to rebuild social capital and meaningful ways of life. Work is central to this." This statement is corroborated by research on this topic. For instance, Ying et al (1997) found that employment was a key generalised resistance resource – therefore central in maintaining a high sense of coherence – for Southeast Asian refugees resettled in the US. Employment as a generalised resistance resource acted both to increase understanding of the host culture as well as to provide a financial resource (Ying et al: 1997). Krause (2015),

an economist studying the links between happiness and work, also notes the multiple benefits of employment. Though work increases one's utility and consumption potential, most people attach meaning to work that exceeds its monetary usefulness. Additionally, it may be seen as an 'essential social norm', especially for those of working age, and can have profound effects on one's identity. Unemployment, then, can and often does have detrimental effects. These include the severing of social relationships, a lack of perceived contribution to society and the removal of a structured, daily routine (Krause 2015:515). Other authors are quick to point out that the impact may be mitigated by other factors such as substituting other activities for work, legitimising one's unemployment and belonging to other non-work based social networks (Dolan et al 2008). Recall Helliwell et al's (2017:11) warning, however, that unemployment may represent one of those conditions in which people are simply unable to adapt.

Most of my interlocutors were unemployed as they lacked a formal contract with an employer. Some, however, did work in the informal economy (in the Gambia) or engaged in voluntary work (the UK). For the purposes of this thesis, work will include those with formal contracts, those who engage in informal work and those who undertake voluntary work. A strict definition of work as a stable financial resource, however, is not uniformly relevant for my research. Instead, I focus more attention on the meaning and purpose it could, and often did, provide.

Pursuing work, or more fulfilling work, was a popular topic of discussion. Many who were volunteering in the UK expressed deep regret coupled with impatience at their inability to access paid employment in the UK due to their lack of status. They expressed embarrassment at having to rely on others, or on the government, for subsistence. In the Gambia, lack of opportunities for well-paying jobs caused frustration for many, and resulted in several trying to 'sell' themselves to me as good workers if only I would take them to the US.

My nationality certainly shaped the initial encounters I had with people and appealed to their desires for a better life, which many were convinced could be found in the United States. Others recounted that all Gambians have relatives who live abroad in the US or in Europe and send money back regularly. These assertions were not without substance. It was noted that in 2013, the Gambia's net migration rate was the highest in all of Africa (EASO 2017:22). It is because of these relatives abroad who frequently send

remittances, those I spoke with told me, that so many Gambians can afford luxury items such as fruit, which is quite expensive and, therefore, out of reach for many of the refugees with whom I spoke. If one is struggling to pay 8 dalasi for a bus fare, then a single apple at 50 dalasi is virtually unattainable.[10] These people wanted their chance to enjoy apples – or, preferably, to be the ones who could afford to send money back so that others might enjoy this previously forbidden (costly) fruit.

The lack of money to purchase goods such as fruit, which was deemed vital for children in particular, was not due to any restrictions against refugees in seeking out paid employment. The Gambia, for its part, abides by the OAU's 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. In the 2008 Gambia Refugee Act, it recognises that groups may be accepted into the country on a prima facie basis, and, furthermore, that those accepted as refugees are entitled to many of the same benefits that its citizens enjoy. This means that in addition to being able to freely move throughout the country, refugees are also entitled to engage in wage-earning employment. Two of the three individuals featured in this section will be based on those in the Gambia due to this Refugee Act and the right it grants to seek employment.

Most of the refugees I spoke with came from Francophone countries and therefore those who had regular, contractual employment often worked as French teachers in the Gambia. It should be noted that these men were not French teachers in their home countries and did not study to become teachers but were offered these positions due to their fluency in French. French is a core class that Gambian students must take as they are surrounded on three sides by Francophone Senegal. The French teachers bemoaned that, regardless of their personal backgrounds, they were relegated to poorly paid teaching positions that consigned them to surviving rather than thriving. They assured me that their counterparts teaching English were paid far more handsomely than they were. I cannot confirm or deny this claim, though it was made by several men (for they were all men who had secured these positions) which lead me to conclude that perhaps there was a grain of truth to it. Indeed, during one focus group conducted by UNHCR at GAFNA's head office, all the men gathered (this group constituted only 'other' French-speaking men – i.e. those who were not Senegalese) had to say how many meals their children ate per day, on average. One of the men, a French teacher whose wife I spent much time with, lowered his

[10] During my fieldwork, one Great British Pound fluctuated roughly between 45 and 50 dalasi.

eyes to the floor in shame as he gave his answer. "Two," he admitted in a low voice. "Two!" the facilitator shouted in outrage. "How are you expecting growing children to eat only two meals a day? Children need three – you need to give them three from now on! Okay?" he asked the man. The man nodded, eyes still lowered, while the leader gave a final 'tsk' and shake of his head before moving on to the next question, content that he had done the right thing by insisting on three meals a day. If men employed as teachers were struggling to support their families on their meagre salaries, coupled with accepting a position because one speaks a certain language and not because one enjoys the work, then it stands to reason that employment did not create a sense of purpose among the French teacher with whom I spoke despite its positive potential.

The fishing boat

One of the most highly educated men I met in the Gambia was both a refugee and unemployed. Though he had attended the University of Dakar to study law, he was not among the French teachers that seemed so common to this group. I did not ask why he had been unsuccessful in finding a job, but he wife confided in me that his eyesight was not very good. Indeed, I had assumed as much considering that his eyes shifted back and forth in automatic tremors whenever he fixed them on you. He claimed with a laugh that he came to the Gambia "without any level, without any skills out of law." Due to heavy fees for foreigners to practice law and the fact that he entered the country in 1998, a time when refugees from the Casamance region were unrecognised as such, he found his degree useless. William claimed that his work with Amnesty International, recording abuses occurring in his home region, meant that he quickly turned into a target and had to flee. Though he mocked himself for lack of what he saw as more 'practical skills' to help him in his new environment, he was not content to merely sit around idly.

In the Gambia, William dabbled in the informal economy to make ends meet. At first he mainly collected firewood from 'the bush' to sell in town as this is what most people use for cooking. The main source of firewood for the greater Serrekunda/Banjul area was found along the southern border with Senegal – the Casamance region. These borders are porous and remain largely free from controls such as checkpoints. Those who collect firewood to sell typically cross this poorly demarcated barrier into Senegal to gather the wood and return to the Gambia to sell it. The government of the Gambia, pressured by Senegal, had recently clamped down on the firewood business and made it illegal to sell wood chopped across the border. The Gambian government was careful to highlight the

danger of the situation (the Casamance region is saturated with landmines), though it is more likely that it came about through Senegal's insistence. It is interesting to note that William claimed to never have returned to Senegal since he fled in 1998. While this may be true, he told me that the government clamp-down is the reason that collecting firewood is no longer a viable option to him. The porousness of the border seemed to exist both in theory and practice.

Following this unsuccessful venture, William turned to buying and reselling clothes for small sums. Most of his family's income came from the sale of these clothes and from the small sums his wife collected by selling groundnuts. His wife, Binta, was very keen to start a salon business but the start-up costs proved to be too much. Nevertheless, she persisted in seeking assistance from GAFNA (which remained unsuccessful during my fieldwork) and proved her hairdressing skills whenever she could. Somehow, between these small and sporadic jobs, they supported not only their three daughters, but also the wife's younger sister and brother who lived with them and were traumatised by witnessing their parents' deaths during the fighting in Casamance and suffered frequent nightmares due to it.

William's formal education, though it did not generate income, afforded him many opportunities in the Gambia. For example, he was frequently called upon for his translation skills within UNHCR because of his fluency in both English and French as well as several of the main local languages that refugees used, such as Jola and Wolof. He claimed that he was occasionally needed for translation skills for three or four days at a time. "I come free, I go freely – they never give me something [payment] for that!" he exclaimed with a laugh. Though his skills were seen as highly valuable, this value did not extend to a monetary exchange. He was told that they also have to do some work on a voluntary (free) basis. "But you are receiving your salaries!" he claimed to retort to these staff members. Nevertheless, he enjoyed the work and thus continued to act as translator when needed. He was also elected by Senegalese refugees to the position of refugee leader, meaning he greeted new arrivals and helped them access certain services, answered any queries and raised pertinent issues facing this community with GAFNA and UNHCR staff members. Refugees from various backgrounds sought his advice on legal matters, and he had helped several flee the country and claim asylum in Dakar when they were being threatened with imprisonment in the Gambia's notorious Mile 2 prison. Though he complained over the lack of reimbursement for such roles (such as transportation costs and

mobile phone credit), he continued being active in the community. This continuation of work despite non-payment can be seen as serving the greater good. Indeed, Steger et al (2013:173) remark that "meaning is most fully achieved when people actively engage in pursuits that transcend their own immediate interests." This self-transcendence is "a defining feature of purpose in life", indicating that these roles provided a way for him to recognise and practice his character strengths (Steger et al 2013:173). Most recently, he had taken business opportunities into his own hands and thrown his energy into a business solution that would benefit potentially several hundred urban refugees residing in the greater Serrekunda area.

William's business idea involved a fishing boat. Specifically, he envisaged a refugee-manned fishing boat that would trawl the coast of the Gambia. After the fish were caught, vans would drive the fish to the waiting refugee women who would dry some of the fish and take the fresh and dried fish to the market to be sold. All refugees would put money into this venture, and the women would pay to sell the fish, keeping the profits they made for themselves, while the money they paid for the fish would go to the fishing crew and back into the venture to ensure the upkeep of the boat and nets as well as paying for other essentials such as petrol. He was even proposing to use the money to ensure everyone had enough rice to eat. Those who would be active in this venture, particularly where the selling came into play, would be those who were labelled as the most 'vulnerable' refugees in the community and who UNHCR were not in a position to help further. William used his extensive network as President of the Senegalese refugees to gather nearly four hundred signatures of urban refugees who supported this venture and would like to be a part of it. Embolden by this initial interest, he applied for a livelihood grant through UNHCR to turn this dream into a reality.

This fishing venture not only gave him a sense of purpose, but also had the potential to strengthen his relationship with his wife. Going from the relatively poor Casamance region to study law in the country's capital city typically bestowed a type of 'big man' status. Binta appeared to be much younger than William. In fact, he told me that he had to wait while she 'grew up' before his uncle brought her to him to be his wife, six years after he had fled Senegal. Though she spoke haltingly in French or English, and I spoke nothing but basic greetings in Jola or Wolof, she did manage to express her frustration with her husband's situation. One evening while I was visiting her family, she invited me for a stroll around the compound, linking her arm through mine. The compound comprised eight

simple houses, constructed out of concrete blocks with roofs and doors made of corrugated iron. Set to one side was a communal well, toilet and shower. She pointed out these features to me, highlighting the yellow bucket used to fetch water. Once we were out of earshot of her family – save for the youngest baby strapped to her back with a length of cloth – she leaned closer and whispered, "My husband has lost his power."

This power could have meant many things. But judging by this, and other remarks she made about her husband's abilities, such as his failing eyesight, it meant that he has lost his status. She saw him as incapable of providing for her and their children. Undoubtedly, she thought that such a learned man would provide her with an easier life than what she currently experienced. They were struggling to pay the rent which for their house was the cheapest accommodation in the greater Serrekunda area according to GAFNA statistics. They had no electricity or running water. Food was also a challenge, and I noticed Binta collecting leftovers after one GAFNA workshop. Depending on the length of workshops, a lunch dish consisting of rice, vegetables and some type of meat would be provided to workshops participants. Several large platters would be piled with the meal and a group of four or five people would gather around it, rolling the mixture into a ball and eating it with their right hands. After a group finished eating, Binta collected the platter and scooped any leftovers into a large plastic bag before placing the plastic bag inside of a cardboard box. When I went to visit her family the evening after this workshop, she asked if I was hungry and proudly pulled out the bag of leftover rice and vegetables.

If Binta was complaining about William's lack of 'power', or status, then perhaps he also felt his inability to provide a good life for his family. Since practicing law was highly unlikely and his clothing sales yielded small returns, he saw his fishing venture as a way to finally pull his family out of poverty. While he admitted that he had little experience in fishing – beyond helping family members during school holidays – he boasted that he had the 'level' required to "manage the system". He was, after all, the one who completed the application and applied for the funds. This dream undoubtedly gave him a sense of meaning in his life. His whole persona changed and he became increasingly animated as he revealed this business idea to me. It seemed like he had found a way to regain a lost sense of confidence and capability. His excitement about this project was contagious, and I overheard several members of GAFNA speaking about it at various times. It seemed that a small pilot had been done previously that involved only two families but was generally regarded as a success. Hopes were high for this larger project, even if it was being

continuously scaled down. For instance, his original proposal included four boats. His final proposal involved only a single boat. "I'm sure that, with the team I have, if you go about six months, I'll buy another boat!" he exclaimed, tapping his fingers on the table in front of him for emphasis. The only foreseeable problem was that, in order for the proposal to pass, the nets had to be scaled down from 200 metres to a mere 60 metres. He questioned whether fishing could be successful with such a small net, but his optimism was not to be dampened. The project was approved for funding, and he had a crew at the ready as well as all materials except for the fishing boat itself. He was still waiting by the time I left the field. Since it had been approved, however, he remained confident of its eventual success.

The informal economy

Stories about deriving meaning and purpose from work, like the one above, were more abundant in the Gambia where one could pursue employment. Even the thriving informal sector provided opportunities to create meaning. Recall Evette, the Congolese woman from the previous chapter who had lost a baby and a husband in rapid succession. She proved herself to be quite a competent business woman. She was the recipient of a livelihood grant, awarded by GAFNA, whose purpose was to give recipients a helping hand in creating a sustainable source of income. The livelihood grant was for 5,000 dalasi (about £100).

Initially, Evette attempted a small cooking business, selling lunch on the side of the road, as many Gambians do. She claimed that she was forced to quit because jealous Gambian rivals, unable to bear being outdone by a foreigner, scared her customers away. She decided instead to use the funds to buy diamante jewellery wholesale from a Chinese businessman and to buy clothes cheaply from other sellers at the market. "Anything that's nice I sell," she explained. She would buy these second-hand clothes, wash them, iron them and then mark up the price for resale. For example, she would buy something for 50 dalasi, sell it for 150 dalasi and pocket the 100 dalasi profit (At the time, D50 equalled approximately £1). Evette, similar to many other businessmen and women in the Gambia, would take her wares around to various offices and shops. For example, when she would take her jewellery, she would then say, "I also have some clothes, you can see?" With these small earnings, she was able to open a savings account. "I save small small…even if I have little, I add there. Then I'm happy, that I'm living." Her business mind allowed her to increase the initial grant of D5,000. "Going and going and going…it go to – it got to 30,000!" she exclaimed proudly. She took pride in her work and

found it meaningful in providing a sense of security for her and her son. She also took the opportunity to teach friends about the importance of using a savings account and placing even small amounts of D100 in at a time. She claimed that she was a very smart student growing up and by demonstrating her business prowess, she was able to prove that she had not lost her cleverness.

While stories that looked at meaning through work were more likely in the Gambian setting, those in the UK were not exclusively denied these experiences. Refugees were permitted to seek employment and were encouraged to do so. It is worth noting, however, that despite the permission to work, refugees and those with leave to remain still experience the highest unemployment rates of any group in the UK (Dwyer et al 2016:3). Those who were asylum seekers or refused asylum seekers were generally barred from seeking employment (Rotter 2016:84) unless they offered a particular skill that the UK needed. Examples of these types of jobs include things like chemical engineers, high-quality pipe welders or ballet dancers. In other words, very special skill sets that very few people in the world – whether migrants or not – possess.[11] Therefore, the asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers I spoke with were not in paid employment in the UK.

Voluntary Work

There is a small but growing body of anthropological research that examines how asylum seekers structure their time spent 'waiting' for either a positive decision, more evidence for a fresh claim or deportation within the UK. Rebecca Rotter (2016) remarks that this period of stereotypical idleness can in fact be quite active and meaningful. During this period of waiting, her informants "socialised, studied, shopped, undertook domestic work, prayed, gathered information about the asylum process, and supported and elicited support from peers," (Rotter 2016:93). Several of her informants and my own turned to regular voluntary work. This work became so important to their lives that many simply filled up their days with different voluntary positions. It provided their days with a sense of purpose and meaning, as well as produced a sense of progress in time (Rotter 2016:93) even if it did not provide financial security. Recall that in the UK during my fieldwork (2014-2015), asylum seekers were entitled to a small weekly sum of £36.59 per

[11] https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/jul/29/restrictions-sought-asylum-seekers-jobs

week.[12] Refused asylum seekers that I spoke with received a weekly £15 in support from WERS.

One of my informants, Abigail, sought to imbue this period of enforced idleness with a sense of purpose by engaging in voluntary work. She was a single mother of two, having fled her country with her children to join her sister in the UK to escape, among other things, an abusive relationship. Her asylum claim had been refused and she was facing threats of deportation from the government. Nevertheless, she was seeking out opportunities that provided her with a sense of purpose and meaning. Though she devoted herself to her children, it had been suggested to her by a counsellor that she seek out some activities that keep her busy doing what she enjoyed. For her, this took the form of volunteering in a clothes store.

This clothes store at WERS was unique in Newcastle in that, though it was called a 'store' and resembled a charity shop (meaning that all items were donated and 'pre-loved'), the items themselves were free for asylum seekers and refugees. Shoppers had to check in with counter staff to have their chosen items counted and logged, so as to prevent one person from taking more than their fair share in a week. Abigail was one of the staff, responsible for checking people out as well as choosing what items to put out and restocking when necessary. She found this work to be crucial to her well-being. "This voluntary work really makes me feel…I go back home fulfilled because I've done something I love doing," she admitted with a shy smile. She told me of her life in her home country and how she ran her own clothing business. She travelled extensively to buy nice fabrics, not just around Africa but even going as far as Dubai. Being active in a clothing store, even if it was vastly different from the one she owned before, still provided her enough similarity to lend a sense of meaning to her life. Her past and present were not – for the moment at least – completely ruptured, and it was this voluntary job that allowed her to use her skills in an environment that was comfortable to her. This job, then, allowed her to feel some sense of continuity with her pre-migration life (the 'comprehensibility' component of the sense of coherence) as well as acting as a generalised resistance resource by providing her with a social network of other staff members who were also asylum seekers or refugees. Furthermore, it allowed her to contribute to the community which has

[12] https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get
http://www.star-network.org.uk/index.php/refugees/facts_figures

been found in other studies to provide meaning and increase well-being (see for example Grouden and Jose 2015).

Better than Silver and Gold

Education in the Gambia

While education certainly allowed William's and Evette's ideas to reach fruition in the Gambia, it was not education itself which allowed them to find a meaning and purpose in their lives. Borwick et al (2013) note that amongst their informants, education is often associated with a secure and stable future through its link with employment. Education, for their informants and for mine mentioned above, merely gave them the tools to seek out jobs and businesses through which they were able to find a sense of meaning. It is clear, in this sense then, that education acted as one of Antonovsky's generalized resistance resources through which coping and continuing with a meaning life were made possible. Others, however, found purpose through education though not necessarily due to its link with employment.

In the Gambia, education opportunities were not as abundant as in the UK. While they were not non-existent, for most refugees I spoke with attending university in the Gambia was very much a pipe dream. Tuition was virtually unaffordable for most of the population. Sixty-five percent of the population live in poverty, as defined by less than $2USD a day (Saine 2012:22), and refugees are typically seen as having less resources at their disposal than citizens due to the lack of extended family to pool funds and the difficulty in finding work as a foreigner. Prices (often listed in USD) for tuition ranged from $6,000USD per year (with a suggested $1100USD for accommodation and $1000USD for food expense) to study pre-medicine, dentistry and pharmacy at the American International University of West Africa[13] to D40,000 (approximately $750USD) per year at the University of the Gambia.[14] Though several people I spoke to had begun studies in their home countries, these were universally abandoned. Recall in William's case, however, that though he was not formally using his education, it nevertheless

[13] www.aiu.edu.gm/fees.html

[14] The official university website is unavailable. This figure came from a newspaper article where the vice chancellor of the University of the Gambia quoted this number. That article can be accessed at http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/prof-kah-says-gambia-university-tuition-affordable-students-disagree. I will also add here that I spoke with a student at the university who stated that tuition ran approximately $900USD per year.

conveyed certain benefits. He even confided in me the importance of an education, stating "my level help me too much." He explained that whenever he was faced with a problem, he immediately sought ways in which to overcome it. This coping strategy was made possible by his education level and the analytical skills it gave him to think critically about ways to overcome his problems. Thus, though having an education or having attended university was still beneficial, it was not practical to continue with a university education given the large sums of money involved. Many focused instead on gaining certificates, diplomas or experience through apprenticeships. While the government did not support refugees to take these courses, GAFNA did receive funds through UNHCR help fund these education and training opportunities.

During my first day at GAFNA, I met with Ebou Joof in his office. He was the staff member in charge while Yusufa Gomez, the executive director, was away visiting family in Europe. He explained to me the position of GAFNA within the humanitarian scene in the Gambia. He outlined, among other things, the role that GAFNA played in education. At the time, they were mainly dedicated to supporting children to attend primary and secondary school by helping with school fees and books. A few individuals were supported in tertiary education in subjects such as computer skills, accounting, managerial skills and conflict resolution. "Learning is better than silver and gold," Joof finished with a proud grin. He rifled around in a filing cabinet and came out with a stack of papers. He handed them to me and explained that these were the applications they had received for educational assistance. It was a simple form, photocopied with a picture of the beneficiary in the top right-hand corner. Most of them were pictures of young children, though not all were. "We don't discriminate on applications," he explained. "Some may be dropouts but now want to better themselves by getting an education." This service was clearly a source of pride for him and, among those I spoke with, it was invaluable for realising a better future.

While all those I spoke with asked for education assistance for their children, a few also sought it for themselves. I met Benjamin just before the start of one of the workshops organised by GAFNA. Because the building itself was becoming more crowded due to the amount of people turning up to attend the workshop, we each picked up a plastic chair and took them outside to sit in the shade of the orange trees in the GAFNA compound. Though Benjamin came from Senegal, I complimented him on his nearly flawless English. He beamed at me and admitted that languages were his passion – he had studied French,

English and German at school and was fluent in them. He also spoke his local language, Jola, in addition to Wolof and some Mandinka, though his current focus was on mastering Spanish. English, however, was his favourite language. "The best books are written in English," he told me with a grin.

Benjamin came to the Gambia in 2000 while the rest of his family fled to Guinea-Bissau. He told me that he had been to the Gambia on holiday once when he was younger and he had remembered which road to take when the fighting in Casamance escalated. "When I was here, my first problem…you know me, I like education, I like school. So when I came here in 2000, my first thing is to go to school. But at that time, I don't have money to go to school," he explained to me. He had been unaware of how to apply for refugee status or that, as a refugee, he could apply for funding to help him return to school. He did his best to blend in with Gambians out of fear of retribution. He wasn't sure what he was so afraid of exactly, but that this fear guided him and he relied heavily on his Jola identity to navigate the Gambian community rather than his Senegalese identity. He feared even his neighbours finding out. It was only after speaking to the president of Senegalese refugees that he received the information, and gentle prodding, to present himself to the Gambia Refugee Commission and GAFNA to register as an official refugee and to begin benefitting from some initiatives set up for people like him.

With a characteristic grin and a laugh at his own eagerness, he told me how he got his ID card and immediately wrote to GAFNA to ask for training assistance. "I was paid by GAFNA to do IT!" he boasted proudly. He immediately reached down and began digging around in his bag, searching for the right piece of paper. He thrust the paper into my hands while explaining. "Me, if I go, I go with everything [all of his education documents]." "Just in case?" I asked. "Yeah! In case," he affirmed. "Maybe tomorrow they [potential employers] will ask for a certificate – for a transcript – to see whether you work well or not. It will help you a lot," he stated, shuffling the various certificates, transcripts and proof of payment forms in his bag. While these courses ended up being paid for by GAFNA, they did not contribute anything toward a salary. Benjamin picked up gardening work while his wife was a cleaner. He explained that gardening was one of the few work opportunities available to him as he needed a job that was flexible enough to allow for either morning classes or afternoon classes. Many other jobs required an 8am-4pm working schedule that was simply out of the question for him if he wanted to pursue his education.

Indicating the other forms in his bag, he elaborated on all that GAFNA had assisted him with. "So they pay for me certificate, they pay for me diploma, and now I'm doing A+. In order to be in maintenance," he clarified. "So then maybe I can go higher to get a better job," he added hopefully. When I asked him why had chosen an IT path rather than focusing on languages which clearly loved, he responded, "Because I know now the world we are living in is about information." He went on say that if there was a school for languages in the Gambia then perhaps he would think about studying languages further, but at the moment it was not possible. "But also," he interjected thoughtfully, "with IT I can do some research, I can research and eventually be better [at languages]." Learning languages was still clearly important to him. "If I am not educated," he explained, "we cannot sit down here and talk. It's very different because you don't speak very good Jola," he added matter-of-factly.

Education was clearly of central importance to him. It was crucial to him not only in his youth when he fled the Casamance region, but also in his adult life in his new country. While the topics he focused on had changed, the love of learning in and of itself had not been dampened. Benjamin was passionate about education, and his eyes sparkled as he grinned and laughed during our chat. I wonder who I would have met just a year or two prior to this, before he realised he was entitled to some assistance with education and training. His life now revolved around gaining competencies and creating a good life for his wife and baby girl. "Education, that is my pride," he boasted toward the end of our conversation. He then told me two of his favourite sayings. The first echoed what I heard in Joof's office on my first day at GAFNA: *Learning is better than silver and gold.* "We have also another saying, '*Education is the key to success,*" he told me. "So these two proverbs make me like to study more," he finished with a grin, fastening his bag as the final call before the meeting rang out.

Becoming bigger and better in the UK

Since, as stated previously, paid employment was barred to asylum seekers in the UK, many instead turned to education to find meaning and a sense of purpose. Several of my informants did both classes and voluntary work. Even older asylum seekers seized education opportunities when they could. One woman proudly told me how she loved learning and sought out hard courses that she didn't yet understand but wanted to. In fact, she was hoping to study physics next. She had recently completed her GCSEs and

remarked how she always made friends wherever she went, even if she was over thirty years older than the rest of the students!

Others shared a similar attitude, taking classes they would never have considered before. It should be noted that asylum seekers were not eligible for all classes. The government offered free courses in certain areas and up to a certain level. All refugees and asylum seekers, however, were entitled to free English classes through Newcastle College. Newcastle College was, unfortunately, oversubscribed, and I had many individuals come into WERS requesting to put be on a course, only for me to ring the college and find out that they had to wait several months until the next semester.

I met Mariam, a young Eritrean girl of nineteen, collapsed in a chair in the Operation Manager's office at WERS, wiping a fistful of tissues across her sodden cheeks. She had come to WERS for support and began sobbing during her chat with a support worker. As the support worker was male, he followed WERS protocol and immediately asked the Operations Manager to take over. This is done for two interrelated reasons: the first reason is that women may prefer to talk to women, and that crying may be indicative of traumatic events like sexual violence that are probably easier to discuss with a woman, and secondly such issues should be discussed with someone like the Project Director or Operations Manager, who happened to be women and, most importantly, who are trained to handle such complicated and delicate interactions. I was called into the room once it was established that she was, quite simply, overwhelmed by the negativity she perceived in her life: she was not enrolled in education courses, she felt like her English skills were severely lacking, she hated the town she lived in (located outside of Newcastle – she was desperate to get to Newcastle) and she felt incredibly alone and isolated. I was asked if I'd like to help her integrate more into the community and show her around as part of WERS's befriending programme. I accepted and smiled at the girl as she smiled feebly back and arranged a time and place to meet with her in a few days' time.

Mariam and I became fast friends. Mariam expressed embarrassment at her previous outburst and admitted that she was just feeling overwhelmed with everything. We met at least once a week over the next year where I learned about her 'back home' as well as her new life in the UK. I saw the overwhelmed young girl I met in WERS blossom into a funny and vivacious character. She told me it was who she was before. "In my back home, I was always giving my parents headaches! I used to be very naughty," she laughed

one afternoon as we strolled through the centre of Newcastle's busy shopping district along Northumberland Street. What, then, had brought about this change? I do believe that I caught her on a 'bad day', as it were, when I met her at WERS. However, I did see her become more confident and comfortable in the community. The reasons are no doubt manifold and nuanced. Crucially, she highlighted the meaning that education brought to her life and recognised its life-changing role.

Enrolling in classes gave her life a sense of purpose. She loved to talk about education and sought out opportunities to enrol in any classes that would accept her as an asylum seeker. Mariam admitted that before she accessed these classes, "I'm very stressed, I'm always crying as well, I don't get sleep. But when I start college, I become bigger, better better. Now, thanks to God, everything's well and I love my school." This quote could also fit within a posttraumatic growth narrative, and indeed she did say and exhibit many indications that she has experienced PTG but given my closeness with her I chose to include it in a discussion on a meaning-making as seen through a sense of coherence lens. In particular, I want to highlight the added benefits of accessing education beyond providing meaning to her life.

Education allowed her to make her life more manageable not only by giving her a choice and thus sense of agency over her life (Rotter 2016) but by also facilitating her access to a support network of other students and even others from her home country, acting as a generalised resistance resource. It was actually through this network that she met a man who was friends with another asylum seeker (in Germany) who came from the town next to hers. The Newcastle friend was able to call the friend in Germany who knew her family, assured her that they were safe and revealed that since she had left her mother had given birth to a baby girl! Mariam came rushing to our usual spot at the back of the ground floor at Newcastle Library to tell me the good news. Her eyes shone bright with excitement and emotion as she thanked God her family was safe and imagined what her new sister was like. This information would not have been possible without the extensive and indirect benefits that enrolling in education brought.

Education proved to be a vital GRR for her, unlocking social support and creating a sense that her life had now become manageable. She felt lost upon her arrival in the UK, but education, and the secondary benefits like a support network which tied her, however tenuously, to her family back home, made other stressors in her life more bearable. I will

speak more about Mariam and the role that education had on her life in another chapter as I witnessed its profound effect on her life.

Other Sources of Meaning

The two sources of meaning mentioned – employment and education – are clearly not an exhaustive list of sources of meaning. An astute reader may wonder why one of the most well-known sources of meaning for many people today, and indeed historically, is not mentioned: religion. Religion provides many people with a source of meaning and a sense of purpose in their lives. As all of my informants claimed to be religious, it is not unusual that so many spoke to me about this aspect of their lives. I have not, however, included it in this chapter as I felt it more appropriate to include in the final chapter which highlights the role of religion in people's lives, as well as the common thread it provides in narratives of well-being and happiness.

Conclusion

Most people in the world seem to have a need for some overall sense of purpose or meaning in life. This, in turn, is important for well-being. So important is it, in fact, that some such as Steger et al (2013:175) implore us to "consider whether meaning…should be considered to be the foundation of well-being." The aspects outlined above – employment, and education – are central to the meaning-making process and a sense of well-being for many people and certainly were crucial to my informants in all three settings. Following Antonovsky's salutogenesis concept, and in particular his sense of coherence, I demonstrated how these life domains allow a person to feel that life is more comprehensible, manageable and meaningful by being present. Certainly, not all of these were available to those I spoke with, but everyone discussed at least one aspect of a life domain and the positive impact it had on their lives. These three domains certainly fit with what are described as generalised resistance resources and provide a way for effective tension management by providing a means to cope with an otherwise stressful situation. Furthermore, these domains build upon themselves by providing the resources necessary (social networks, financial capital, careers, even motivation) to allow people to pursue their goals. This commitment to personal goals, Steger et al (2013:174) claim, "lends a sense of agency, life structure, and personal meaning to people's lives." Striving to attain these

goals and a sense of purpose more broadly positively impacts upon a person's sense of well-being. Other significant connections between meaning and well-being, however, do exist. One of the most significant sources of meaning in life with direct implications for well-being feature in the following section: relationships (Steger et al 2013). It is to this interpersonal domain, relational well-being, that I turn to next.

Chapter 4: Personal Communities and Their Impact on Well-Being

This chapter marks the transition from the existential, internal meaning-making and reinterpretation of life events to a more interpersonal one. Specifically, this chapter and the next focus on relational well-being. Social relationships are seen as a key element in maintaining a positive sense of well-being. As White (2010:168) remarks, "Wellbeing is something that happens in a relationship." Leung et al (2013:248) equate these relationships specifically with happiness, claiming it to be directly impacted by the number of close relatives that one has, as well as the quantity and quality of friendships. Walker and Kavedžija (2016:2; 18) remark that successive waves of anthropologists have noticed that "people are generally happiest in those moments when they feel most connected to others" and that "real" happiness is not only relational but "*other-oriented*" (emphasis in original). Indeed, so central are relationships for well-being and happiness, that some authors even posit that social relationships should be included in Maslow's hierarchy of needs alongside things like food and shelter (e.g. Biswas-Diener and Diener 2006). The importance of these social relationships is magnified when one looks at the impact of them on refugees and asylum seekers.

In exploring the role of relational well-being for refugees and asylum seekers, I employ the use of two broad categories that represent this chapter and the next. The relationships in this chapter are those which typify 'close' relationships (kin, fictive kin and friend relationships), while the relationships in the next chapter typify more distant types of relationships (ethnic, national or host communities). Kin and friend relationships can contribute significantly to an individual's sense of well-being.

A useful way for framing this chapter on relational well-being is to place it within a wider discourse on personal communities. A focus on personal communities allows one to "explore in detail people's micro-social worlds and to see how they [bring] together in their day-to-day lives a range of given and chosen relationships" framing this as families of 'fate' and families of 'choice' (Pahl and Spencer 2004:203). Spencer and Pahl (2006:45) define a personal community as a "specific subset of people's informal social relationships – those who are important to them at the time, rather than all the people they know no matter how tenuous the connection." These personal communities, in turn, include "bonds

which give both structure and meaning to their lives" and "develop a person's sense of identity and belonging" (Spencer and Pahl 2006:45). In this way, personal communities cover all aspects of 'close' relationships, whether kin or not. These relationships fall under the terms 'family' and 'friend'. Though their use of 'community' instead of 'network' appears incongruous, Pahl and Spencer (2004:204) maintain that "a personal community is not itself a network but may contain networks within it." While perhaps not all agree with this distinction, and though there is much to say about communities as the next chapter shows, suffice it to say that their conceptualisation of 'personal communities' is a useful way to succinctly describe those individuals with whom one has (or feels they should have) strong ties.

This chapter will first explore the benefits of families before moving on to the 'darker' side of families, as Huovinen and Blackmore (2016) call it. Families are defined as such through their factual aspects, such as being married, being a parent, being a sibling, etc. A focus on the 'darker' side complicates the seemingly rosy picture that much of the literature uses to discuss families, before moving on to explore the ways in which refugees and asylum seekers attempt to overcome these familial contradictions and ambiguities associated with well-being by creating their own beneficial type of families. The second half of the thesis is spent engaging with the idea of friendships and the role they play in well-being. Friendships remain a less clear-cut category and, unlike the factual aspects invoked when discussing families, involve more uncertain descriptive aspects such as being friends or being colleagues. Perhaps because of the issues involved in defining and outlining the roles of a friend, friendships both within anthropology and within the larger migration discourse receive much less attention than other types of close relationships. This chapter seeks to fill this gap by teasing out the impact of friendships on well-being among those who have experienced forced migration.

The Contradictory Role of Families

The Benefits of Families

The previous two chapters focused on posttraumatic growth and meaning-making. Relationships are embedded within these two concepts. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995:93) note that when it comes to posttraumatic growth, the "quality of the relationships with family and friends before and after the traumatic event plays a role in determining the likelihood of growth." The role of family and friends is so great that they even assert that

these intimate others "may provide all the emotional support necessary," (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1995:93). This claim is supported by the literature. For instance, in Chan, Young and Sharif's (2016:294) literature review on PTG and refugees, they remark that social support from those such as partners, family members and friends "is one of the most robust predictors of PTG in the mainstream trauma literature." Similar findings exist within literature exploring the related concepts of salutogenesis, coping and resilience.

The benefit of families to well-being – and specifically to the well-being of those affected by forced migration – proliferate in the literature. Indeed, the positives of being with one's family cannot be overstated. Literature on well-being and happiness abounds with studies that point to the centrality of social networks in general (see for example White 2000; Biswas-Diener and Diener 2006) and among refugees and asylum seekers in particular (see Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani 2012; Schweitzer et al. 2007). A few studies, specifically, point to the importance of having a partner and children. In Ager et al's (2002) paper on refugees in Edinburgh, they noted that in terms of levels of depression, half of those who were single qualified for a clinical diagnosis compared with only a quarter of married respondents, indicating the importance of this relationship. Helliwell and Putnam (2004:1436) note that "marriage has universally been found to be a strong correlate of happiness." They cite a US study which found that being married was essentially the happiness equivalent of quadrupling one's annual income. Echoing this finding is work conducted by Kohler, Behrman and Skytthe (2005). They note that men and women alike who are in a relationship report significantly higher levels of happiness than those who are not in a relationship. They further elaborate on the increased happiness of those who have a child. Though they find happiness increases with only the first child, they focused on low-fertility Western populations. It is nevertheless interesting to point out the happiness that parents derive from their children, even if the social contexts are drastically different.

Few of my informants fled with their nuclear family and, even if they had, they acutely felt the absence of their wider family network, many of whom had passed away. Still, they recognised the positive role that their family played. One man, though he felt as if he had lost his 'family background' because all but a paternal aunt had been killed or was missing, highlighted the role his wife and three children played in their so-called 'second home' of the Gambia. As Laurent from Côte d'Ivoire put it, "My wife and the children, this ones, you know – I feel somehow comfortable with them. It doesn't make me think that much of those I lost behind." He found that concentrating on his family here helped

keep him more positive. "At least by seeing them," he elaborated, "I have hope that one day things might get better." This hope that his family created ensured that his well-being did not suffer. Similarly, in Cameroon, several informants also mentioned the hope that having children brought. Specifically, what kept them working hard and looking toward the future was the idea that one day their children would become the 'big men' in the society. As Marie, a Congolese refugee who was raising her four children on her own and relying on church members to pay for food and rent, said of her son, "One day he will be a big person, [have] a good job, have anything he wants." This idea gave her hope and kept her going. This type of hopeful optimism among Africans has been noted before (see Helliwell et al 2017; Graham 2009) and will be touched upon in a later chapter. What is pertinent for this discussion is Graham's (2009) finding on happiness around the world. While she notes that in Russia, the United States and countries in Latin America, positive expectations for the future – which included expectations for respondents' children – were correlated with higher levels of income, health and reported well-being, the inverse is true of respondents in Africa. That is, in Africa, the poorest respondents also appeared to be the most optimistic about their future and their children's' future (Graham 2009:68). This optimism for the future, in turn, is positively correlated with happiness. While this may be indicative of a coping strategy, such that people in extreme poverty "have to be optimistic to survive" (Graham 2009:68), it is nevertheless illuminating that this positivity about children's futures in the midst of extreme and persistent poverty was articulated in my own research.

The passive hope and optimism that Laurent and Marie narrated contrasts with the more active coping and growth roles that some families exhibited. Esther, the refused asylum seeker who was eventually granted humanitarian protection in the UK along with her pastor husband and four children in Chapter 2, provides one such example. Though she openly admitted that she suffered from depression at various stages of her asylum journey, she recognised that she was not suffering alone. Each member of the family was strong but at different times, leading them to hold up the others until they felt that they could make it through whatever was bothering them. Recall from Chapter 2 the strength she drew from her family, noting that the experience has brought them closer together and ensured that they "can't give up" now considering all the hardships they have overcome thus far. Her family relied heavily on its strength as a unit to make it through the difficult

times. She insisted that she saw the joy in even very difficult situations, so long as her family was around her.

A discussion of the benefits of families would be incomplete without a nod to the positive family transformations that can take place as a result of migration. While this aspect receives less attention in the literature, it nevertheless remained important for several of my informants. The most drastic case of a positive family transformation came from Abigail, a Nigerian woman who fled with her two sons to the UK. As she explained to me, she fled to escape an abusive relationship with her husband.[15] Her fear of being deported largely hinged on what she saw as his ability to find her if she was forced to return. So toxic was the relationship with her husband that she believed he was using witchcraft against her while she was living in the UK and which caused her to temporarily lose her sight. She sought treatment from a powerful healer, another refugee, who assured her that her husband could not harm her through this medium again. In this way, then, seeking asylum was beneficial for the family in that it disrupted a harmful relationship between spouses. This scenario contradicts the dominant themes of marriage, happiness and forced migration mentioned above; namely, that marriage and happiness enjoy a close relationship and that partners who flee together experience a higher sense of well-being.

Another way in which forced migration might change family relationships and dynamics for the better is through transforming unequal relationships into more equal ones. Grace, the religious Ivoirian living in the Gambia who was mentioned in the previous chapter, embraced the changes migration wrought. Before, she had stayed at home while her husband worked. Now, because the family struggled to support themselves on his wages alone, she worked when the opportunity presented itself. While she walked me home one evening along the dusty, potholed path to my house, she sighed and smiled up at the night sky. "You know before, I was working in a school – teaching French! Can you believe it? Me, I loved teaching the kids," she enthused. She told me how she had been employed in a primary school when she first arrived in the Gambia due to her ability to speak French. When I asked why she was not doing that now, she shook her head sadly

[15] It should be noted that this is a perfectly legitimate reason to seek asylum. While my position as a researcher was never to doubt anyone's claim to asylum as this was irrelevant for my study, I want to assure readers that according to UNHCR guidelines and training, a failure on the part of police and other state officials to adequately protect a woman from recurrent domestic violence is acceptable grounds for the woman to flee her country and lodge a legitimate asylum request. The frequency with which this is done (and with which these asylum claims are successful) is less certain.

and confided that they were forced to fire her because she did not have the appropriate training and documentation to teach children. She hoped to work in a school again one day. In the meantime, she had held other jobs like cleaning while her most recent venture saw her buying second-hand clothes from a Canadian man which she then resold. Unfortunately, it had been several months since the man had brought new stock to the Gambia. Nevertheless, she remained optimistic and confessed that she enjoyed the opportunity to contribute to the family like her husband did. "He support, I support," she told me with a grin. While these benefits of families – breaking harmful ties or positively changing family dynamics – receive less attention in the literature, they nevertheless remain important to the well-being of my informants.

The benefits of families to both well-being in general and to migrants more specifically are well documented in the literature. Therefore, it is not my intention to provide a comprehensive discussion on the ways in which families contribute to well-being, particularly among those who have migrated. Instead, I used examples to highlight the way in which the benefits of families on well-being were spoken about that corroborated with other literature, as well as discussing some of the less common ways in which the dynamics of family migration are improved. In the next section I turn to the ways in which well-being and happiness are frustrated by families and the implications of this for my informants.

Negative Impact of Families on Well-Being

While families certainly could, and often did, play an important role in the well-being and happiness of asylum seekers and refugees, they did not universally create a positive impact. Huovinen and Blackmore term these the 'dark side' of family; by this they mean the "struggles, tensions and constraints in the reworking of these [family] relationships," (Huovinen and Blackmore 2016:193). Their work focuses on 'mobility stories' among residents in a shantytown in Peru. The purpose of their chapter is to complicate the picture presented in much of the migration literature, namely "the positive, cohesive, resilient and harmonious nature of ties amongst spatially dispersed families," (Huovinen and Blackmore 2016:192). While not wishing to detract from the positive impact that families can and do have on well-being, both between those geographically dispersed and those living together, this section is devoted to the ways in which families frustrated a feeling of happiness or well-being as this aspect of experience goes largely unacknowledged in the literature.

Though the act of flight itself can disrupt many families, some find that the asylum process in the UK seriously impacts family relationships. More specifically, what my informants were narrating to me were the hazards of being a refused asylum seeker. Recall Haroun from Chapter 2, the Chadian man who 'coped ugly' after he was forced to quit his job and stop his schooling due to his refugee status being refused. In addition to these hardships, Haroun had to severely limit his contact with his cousin who lived in France and travelled frequently back to Chad. This cousin was so upset by the conditions Haroun was forced to live in – being unable to work, relying on the hospitality of friends and acquaintances for basic necessities like food and accommodation – that he threatened to come to the UK and take him home. Haroun revealed that he actively avoided his cousin when the man had visited London the previous year. "Me and him, we cannot [be] meeting," he explained with a shake of his head. When I asked why, he responded with, "Because he doesn't like my situation." "Does he get upset with it?" I asked. "*Upset*," he stressed. "He says, 'You come or I'm coming to your place and take you away.' He was serious," Haroun added. His situation in the UK strained a once-close relationship with a dear cousin. Given that he was unable to work and was effectively homeless – surviving on £15 a week and staying with various friends – a family connection could have provided a useful source of social support and helped to alleviate stress. Unfortunately, he felt that he needed to maintain his distance to prove that he was as strong and independent as he was in his country of origin. His lack of refugee status, however, severely limited his ability to provide for himself and therefore forced him to keep certain family relationships at arm's length.

Michael, a refused asylum seeker from Kenya, felt similarly distant from members of his family. He, however, chose to enforce this distance because of the role he sees families as playing. Michael, an older man with grey streaks running through his dark hair and a wide, friendly smile, had been living in the UK since 2007. He promised me that he was here to talk and he would tell me anything I wanted to know – he had nothing to hide, he told me, it was just his situation. He had left a wife and five children in his home country and had acquired another wife (also an asylum seeker) in the UK along with a young step-son. Yet, when asked what the most important thing in his future was, he replied with, "Just to hug my mom, my dad. Even one day." The pain of being away and missing them terribly weighed heavily on his mind.

As the conversation turned to talk of friends in Newcastle, he admitted that he relied on them to cope with the everyday asylum process. As asylum seekers, they were experiencing similar difficulties and hardships at the hands of the United Kingdom's Home Office. Speaking with them and discussing with them about where they were in the process, along with supporting each other through the tough times, was crucial in helping to keep him going. Turning to others in a comparable situation is common in literature on coping and posttraumatic growth. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995:100), for instance, remark that these 'similar others' "provide a useful way of understanding the coping process because they may be able to discuss specific emotional reactions and concerns that victims experience." These similar others may also be preferred over therapists and are seen as more credible because of their experience with a similar, difficult situation. It is not unusual, then, that Michael cited similar others as a crucial component of his coping. When I enquired whether discussing his situation and the problems arising from it extended to family as well, he hesitated. He took a deep breath, and attempted to explain

> When you're in this kind of situation, you don't talk so much to relatives because sometimes you wait until once you've sorted out your issues then you can [talk]. Because sometimes, you know, relatives don't like being stressed. The way families are, very few families would want to [be] involved when you are in any very difficult situation like this. They're not like friends. A friend you can be very free, you can discuss so many things, you see. But a relative, again, you have to be careful. Because that's a permanent relationship. A friend is something which can stop anytime. So when it comes to relatives, one has to be very sensitive on how to handle. Once everything is sorted then I will call him [family member]. That one makes families respect you. If I went through my own ways, it creates a lot of respect.

Family, for Michael, was not a direct source of strength. Instead of helping him cope with a difficult situation, they were another obstacle to carefully manoeuvre around. This relationship was important to him; therefore, he had to make certain he did not jeopardise it by creating additional stresses on, and for, it. As Pahl and Spencer note, the expectation of the role of family in theory does not necessarily come to fruition in real life. For instance, family "do not always provide a helping hand" and "people do not necessarily expect to confide in their family for fear of worrying or shocking them," (Pahl and Spencer 2004:213). It is for this reason that Michael divulged that friends, not family, were suitable for sharing burdens. This side of families – the reluctance to burden them with problems to both preserve the relationship and to prove one's independence – rarely features in the literature.

Lack of refugee status in the UK affected families in other ways as well. While the examples of Haroun and Michael above show informants choosing to distance themselves from certain family members because of their reactions to a current situation, others found that it was the family members themselves who created the distance. The case of Ariko, a refused asylum seeker from Zimbabwe in his late twenties, elucidates this point. He has many extended family members living in the south of the UK, but they keep their distance to him due to fear. "This asylum process teaches you a lot about life I think and they're scared," he told me. "They've been through the [asylum] system as well but they like, try [and] minimalise all the contact they have with people going through it 'cause they're scared that the government's going to take their passports over it or something…It's weird," he admitted. Ariko has effectively been abandoned by his family network until his status changes. When asked if they gave him any tips or advice before he began this asylum process, he responded with, "I wish they would've. If I'd know what I know now when I started, I think I'd be in a much different situation than what I'm in now." Ariko confessed that he struggled with depression and often stayed in bed until the late afternoon or early evening because he felt he had little reason to get out of bed. The perceived abandonment of family members in the UK went beyond a lack of emotional or financial support. They did not provide any helpful advice at the outset, further exacerbating his low mood and general lack of well-being as he felt he was completely unprepared for his current situation and how to cope with it.

The experience of forced migration can cause significant strain on a family's relationship even if they remain together. One such issue with extended family members was the added burden of providing for them financially. Few mentioned increased hardship by taking care of younger family members, such as nieces, nephews or even grandchildren. This finding is not surprising given the culture in many parts of Africa (see Saine 2012 and Chu et al 2016). In the Gambia, for instance, one rarely lives with just a nuclear family. Children live with various family members, and at various times. For illustration, in my host Gambian family, the grandmother raised the oldest daughter in a different village because they enjoyed one another's company until both moved back in with the girl's mother and the rest of the family. One nephew was living with them so he could be closer to a good secondary school, while a niece was there to try and learn some English since she had been taught only in a madrassa, or Arabic school that focuses on Quranic teachings. This situation is not unusual and many families were similarly diverse. Nevertheless, it

seemed to be positive to have children around, especially if they were old enough to help with domestic chores.

While additional child relatives were not seen (or at least not spoken of) as burdens, several informants did cite older family members, especially parents, as a particular difficulty. It should be noted that it is common in many African cultures that children provide for their elderly parents in the same way that their parents provided for them when they could not. It certainly is heavily built into the Gambian culture. The burden of these older family members was primarily financial. One man living in the Gambia admitted that "it's tough" to have his father also living in the Gambia. The man had married in the Gambia and, as is the custom, moved out from his father's house. This move, however, had not freed him from his responsibilities to his family. When asked how it was tough, he explained, "You have to assist the family too, and the earning is not that much." He struggled to run both his household and his father's household on his single salary as a French teacher. This type of burden was not restricted to the Gambia. One woman's father had followed after her to apply for asylum in the UK. Though her case was refused, after several years he was finally granted a temporary visa to remain due to his poor health. When asked if having him around is beneficial, she replied with, "I think for him it much better [to have me around] but he's sick and I'm not really…it's difficult." She was now in charge of looking after him which was further complicated by the fact that they did not live in the same area and public transportation is a luxury for refused asylum seekers. This situation negatively impacted on her well-being as she struggled to balance an evaluate aspect of relationships – being good daughter – with the practical realities of her impoverished situation.

Despite much of the literature expounding on the importance of families for well-being and happiness, family units can be an ambiguous area in which a darker side is revealed. While they may constitute a state of being with others, which is generally seen as a crucial component of well-being and happiness, these relationships can be fraught with difficulties. This type of ambiguity regarding familial relationships came up with several informants in both the UK and the Gambia. Nevertheless, the basic premise that families are beneficial for well-being led many to seek out new opportunities to create a kinship network.

Creation of New Families

When a person found themselves in a different country without any blood relatives, they frequently created their own families from their closest friends. Isolation is not conducive to well-being. In fact, research repeatedly shows that having social networks is a crucial part of being well (e.g. Ager et al 2002; Helliwell and Putnam 2004; White 2010). This sense of well-being includes both physical and mental aspects. Helliwell et al (2017:31) remark "having someone to count on is of fundamental importance, but having a fuller set of supporting friendships and social contacts must be even better." Expanding these personal communities on which one could count was important and was an activity that many of my informants engaged in, regardless of their status or country of asylum.

Some of my informants created new families for themselves in their country of asylum. While several of my informants in the UK and in the Gambia spoke about spouses and partners met after fleeing their home country, one of my informants actually invited me to take part in in a public ceremony creating these new kinship ties: her wedding. The wedding ceremony took place in North Tyneside in the UK. The bride, Olimatou, was a refused Gambian asylum seeker I had befriended, while the groom was a Congolese refugee turned British citizen. Their wedding provided a space for these two individuals to bring together old and new family and friends. During the reception, I saw several faces I recognised but who were not physically present. These beaming faces were being passed around on her mobile phone. I recognised several of Olimatou's sisters and waved at them, asking how they and their families were and showing them the proceedings taking place (the food, the dancing, the bride and groom) before handing the phone to another family member who replicated the process. These 'non-present' guests were an important part of the celebration. Olimatou wanted as many of her friends and family around as was possible on such a special day. The inclusion of these guests is crucial as they represent a part of Olimatou's personal communities. As Spencer and Pahl (2006:45) remark, "personal communities act as a reference point helping people define themselves even though the collective may only be directly observable in public rituals such as weddings, special anniversaries or funerals; even then, not all members of a personal community may be present." The physical presence of Olimatou's sisters and other family members was not, therefore, required to keep the ties between family members strong or to demonstrate that she still belonged in the family. In fact, "as collectivities […] these personal communities are more 'communities in the mind' rather than communities on the ground [...]," (Spencer

and Pahl 2006:245). That she was thinking of her family and that her family was thinking of her on her wedding day, as was evidenced by the phone call, was enough to fulfil the ideals of their family relationship.

Rather than creating new family ties through family as Olimatou had done, many refused asylum seekers relied heavily on their friends turned family. This, too, is a common theme in the literature. For example, Whittaker et al (2005) remark that among young Somali refugee and asylum-seeker women living in the UK, one key source of support was friends. Among my informants, Yasir who was introduced in Chapter 2, for instance, had lost both of his parents and was estranged from any living relatives. He explained, "Cause me, tell the truth, I got nobody. So people, they are my family. Anybody I see is my friend." His closest friend, and someone he considered as part of his family, was a man around his age who took him into his home and looked after him. This man fed him and even gave him a room of his own. This bond between them has given Yasir new hope. "That's my family. And when you see good people and help you and that, look after you, you feel like there's good people in this world. It's not the people [who are bad but] the system." He had created a new family and by doing so, had improved his overall outlook on life. He further elaborated: "There's the bad people, there's the good people, and as long as you don't give up the life, still you go and do something, and you will meet somebody." He has found the strength to keep going thanks to his newly created family.

In the Gambia new families were also being created beyond the addition of spouses or children. While many of my informants tended to avoid becoming too familiar with those from their home countries for fear of being discovered as coming from an opposing 'side' of a conflict, some did enjoy spending time with those from their home country as they represented a familiar extended family. Grace, for instance, expounded on the closeness of the Ivorian community. According to her, they were "My brothers! My sisters! Because we are the same country, the same religion. So we are what? We are one," she concluded. This sentiment could also be seen in the way that this particular community organised itself during meetings at GAFNA's main office as well as during certain celebrations. For instance, when looking through the photos of Grace's wedding that had taken place earlier in the year, I noticed many familiar faces from the Ivorian community. She confirmed that they had formed the bridal party as well as acting as official witnesses. This situation is not so unusual, and in fact is echoed in Chigeza and Roos's (2011) work with illegal African migrants in South Africa. One of their informants commented that

when he encounters another from his home country without accommodation, he and those from the same community step up to help the newcomer. "We cannot let our brother sleeping outside," the informant commented. "The fact that we come from the same country we just trust each other," (Chigeza and Roos 2011:129). This sentiment is remarkably similar to the one Grace told me. It was clear that for some, a similar country-of-origin refugee population also acted as an extended family, complete with kinship terms, in a host country.

The Significance of Friends and Friendships

Not all friends became family members. Their role in maintaining overall well-being, however, was crucial to many of my informants. Friends constituted the other significant portion of one's 'personal community'. The importance of friends for well-being remains largely intuitive; as Demir (2015:v) points out in the preface to *Friendship and Happiness Across the Life-Span and Cultures*, "the robust association of friendship with happiness is well accepted by laypeople and scholars." The link between friends and happiness has been important since the days of Aristotle, who distinguished between friendships based on utility, pleasure or virtue (Bell and Coleman 1999:9), while "decades of research have consistently documented that having friends, and friendship experiences like intimacy and friendship quality, are related to happiness," Demir et al (2013:1). Graham echoes this finding and takes it a step further. In her analysis of the happiness of Latin American respondents, she reports that the average individual saw friendships as more important than health, employment and personal assets when it came to their well-being. Indeed, so significant are the benefits of friendships that she posits "the relationship between friendships and well-being seems to cross the bounds between psychological and physical well-being," (Graham 2009:193). Helliwell et al (2017:31) point more specifically to evidence which demonstrates that having a range of social contacts may reduce the likelihood of falling ill with the cold virus. Another example of the benefit of friends comes from Christakis and Fowler (2010:20) who note "that having an extra friend may create all kinds of benefits for your health." Not only can friends make one healthier, but the friends are more likely to make you happier; having happier friends, in turn, is "the key to our own emotional well-being," (Christakis and Fowler 2010:52). Here the authors explore the idea that friends provide access to wider networks which in turn can affect positive changes in one's mental and physical health, such as decreasing the likelihood of obesity or smoking

and increasing the likelihood of being happy. Despite these acknowledgements, however, Demir et al (2013:6) concede that "many of the theoretical arguments focus on close relationships in general and rarely specifically highlight the importance of friendships to happiness." They call for more research on the link between friends and happiness, particularly among relatively understudied ethnic and cultural populations.

The anthropology of friendship remains similarly underdeveloped. Beer and Gardner (2015:426) point to the extensive literature on friendship in other social sciences – namely sociology, psychology and gender studies – while noting that "friendship has not loomed large within anthropology". They conceded that "friendship has been easy to overlook, even if its universal presence and general significance has been acknowledged," (Beer and Gardner 2015:426). Even a consideration of what constitutes friendships remains contentious, with Killick and Desai (2013:1) opening their edited volume titled *The Ways of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives* by stating, "The study of friendship is haunted by the problem of definition." They opted for a broad definition, using 'friendship' to define those close relationships that are not primarily thought of as a kinship relationship. This rather open, inclusive approach to who constitutes a friend echoes that of the previous edited volume on the same topic, *The Anthropology of Friendship*, in which Bell and Coleman acknowledge that one of the main points of their book is "to make sure that clear distinctions between friendship and kinship, if sometimes analytically useful and ethnographically very evident, are not always easy to sustain," (Bell and Coleman 1999:6). Indeed, they fully reject attempts to create a bounded idea of friendship, claiming "there is little pragmatic sense in attempting to construct a rigid, globally applicable, definition of friendship," (Bell and Coleman 1999:15). Killick and Desai (2013:1) embrace the ambiguity of the term and comment, "For us friendship is interesting precisely because it evades definition." I have followed the lead of these anthropologists and consider 'friendships' as those relationships that are defined by my informants as such and which are not primarily defined by them as kin relationships.

In anthropology, if little research exists on friendships in general, then the research is even sparser on friendships in Africa and on the intersection of friendships and forced migration. In each of the aforementioned edited volumes, only one chapter was devoted to each of these topics. In Kenya, Aguilar (1999) explores the role religious institutions have played in the creation of friendships among pastoral peoples. He sees this work as crucial because "kinship relationships have been overstressed in the anthropology of Africa,"

(Aguilar 1999:169). This privileging of kinship over friendship on the African continent continues even outside of anthropology. For instance, none of the nineteen chapters of the handbook titled *Friendship and Happiness across the Life-Span and Cultures* (2015) focus on African friendships. Friendships among Africans who have forcibly migrated remain similarly understudied within anthropology. In Killick and Desai's more recent edited book, Graeme Rodgers remains the sole anthropologist to discuss friendships in Africa – and specifically friendships among Mozambican refugees living in South Africa. His work is particularly relevant for my own as my research is situated at this nexus of friendships, forced migration and Africans. The importance of friendships for refugees is enhanced because of their situation. As Rodgers (2013:75) notes, "The new social and economic conditions of life in refuge created greater opportunity for friendships to develop beyond the framework of kinship." This statement reflects the situation narrated to me by many of my informants. In fact, many found that being a refugee facilitated this process of friendship and friend-making, which I will discuss in more detail below. Friendships can come to take prominence over kinship, particularly (though not exclusively) when kin are not present. Rodgers (2013:71) remarks on the changing dynamics between friendship and kinship, noting "Commentaries on friendship and amicability sometimes affirmed the resilience of kinship but were also indicative of its declining value in a rapidly changing social context." Both the declining value of kinship and the hardiness of these links when strong bonds did exist and the prominence of friendships affirms what many of my informants narrated to me.

UK friendships

In the UK friends were very important. Since sixteen of the twenty people I spoke with had come alone, or were the only family member living in the Newcastle area, friends constituted a proximal, crucial social network. Some, such as Ariko, who was mentioned above, saw this network as vital. "I think that's the only way you survive out here, if you know somebody," he told me. Since his family members distanced themselves from him due to his lack of refugee status, he found that seeking solace in friendships the only way to tolerate the difficulties of life. Ella elaborated by pointing out how important it was to have trusted friends. As she put it, "I started volunteering, I started having a lot of friends, so that makes it easier. You know if you have a problem you can go talk to someone." Others remarked on the similar benefits of friendship. Hagos's philosophy on this point was simple: "Keep making friends – then you'll not feel alone." Seeking out friendships

was, in this way, a crucial coping technique given the difficulties of forced migration and asylum-seeking. Creating and maintaining this personal community comprised of friends, particularly in the absence of a family network, was vitally important for my informants' well-being.

As mentioned previously with Michael's explanation, many saw family as a potential obstacle because "relatives don't like being stressed" while one could speak more freely with friends, particularly when they represented 'similar others' and indicated a narrative aspect of relationships; namely, that they have and are going through an experience together (the experience of seeking asylum in the UK/being denied asylum in the UK). Other studies record similar findings. For example, Whittaker et al (2005) remark that among young Somali refugee and asylum-seeker women living in the UK, one key source of support was friends who were seen as a good substitute for family when discussing certain issues. Additionally, Schweitzer, Greenslade and Kagee (2007) remark on the importance of the emotional support that Sudanese refugees in Australia receive from their friends. These findings are echoed in my own research, in which many immediately turned to their friends, rather than family, whenever the stresses of everyday life became too much to bear. Others, however, turned to friends for different reasons.

Friends filled various roles depending on the informant. For instance, even when discussing with people what made them feel happiest, several responded with friends. For Nala, a refused asylum seeker from Somalia, this answer took the form of doing something social with a friend. As Dolan et al (2008:107) reminds us, "Socialising with family and friends is positively associated with SWB [subjective well-being]." This act of socialising allowed Nala to feel 'normal' as is evidenced by her following description. "I'm happy sometimes if you have a friend, like a community member friend, stay together, we go outside, go to Metro Centre, you give me offer for lunch – I'm happy."[16] She then went on to tell me about a friend she had, a fellow East African (though from a different country), who had married a British man and thus become a British citizen. This friend occasionally drove up from a town called Beverley, located in Yorkshire, approximately two and half hours from Newcastle. This woman was divorced but had two children that Nala frequently babysat. Because of their perfect attendance at school the past year, the children were

[16] The Metro Centre is credited with being the largest shopping and leisure centre in the European Union. It is located in Gateshead, which is the town on the opposite side of the River Tyne from Newcastle and easily accessible by public transport such as buses and trains.

awarded with a trip to a popular seaside town near the English border with Scotland called Berwick-upon-Tweed. The friend invited Nala to come along as the reward allowed two adults. She appeared to take great joy in recounting this trip to me, becoming increasingly animated as she told of the big hall with games where one could earn tickets. "It's good good good GOOD!" she emphasised, tapping her index finger on the table in front of her to stress each word. She affected a 'tough guy' stance with me, complete with arm flexes and scowling, describing how she had received her first ever (fake) tattoo there, and describing the lengths to which she went in trying to keep it covered in the shower so it would last longer. "It's so fun, so funny!" she laughed. She assured me she was monitoring the children's performance closely this new school year so she might have the opportunity to go again. This friendship, and being able to be social even as a refused asylum seeker, played an important role in maintaining her well-being.

Some, instead of mentioning specific friends, saw the mere act of making friends as a continual source of joy. For Millie, her answer as to what makes her happy is, "Making friends I think. Me, I'm not a shy person, if I see people I talk to them. And going to church and meeting different people…like here [WERS]. You come and chat for two hours, you go. You've made a lot of friends." Her volunteer position at a local church, serving breakfast to homeless people in the area, furthered her circle of friends. According to her, many of the patrons would motion to her and request that she sit and talk to them, which she happily obliged. Friendships were made quickly in this way. She revealed that she also studied in Newcastle College and had only recently finished. Typically, those enrolled in college are between 16 and 18 years of age. Millie was a good thirty years older than that. Still, she remembered her college days fondly and reminisced about the friends she had made there. Though her age could have potentially impacted her ability to make friends in that environment, she was a very warm and friendly person, always chatting to people, always smiling and laughing. She recalled that everyone was her friend, and she expressed a desire to continue her studies both for the love of learning and the potential for more friendships.

The creation of friends is often necessary for asylum seekers in the UK because when they arrive in the UK, they are dispersed to a city with no consideration given to where current family members (if applicable) live or whether there is an established community of the same nationality and/or ethnic group there (Zetter et al 2005; Dwyer et al 2016). So, often, when people arrive at their new 'home' in the UK, it is wholly

unfamiliar to them. Some make ties with their local ethnic groups if they exist, while others focus, whether based on necessity or not, on creating something entirely new. These friendships act as a form of 'relational anchoring' (Auyero and Swistun 2008). This concept was first used to describe residents in 'contaminated community' in an Argentine shantytown and the way in which familiar routines and relations rooted residents in this town despite the heavily polluted environment around them (Auyero and Swistun 2008:360). Later, Huovinen and Blackmore (2016) adopted this term to describe the way in which individuals create a sense of home and belonging through established networks of family, friends and work in a Peruvian town with high rates of mobility. Among my informants, the formation of new friendship networks allowed an individual to 'anchor' themselves and to create both a sense of belonging and to recreate a personal community for themselves.

Olimatou, the Gambian woman living in North Tyneside mentioned above, anchored herself in the community through her marriage. As Huovinen and Blackmore (2016:180) remark, "activities of building families, enjoying friends and working are identified as 'anchoring routines' and these routines work to root residents in the community." While anchoring herself through family was mentioned, she also anchored herself primarily with those who were like her – migrants. It was not uncommon for me to arrive at Olimatou's house to see an unfamiliar face sat on her couch. This person was invariably introduced as her new friend who she would send off with wrapped parcels of food or plans for their next meeting. Just walking through the town centre often led to the creation of new friends for her. This action is not surprising; indeed, Ahmed (2000) notes that communities can also be created through the similar experience of 'not belonging' rather than belonging in a certain context. These 'non-belongers' thus band together to form their own supportive space. Indeed, this seemed to be Olimatou's strategy. Where she lived it was easy to see, visibly, who did 'not belong' as there were relatively few Africans resettled in her area. It mattered little whether they were Gambian. Indeed, as Babatunde-Sowole et al (2016) highlight, just being African can be enough to create a communal bond, which is certainly the case with Olimatou. This is the case in a study by Shakespeare-Finch and Wickham (2010) in which a Sudanese man living in Australia remarks that everyone in the community who originally came from Africa is considered as a brother. This sentiment was echoed in Olimatou's interactions with others. For instance, she met a woman, also from West Africa, in the town centre while doing her shopping one

afternoon. The next day, she picked the woman's eight-year-old twin daughters up from school and took them to their after-school swimming lessons. She did this every Wednesday afternoon for the next several months. The women had formed an immediate bond with each other through a single meeting to the point that the woman entrusted Olimatou with her children. While this seems remarkable in a place such as the UK, it is not in the context of, for instance, the Gambia. In this way, Olimatou and the woman were recreating a familiar space by forging friendships in a way that seemed natural to them.

Making friends – or engaging in what constitutes a friendship – differs drastically not only across cultures but also between people. For instance, I recalled discussing the difference between the UK and an East African country during earlier fieldwork conducted for my Master's dissertation. In this discussion, the refugee woman told me that it was hard to make friends in the UK because in her home country, if you were taking one path into town, and you found someone also taking that path, then the two of you would walk together, becoming friends by virtue of walking to a shared destination and talking. The same cannot be done in the UK as British people are rather reserved and keep to themselves. Perhaps this method of creating friendships explains why Olimatou befriended Africans. They were simply walking the same way, and she also felt that British people were too reserved to see this as an opportunity to create a new friend.

Friendships in the Gambia

Narratives involving friends were not nearly as common in the Gambia as they were in the UK. One possible explanation for this difference may come from the permanence with which they view their country of asylum. Though I go into this in more depth in Chapter 7, in general those in the UK anticipated that they would continue to live in the UK, while those in the Gambia very much saw their time as temporary while they waited for resettlement in a third country. Nevertheless, the ways in which friendships were spoken of differed. One man in the Gambia avoided friendships because if you attempt to form a friendship, "They think that you want something from them." For him, it was better to be independent, speak amicably with everyone, but keep one's problems to one's self lest someone think he had ulterior motives. Evette, the Congolese woman mentioned in Chapter 2 who lost her infant daughter and husband in rapid succession, simply made the conscious effort to avoid befriending many people. As she explained to me, "I always have few friends. Not too much – few. People like me but I don't like them too much. Too much friends no good! My mother always tell me no good to have plenty friends. Few is okay."

While she was very forthcoming with her decision to forgo many friendships in the Gambia, others merely stated that they did not have any. Usually further questioning on the deficit of friendships revealed the reason for this related to either incidences of discrimination or simply a lack of desire to mix with the host community. Many of the refugees residing in the Gambia had previously held positions of power in their home country and were highly educated. After fleeing, they found their lives, as well as social status and capital, greatly diminished. They were now living alongside the urban poor in the Serrekunda area. Though none openly said that they felt somehow superior to their Gambian neighbours, when I asked if they had any Gambian friends the answer was typically a swift 'no'. Some even laughed at the idea. Many commented that they were just too different to become friends. While I put forth this idea as one facet of a complicated answer, it nevertheless plays a part.

As is often the case with refugees, issues of whom to trust come to the fore when influencing a decision to make friends. One man, Laurent, highlights the forces at play in this situation. "Here, there is no friend that I can find trustworthy," he confided in me with a small laugh. "I don't know, there might be people, honestly, there might be people who can be trustworthy, who can be good," he conceded. Unfortunately, this 'might be' was not enough for him to actively seek out friendships. "I'm very reserved, honestly, I am reserved. I don't know who is the best one I could have as friend. Really talk of my problems, share my burdens, you know. Except Madame [his wife], and she is also bearing the same situation," he concluded. These sentiments were highlighted by others. Fear kept many from seeking out relationships. Though none of those I spoke with were 'new' refugees (the most recent one arrived in 2010), the situations they had been forced to flee from still potentially, in their minds at least, posed a real threat to their safety and their lives if their whereabouts were fully known.

An exception to the reluctance to create friendships came from two of my informants. Both were young men in their twenties who had fled and settled without their families. It should be noted that they came from neighbouring Senegal which shares its ethnic group and local languages with the Gambia. This fact undoubtedly eased their acceptance into the wider Gambia society as it was difficult to distinguish between Gambians and Senegalese and many crossed the border between the two periodically. In fact, the Gambian family that I stayed with traced their father's father to the Casamance region in southern Senegal. A grandfather's village is where one must return during crucial

ceremonies, such as circumcision ceremonies and Tabaski feasts, leading to frequent forays across the border to visit various family members. Therefore, it is unsurprising that these two men, both young unmarried men when they arrived, had formed a close circle of Gambian friends. Benjamin, in fact, picked up on this cultural similarity as the reason that he claimed so many friends. "Gambians are friendly. As Senegalese, they are friendly. Everybody is friend," he assured me with a smile. He further recounted that, "When I have stress, I usually sit down with many people and chat and forget. Because if I am alone, I will think more. So I usually chat, laugh, or drink attaya to forget some problem." Benjamin was not the only man to cite the importance of sharing attaya among friends. Another young Senegalese man, Ebrima, also commented on it. When asked about his friends, he responded with, "Those friends with which I chat…I drink tea [attaya] with them, sometimes I go with them to the club, tourist market, when I'm stressed do sports [with them]." Because the Gambia and Senegal share so much culture and history, it was unsurprising that Benjamin and Ebrima specifically cited the importance of the attaya ritual in making and maintaining their social network of friends.

Attaya enjoys a very privileged position within Gambian culture. It is a type of green tea, mixed with copious amounts of sugar, but it is also a process that amounts to a ritual. It most commonly fell under the purview of men; this is unsurprising when one sees attaya as not simply the drink but the actions that surround it. Bell and Coleman (1999:13) note the "general agreement" within the anthropology of friendship that "men are inclined to share *activities* with their male friends." This is certainly the case with attaya. Even Access Gambia, the most comprehensive website devoted to Gambian culture, acknowledges that attaya "certainly connotes more than the actual beverage" and, furthermore, that it is "a favourite pastime of Gambians, especially young men." While the website remarks that this practice is most common in the Kombo areas (earning young men in these areas the title of 'Attaya Boys'), the practice is widespread. To be sure, wherever I looked I was bound to see a group of men sitting, most commonly during the late afternoon/early evening (though attaya could, and was, made at any time of the day or night). The favoured spot for this brewing was under the shade of one of the many mango trees found just alongside the roadside. Figure 1 shows the essential ingredients for brewing attaya according to Access Gambia and which echo my own observations: "Chinese Gunpowder Green Tea from a box, lots of sugar, a small teapot, a small charcoal stove, 3 or 4 small Maghreb-style glass cups, dexterity for making frothy bubbles and a

circle of friends," (Access Gambia 2017). Given that a discussion on attaya is incomplete without the mention of friends, it is little wonder that this activity was mentioned specifically by my informants. Attaya may also embody a reaction to young male idleness, given the lack of employment or educational opportunities in the country. For example, much like the educated young Indian men who spend their time outside of tea stalls or gathered on street corners, these 'attaya boys' place importance on 'hanging out', which can be seen as a crucial space for the "fashioning of distinctive masculinities," (Jeffrey 2010:473). Sharing attaya can thus be seen as sharing memories, experiences, masculine identities and friendliness that serves to strengthen the bonds of friendship.

Figure 10: Mixing the sugar and tea to make attaya. Each brewing yields three pots of tea, drunk from small glasses of froth and hot liquid. The first round is the most potent and the third the sweetest and weakest, with the second falling somewhere in between.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on well-being in and through the relationships that make up one's 'personal community' as described by Spencer and Pahl (2006). These personal

communities consist of persons who are important to an individual at a particular moment in time and can broadly be conceived of as belonging either to ‘family’ or to ‘friends’.

Relational well-being entails more than merely being with others. In fact, well-being and happiness cannot be said to exist solely in the presence of one’s family. While family can confer a type of social support and protection from the shocks of a traumatic event, such as forced migration, this chapter sought to make this argument more nuanced. To be sure, many people did draw strength and resilience from being with their families, and this finding sits comfortably with the current literature on the subject. Focusing on the benefits, however, overshadows some of the complications of family life and does not do adequate justice to the nuance of everyday life. Families can disrupt a sense of relational well-being and add their own stressors to a situation.

To overcome the stressors of family relationships – including the lack of family relationships – many of my informants instead sought other relationships. These new relationships involved either the creation of new kinship ties or the creation of friendships. Friendships remain a fruitful area of study both within anthropology and within migration studies due to their importance for individuals and their relative invisibility in the literature. While much work has bene done with kin relations, friendships have garnered much less attention. I contend that the inattention to friendship when it comes to refugees and asylum seekers is unwarranted. Nearly all of my informants discussed the role of friends and the impact that friendships could, or did, have in their lives. Differences did occur between the UK and the Gambia. It would, therefore, be interesting for further research to engage with these differences more fully and to examine the impact that these have on everyday lives.

Family and friends contributed to a sense of relational well-being and happiness. Indeed, these relationships were crucial for both enhancing and undermining a sense of well-being. While this chapter focused on the closest – and most important – relationships for individuals, the next chapter engages with more distant relationships. Instead of personal communities, we now turn to social networks and the implications these can have for relational well-being.

Chapter 5: Social Networks and the Importance of Social Capital

While the last chapter focused on one's personal community – or those individuals who are considered important in a person's life (Spencer and Pahl 2006) which generally refers to family and friends – this chapter looks at an individual's wider social network. Spencer and Pahl (2006:46) largely ignore these relationships, since "networks can be affectively neutral, including all contacts regardless of personal significance." While it is true that these relationships may not be seen as being as important or consistent as those found within one's personal community, it is unfair to assume they play no part in realising a sense of well-being. In fact, Christakis and Fowler (2010:xiii) contend that "our connection to other people matter most." This connection does not have to represent only those closest to us. Rather, social networks are a collection of people and the specific set of connections between them (Christakis and Fowler 2010). The purpose of this chapter, then, is to explore the links between refugees and other groups, and the importance of these groups in the creation of social capital. To see a visual representation of how the previous chapter and this chapter fit in the discussion of social relationships, refer to the figure below which represents the social layers that contribute to relational well-being among my informants.

Forced migration places a person outside of his or her own familiar community and this displacement can have significant effects on well-being. As the previous chapter showed, in this situation people often turn to close others, such as family or friends, or seek to create new friendships in which a sense of familiarity and support can be recreated. However, it is not just these relationships that foster a sense of relational well-being. The larger community also plays an important role in shaping how a refugee or asylum seeker creates a sense well-being. As Granovetter (1973:1378) notes, "weak ties […] are here seen as indispensable to individual's opportunities and to their integration into communities." These 'weaker' ties can help ease the burdens of life in the host country and can foster belonging. More specifically, national and ethnic communities and host communities shape or hinder a sense of well-being through various pathways. These communities provide a social network for individuals and, as research repeatedly shows,

having social networks is a crucial part of being well (e.g. White 2010; Helliwell and Putnam 2004; Ager et al 2002).

The term 'community' remains a rather ambiguous one in the social sciences. Generally, however, it is taken to denote "an array of positive connotations, including solidarity, familiarity, common purpose, unity of values and a shared sense of identity," (Rabinowitz 2015:369). While this may sound like a promising start, communities rarely represent bounded entities, and it is for this reason that a vague conception allows one to explore community as "an arena where experience is ordered," (Rabinowiz 2015:370). A useful type of community, and one which seems pertinent for the categories I will speak about below, is the *accidental community*. First articulated by Barbara Myerhoff (1975) in relation to participants at Woodstock in 1969, the idea of an accidental community was taken up by Malkki (1995) in relation to Rwandan refugees in Tanzania. She recognised these 'accidental communities' as a site where individuals began the process of reinventing a sense of communal belonging and creating a local, shared history. I, too, found this type of conceptual community particularly relevant for the individuals I worked with. They formed a community at various levels (national/ethnic, global refugee, host) not through a conscious effort, but through a happenstance that included arriving (unintentionally or not) in a particular country and as a result of unfortunate, extenuating circumstances. The benefits (or drawbacks) of these 'accidental communities' will be described below.

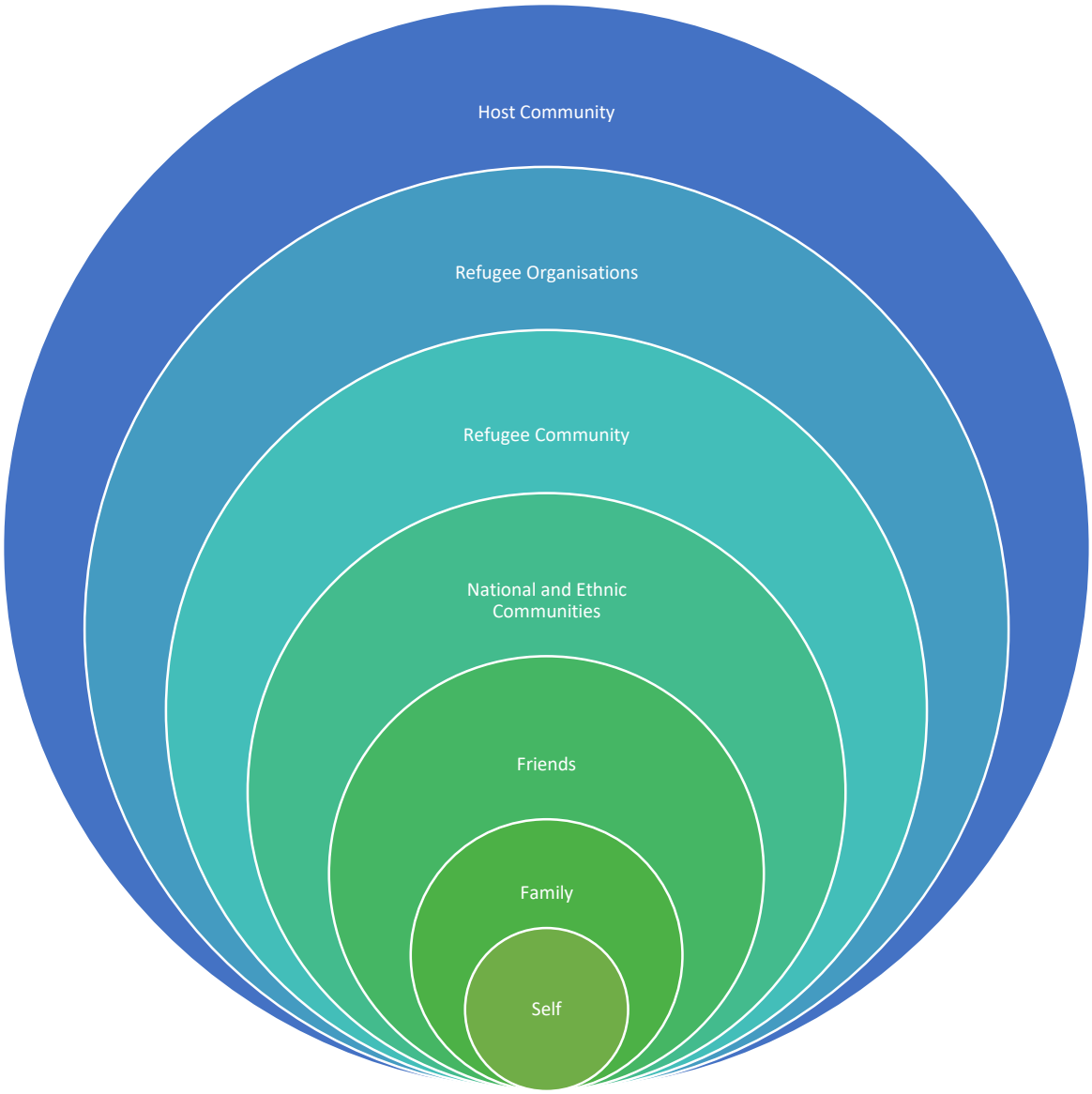


Figure 11: An overview of the social relationships and their distance to 'self'. The three green inner circles represent the personal community discussed in the last chapter, while the other four blue circles represent a broader social network which will be discussed in this chapter.

National and Ethnic Communities

National and ethnic communities constitute one type of community that plays a role in creating a sense of relational well-being. National and ethnic communities are often the first type of social network that researchers engage with when speaking about refugees. This social network is intuitive if we accept Christakis and Fowler's claim that making social networks is part of being human. "The primary example of this is *homophily*, the conscious or unconscious tendency to associate with people who resemble us. […] The

truth is, we seek out those people who share our interests, histories, and dreams," (2010:17). If seeking out others is a part of the human condition, then seeking others who share many of the same characteristics (background, experiences, etc.) inevitably leads to one's national or ethnic community. This community is important in fostering a sense of belonging as well as increasing one's social capital. Social capital, initially put forth by Loury in 1997, has been adopted by international migration researchers to describe an important resource, especially for first-time migrants (Flores-Yeffal, 2015). Social capital "originates between people in society," and, crucially, "resides at the level of community" (Whiteley 2001:174). For migrants, then, it examines the benefits that established migrants in a host country provide for would-be and new migrants from their country of origin. These benefits include resources such as information and facilitation of migration, settlement and the search for employment (Flores-Yeffal 2015). Within social capital theory, Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) identified four sources: value introjections, reciprocity exchanges, bounded solidarity and enforceable trust. Examples of these four areas will be highlighted later in the chapter.

Ethnic communities appeared to play a larger role in the Gambia, particularly among Senegalese refugees, whereas national communities dominated among other refugees there and in the UK. Recall the previous chapter's discussion on creating and strengthening friendship ties through the production and consumption of attaya. Benjamin and Ebrima were Jola and commented that when they drank attaya with their friends and communicated in Jola, no one could tell that they were not 'real' Gambians and, because of this, they felt like they could belong there. Benjamin – the man who was eagerly pursing his education in Chapter 1 – initially felt unease in interacting with the wider community. When he first came he was worried about the proximity of Casamance to the Gambia. "You know for me to go to Casamance, 6 hours from driving. That's why I told you when I first come here, I not go out! I'm afraid," he confided. Yet now, because he had many Jola friends and they constituted a main ethnic group in the Gambia, he felt much safer and, actually, attributed it to his happiness. "What make me happy here?" he repeated in response to the question I had just asked. "If you see me with them [Gambians] you cannot know whether I am a refugee or whether I'm a Gambian. We chat, you cannot difference this one and this one," he explained. Being a part of the same ethnic group gave him a sense of safety and peace and afforded him a degree of integration with his host community.

Others were merely happy to be around fellow countrymen, even if this term encompassed an array of ethnic identities. This type of reformation concerning an 'accidental community' is echoed in Schweitzer, Greenslade and Kagee's (2007) research among Sudanese resettled in Australia. Given that social networks were completely disrupted and lost, many ended up reforming their social networks within the larger Sudanese community. New communities and ties with one's ethnic community in a host country comprised an important part of an individual's social capital and also featured prominently in my informant's accounts. For instance, some of my informants enjoyed spending time with those from their home country as they represented a familiar extended family. Recall the kinship terms Grace employed in the previous chapter. She referred to other Ivorians as her 'brothers and sisters' and cited the reason for doing so due to the same country of origin. These individuals surrounded her during her most important moments, such as her wedding, and it was their company she specifically enjoyed. It was clear that for some, a similar country-of-origin refugee population also acted as an extended family, complete with kinship terms, in a host country.

Individuals in the UK did occasionally turn to their local national communities, particularly if they needed assistance. National communities, in this way, acted as an extended family network (much like ethnic communities) through which one could access social capital in the form of material necessities as well as information. For instance, Nala, the Somali woman mentioned in the previous chapter on close friendships, never mentioned those from her home country as being either friends or family (she had previously told me she lost her brother and mother while fleeing). In fact, when she mentioned friends, she specifically cited those who originated from other countries, such as the East African friend with whom she travelled to Berwick-upon-Tweed. Her nation's community did, however, play a very important role in her life as a refused asylum seeker. This is perhaps unsurprising since the UK is home to both the largest and longest-established Somali community in Europe (Hammond 2013:1005). Therefore, given the sheer size of the community, she could more easily access this resource to receive assistance when needed. Though originally dispersed to Huddersfield as an asylum seeker, Nala later moved to Leeds following a bout of racial and Islamophobic attacks against other Muslims in the area. During her time in Leeds, her claim was refused. After being refused and made homeless, she received an offer from members of the Somali community living in Newcastle to move there. She did not currently live with any of the members of this

community. In fact, given that she disclosed she was at one point 'sleeping rough' (homeless and sleeping in the streets), I do not believe this assistance extended to being formally given a place to stay. As it stands, she was staying in a building owned by a charity who specifically supports refused asylum seekers who have no recourse to any type of housing or government-funded homeless shelters. Instead, the main role this community played in Nala's life was by helping her financially. "They help me sometime to have food," she explained. "They go to give me money because £15 [what she receives from WERS] is not enough." These informal, ethnic networks "may be equal, if not more powerful, agencies of service provision and support than RCOs [refugee community organisations], especially in the economic sphere," (Zetter et al 2005:178). This claim was supported by Nala. She appeared to have engaged with the Somali community sporadically if she needed assistance. Otherwise, she attended the monthly fundraiser where they would cook African food to raise money and donate to another community member, typically someone who was in very poor health. The function of this community, then, was to help her meet her some of her basic needs (though not all), rather than providing some type of emotional support. This limited engagement is unsurprising if one considers that often forced migrants "may not be as inclined to reclaim their role or position in a nationality-bound social network in their country of emigration because these networks may be as problematic as they are beneficial," (Chu et al 2016:787). Nala acknowledged the ways in which the Somali community was beneficial, but felt disinclined to engage with it further.

It is interesting to note, however, that this community, much like the Ivorian community mentioned by Grace, exhibited the social capital component of *enforceable trust* (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). This term refers to a set of social expectations put forth by a community and which can be enforced through various forms of social monitoring. This enforceable trust is echoed in the literature on social networks, with some authors claiming that the norms of a certain network "are always there, exerting both subtle and dramatic influence over our choices, actions, thoughts, feelings, even our desires," (Christakis and Fowler 2010:7). In Nala's case, the enforceable trust that she felt merely from being associated with the Somali community (even if she did not define herself as an active member of it) still shaped the interactions she had with others. For instance, when she told me that she frequently 'signed on' at the Home Office with another man, I began teasing her that the man was her 'boyfriend'. She quickly interjected that she didn't like to make "small chit-chat" with other people, especially if they will get a "bad idea". She then

explained that this "bad idea" could develop from someone such as herself, a woman, speaking to a man; she assured me that she would not engage in conversation with men, only women. Though this was at odds with what I observed in the confines of WERS, in the larger community it undoubtedly conveyed a sense of enforceable trust in which she may be monitored and thus punished for transgressing these social norms of speaking to men in her community.

Related to the enforced trust that shaped Nala's behaviour regarding interactions with men, Gail Hopkins's (2010) study among Somali women in Toronto and London demonstrates the influence that direct and indirect links with Somalia and the diasporic Somali community have on what she terms an individual's 'Somaliness'. She remarks that the task for arriving women into the already established community becomes one in which an individual must learn "what it is to be a Somali woman in Toronto or London, or *how* to be a Somali woman in those locations at a particular moment in time," (Hopkins 2010:534). Given that Nala disclosed that her asylum claim was rejected because they believed her to be from Tanzania and not Somalia, it is little wonder that she is so eager to replicate what it is to be a proper Somali woman within the wider Somali community in Newcastle, both to garner the benefits of being a member of the community and to demonstrate to outsiders her commitment to a Somali identity.

Others that I spoke with rely on national and ethnic communities to provide emotional and practical support. Isaac, a refused asylum seeker in the UK from Uganda, met others from the same country after deciding at the last minute to celebrate his country's national independence day in London. He began chatting with a woman there, and through this chance encounter the two struck up a strong and lasting friendship. Unfortunately, they lived in a different part of the country – still, the woman and her family kept in touch, even paying for a phone and contract for him and occasionally sending him rail tickets so he could travel down and stay with them. As the wife and husband worked different shifts, they enjoyed having him around as someone to talk to. He was very conscientious of his position, lamenting that "It is very difficult to live with a family if you can't even buy bread. At least you have to buy milk." Buying anything was an impossibility given his refused status. He therefore relied on the £15 from WERS and the graciousness of these newfound relationships. He took pride, however, in being able to provide for this new family through cooking. He ensured that whenever a member of the family returned home from work, they found a cooked meal waiting for them. He was receiving both practical support, such as

shelter and food, as well as emotional support in the form of someone to talk to. They were also very supportive of his determination to put in a fresh claim, and were helping in this aim.

Not all communities provide practical support in terms of meeting basic, physiological needs. For example, Yana, a young woman with refugee status, met a man from her home country while she was working in a restaurant. He introduced her to his wife who, in turn, introduced her to other members from the same country. When asked if being close with this community has impacted her life in the UK, she responded with, "It makes me feel better, not completely better, but I feel like I know people, if something wrong happened to me there's somebody there to help me, to support me." They provided a source of advice and support. Some of it, however, did conflict with her own views, causing her to critically examine her own life. For example, she completed her training as a doctor in her home country and had taken the necessary exams to practice in the UK. Her desire to focus on her career conflicted with her country's cultural expectations of creating a family, which left her at odds with the enforceable trust component of this community as she was refusing to conform to this otherwise agreed-upon value and resulting behaviour (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). In fact, in her particular community, she lamented that, "I'm the only single one. I feel so weird! They look at me as like, very different." She was seen as so different that many had suggested ways to 'fix' her problems. In relating one conversation she had had, she told the woman all the difficulties she had been through in leaving her family and seeking asylum and was met with the response of 'This is because you're single.' "I don't know, maybe she's right?" Yana wondered aloud. The community undoubtedly provided emotional support and offered advice, though from my talk with Yana it seemed as though it occasionally caused an internal conflict between what she wanted to do and what the community thought was best for her.

While the above example highlights the ambivalence these communities can cause, it should be noted that ethnic and national communities were not unanimously seen as a good thing. Though they certainly had their advantages, the disadvantages in engaging with them could deter someone from seeking out their fellow countrymen altogether. In addition to the impact that enforceable trust may have, they could also negatively impact on well-being if an individual fled for ethnic or political (which is frequently ethnicised) reasons. This unease with fellow nationals occurred frequently in the Gambia because

one's home country was relatively close. In the case of the Senegalese, the government that one feared literally surrounded them, as Benjamin noted in the exchange above.

Gossip was another reason to avoid national and ethnic communities. In Chapter 2 I introduced Sandra, a young Zimbabwean woman who found her life changed in positive and unexpected ways by virtue of going through the asylum process. In our discussion, she laughingly told me how her friends were mostly from Malawi. When I asked her if she had any Zimbabwean friends, she emphatically shook her head no. "I actually met a lot of Zimbabweans in Newcastle," she admitted. "I see you, "hi, hi" – here she mimicked greeting someone and being greeted back, waving to the fictitious person. "But then I keep to myself because when you're in a community so many things are stories. Someone come 'Oh did you hear what happened to this person, did you hear what happened' – that causes conflict. So I try to avoid," she emphasised. She admitted that it was difficult to have only a few friends here, but it was better than becoming too involved with the local Zimbabwean community. In a study among Somali refugees and asylum seekers in Northern England, Whittaker et al (2005) found that young people also experienced this uncertainty around confidentiality and, unsure of whether their friends would either tell their parents or gossip – which could get back to their parents – they opted instead to share personal or sensitive matters with their non-Somali friends. A similar finding by Jeffery (2010:1108) shows that Chagossian migrants turned British citizens also feared 'too much gossip'. In particular, they worried that activities like drinking and dancing would somehow find its way to back to their family members who were not even living in the UK at the time. The fear of gossip, then, is certainly a factor that can inhibit one's interaction with ethnic and national communities.

Refugee Community

Another type of community, more broadly defined than strictly a national or ethnic community, was the type of 'accidental community' I mentioned in the previous chapter. An example of this is the individuals that Olimatou collected as friends and invited to be a part of her sphere of belonging – those who are identified by their 'non-belongingness', meaning other (African) refugees. Other refugees or asylum seekers constituted important communities for some. Not only could one speak about his or her problems with someone who was experiencing something similar, but the refugee community in general could act in as social capital where established ethnic or national communities were sparse. Some

people I spoke with even felt that refugees constituted a family in their own right and referred to others in their situation as brothers or sisters.

This community, as mentioned previously, constituted an important source of friendship. It was frequently easier to speak with 'similar others' in a comparable situation as you rather than overburden family with your situation. In addition to creating friendships, refugees and asylum seekers spoke of a sense of obligation or duty to their fellow asylum seekers and refugees. It is this obligation that I assert corresponds with Portes and Sensenbrenner's (1993) idea of reciprocity. It is the expanded notion, set forth by Flores-Yeffal (2013), however, that is relevant in my research. Reciprocity among asylum seekers and refugees that I worked with did not mean that one person gave (whether advice, information or material resources) with the expectation that they would receive something in return. Rather, asylum seekers and refugees gave to another with a 'pay it forward' expectation. Take the following as an example: Kakengo recounted to me the troubles he faced as both an asylum and a black African living in largely undiversified city in the early 2000s. Now a refugee with status, he recognised his privileged position to help others facing similar problems. He said, "I see many problem happen to people…the difference we found here, and the goodness we found here, we can learn from our mistake and provide for the people who arrive." This 'we' referred to the other members of the asylum seeker community who initially assisted each other. Now, he wanted to do his part to make life easier for those coming after him. He commented on the role he already played in shaping a more refugee friendly Newcastle. "We help Newcastle to be a City of Sanctuary today," he told me with a proud smile.[17]

Others were less fortunate than Kakengo in that they had not yet been granted refugee status. It was known, however, that few who received status were seen at WERS with anything regarding regularity. It was reserved mainly for those who were refused asylum seekers. This disparity was not lost on those who had no choice but to visit weekly to receive their support. One refused asylum seeker, Ariko, noted how important something like WERS was to the asylum seeker/refugee community. When asked what his ideal future would look like, he responded that, "I definitely think I'd be involved with like, West End [Refugee Service] or something, doing that kind of stuff because it can't be easy for those people [asylum seekers]. I have experience in that [the asylum process], I think I'd be quite

[17] Here Kakengo is referring to a specific title. Newcastle is a recognised City of Sanctuary, meaning it focuses on "improving the experiences of refugees in Newcastle." (https://newcastle.cityofsanctuary.org/)

helpful to them." He added that others "Forget that the work is not done." He did not want to forget where he had come from and what obstacles he had faced. His ambition was to 'pay it forward' to those coming after him in a nonreciprocal way. The implication was that he would not receive anything direct from those individuals, but that they would perpetuate the cycle of assistance. His addition that others simply leave after they get status suggests that he himself may feel abandoned and expendable by friends and acquaintances who want to close the door on their asylum seeker past, leaving him behind to face the challenges alone. Perhaps this is why the only full-time support worker at WERS was so revered. As mentioned in the Introduction, this man first came to WERS as an asylum seeker and was in fact a close friend of Kakengo's as they belonged to the first dispersals of African asylum seekers to Newcastle. Though he received his refugee status quickly, he has remained to help those going through the system. The unwavering trust that clients have in him is only strengthened by this notion that he was once 'one of us'. Indeed, Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995:96) note that "People who have coped successfully are highly credible sources to those in distress who have little idea how to proceed in coping with a novel and frightening situation." Someone like the support worker provides hope that a situation can improve and the advice given is seen as more meaningful. The way that the support worker has helped Ariko has undoubtedly influenced his future goals in wanting to play that part for someone else.

In the Gambia, the refugee community had a more international flair to it in that references to this community typically meant the global refugee community. For instance, during one of the workshops in which it was announced that funding to cover healthcare costs would cease, the grumbling this decision provoked was stopped by a staff member who pointed out their positionality in regards to other refugee flows. "The world is a global community," the staff member said. "Syria, Central African Republic, Boko Haram…right now, as we speak, Mali is being attacked.[18] Who do you think the global community is going to send money to now if Malians flee and come here?" she asked. "Them," those assembled agreed wholeheartedly. Later on in the workshop, there was a similar call about the terrible situation Syrians are fleeing and that money must be diverted to assist them since they are in a more precarious situation. Indeed, this comparison between other refugee groups was one I heard repeatedly. While fortunately the situation in Mali did not

[18] On the morning of the workshop, the Radisson Blu in Bamako, Mali was attacked by an extreme Islamist group called Al-Mourabitoun, leaving 21 people dead. See the following link for more details: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/20/mali-attack-highlights-global-spread-extremist-violence

create massive refugee flows, the situation in Syria was evoked frequently to highlight the distinction between those who were 'worse off' and therefore needed more of UNHCR's resources in this global refugee community, in which membership implied that many had already suffered severely.

Host Communities

This next section looks at the relationships (and the implications for social capital) that refugees and asylum seekers may have with a wider community – one that is based on membership of the host country. Dolan et al (2008:112) comment that "the role of social capital and contact with local community has been under explored within the literature" when it comes to subjective well-being. In this section, I add to this sparse body of literature. While there are undoubtedly many types of relationships one could have with various configurations of the local community, I have opted for the two that were most commonly cited among my informants. The first of these focuses on the refugee organisations with which I worked. It is unsurprising that my informants spoke of their relationship with these organisations so frequently; after all, it was through these organisations that we met. Both GAFNA and WERS also provided me with an opportunity to observe and participate in their daily workings which in turn gave me a more nuanced perspective of the relationships between the organisations and their refugee clients. Secondly, I conclude with an exploration of the links refugees and asylum seekers made with members of the country of asylum beyond those who worked or volunteered with the refugee organisations.

The role of organisations

The organisations I worked with – GAFNA and WERS – played a large role in fostering a sense of belonging in the wider community amongst refugees and asylum seekers in their respective areas. They did this through a variety of avenues that were very much distinct given the sociocultural background of each. Because of this, I will go through each separately below.

GAFNA

GAFNA was highly involved in fostering a sense of community among refugees and in actively creating relationships between the refugee and host communities. A comparison between the two organisations I worked with is, admittedly, somewhat unfair considering that GAFNA had a UNHCR-backed mandate that specifically focused on areas

such as integration and the creation of livelihood strategies which included a budget that allowed them to do so. The centrality of GAFNA in assisting and supporting refugees was not lost on those who benefitted, with the result that many applied kinship terms to the staff – calling some Mom and Dad – as well as claiming that GAFNA itself was their 'home' complete with their 'family'. This "playful usage of kinship terminology" (Rodgers 2013:73) is not uncommon in the situation of forced migrants, particularly when there is an imbalance of status or power. This conferring of kinship status (particularly if it is a parent or grandparent) can occur when someone is particularly grateful to that person (Rodgers 2013:73). Certainly, many of the refugees in the Gambia acknowledged the ways in which GAFNA had helped them and their family, making their use of these kinship terms less remarkable. Though I witnessed staff members rejecting these terms by pointing out that they were merely doing what they had been instructed (and paid) to do, GAFNA was nevertheless crucial in creating other links among and between communities which impacted how people experienced their lives post-migration.

As stated before, most of the refugees in the Gambia come from the Casamance region of southern Senegal and share a similar cultural, historical and ethnic background with Gambians. Therefore, many refugees from this region simply cross the border into the Gambia and remain in these nearby border villages. As Hopkins (2011) notes, these refugees are largely welcomed into the villages and are provided with necessities such as food, clothes and space in a home. Given, however, that many Gambian villagers experience high rates of poverty, the assistance they provide is somewhat limited and can create a considerable strain. It is for this reason that many of the projects implemented by GAFNA in the rural areas tends to be at a community level rather than focusing only on refugees. These projects included various sustainable livelihood interventions and served to foster a sense of community between the villagers and their hosts since everyone benefits. One of these projects included the distribution of donkey carts to various families (both refugee and non-refugee) in a local village. The purpose of the carts was to help in farming activities, as well as transporting produce to local markets.

Figure 12: GAFNA's donated donkey carts

My research, however, focuses on the situation of urban refugees in the area. The urban area was home to refugees from a wider background and focusing on this area was particularly relevant as Kea (2012:13) notes that the Gambia "is now one of the most urbanized countries in sub-Saharan African." The high concentration of people in the urban areas provided particular benefits and challenges. While it contained more people with different backgrounds, ideas and experiences, it carried several problems for the inhabitants. Community relations were more precarious here. The element of trust, so important in literature on social capital, was very low or non-existent. Following the 1994 coup which ousted the first president Sir Dawda Jawara, the Gambia experienced a surge of national pride which led to "many strangers, particularly African foreign nationals, [made] to feel unwelcome," (Kea 2012:12). This hostility, in turn, leads to the many West African nationals being unfairly blamed for various criminal acts (Kea 2012). In addition to a potentially strained relationship between 'stranger' refugees and Gambian nationals, inequality was also much higher, as can be expected in a city, with fewer social relations

on which to fall back on. Creating relationships therefore presents itself as more of a challenge.

GAFNA ran many workshops aimed to sensitise or raise awareness of certain issues within the community. These workshops included changes that were being made to the benefits refugees received as a result of budget cuts, and also focused on the appropriate ways to *be* in the host community. Relevant here is Goode's (1990) work which focused on recent migrants and citizen residents in a neighbourhood in Philadelphia. The migrants became part of the community on the condition that they "learn the rules." In the Gambia, it appeared a similar situation was taking place. Given the increased hostility between strangers and citizens, an emphasis was more on 'fitting in' in appropriate ways. These workshops thus sought to integrate and assimilate refugees with Gambians. Beyond these information sessions regarding the changes to services, GAFNA seemed to never run short of workshops. Workshops covered various topics; I even attended a child protection workshop. The issues discussed were not solely applicable to refugee communities, yet this workshop promoted a type of social consciousness which was gripping the Gambia at that time: promoting certain moral values and ways of being. For instance, the workshop highlighted that the Gambia was a signatory to the UN Rights of the Child. The facilitator created an understanding that children were entitled to certain human rights and that parents were not free to parent, as it were, as they saw fit. Much discussion (and debate) occurred around issues such as appropriate punishments for misbehaving children and child marriage. Attending workshops such as these were taken seriously by the participants. Those who attended seemed genuinely interested in the issues being discussed with several of them jotting down notes or discussing points amongst themselves.

Indeed, many of the awareness workshops had this moral flavour to them. Cheryl Mattingly (2015:5), in commenting on parents with chronically ill children, notes that these parents are constantly in a process of "cultivating virtues to be a 'good enough' parent." To me, it appears that the purpose of these workshops I attended is to similarly cultivate 'good enough' citizens. To be 'good enough' in this context does not connote a lack of caring or of merely 'getting by'. Instead, to be 'good enough' recognises that one is doing one's best and that one should not castigate oneself too harshly for past mistakes and instead strive to learn from them. Mattingly calls social spaces in which morals and values are cultivated as *moral laboratories.* For her, moral laboratories are "spaces of possibility, ones that create experiences that are also experiments in how life might or should be lived,"

(Mattingly 2013:15). One training I attended that again carried this moralistic flavour – how life should be lived – was a sensitisation workshop on human rights. It took place over two days, outside of the GAFNA office in a relatively close village called Bulock. The age of the group ranged widely, with several children present as well as community elders. Though most were Jola, the trainer, Abie, was not fluent in this language and therefore spoke mainly in Wolof. The children could not communicate in Wolof but felt comfortable using English, making it much easier for me to follow the discussion being that the trainer had to switch between the two languages to make herself understood by all. The trainer, for her part, talked to me at length about her passion for women's rights, meaning much of the workshop had this feminist flair to it. We played an icebreaker game at the beginning in which everyone stood in the middle of the room and tried to step on someone's toes while simultaneously avoiding having their own stepped on. The group took to this task with laughter from the men and children and shy giggles from the women. "Every day we violate others' rights but we don't want our rights violated," Abie said by way of explanation after she motioned for us to stop the game and return to our seats. "So many people step on the women's toes," she stressed. Throughout the course of the workshop, she explained why wife beating was bad and made it a point to inform those present that the president of the Gambia had just banned female genital mutilation.[19] She took great pains to explain that FGM was not commanded by the Qur'an, and though there were some murmurs about how difficult it would be to change, the workshop continued. Some of the issues, however, proved to be more contentious.

[19]FGM had just been banned the week before the workshop:
https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/nov/24/the-gambia-bans-female-genital-mutilation

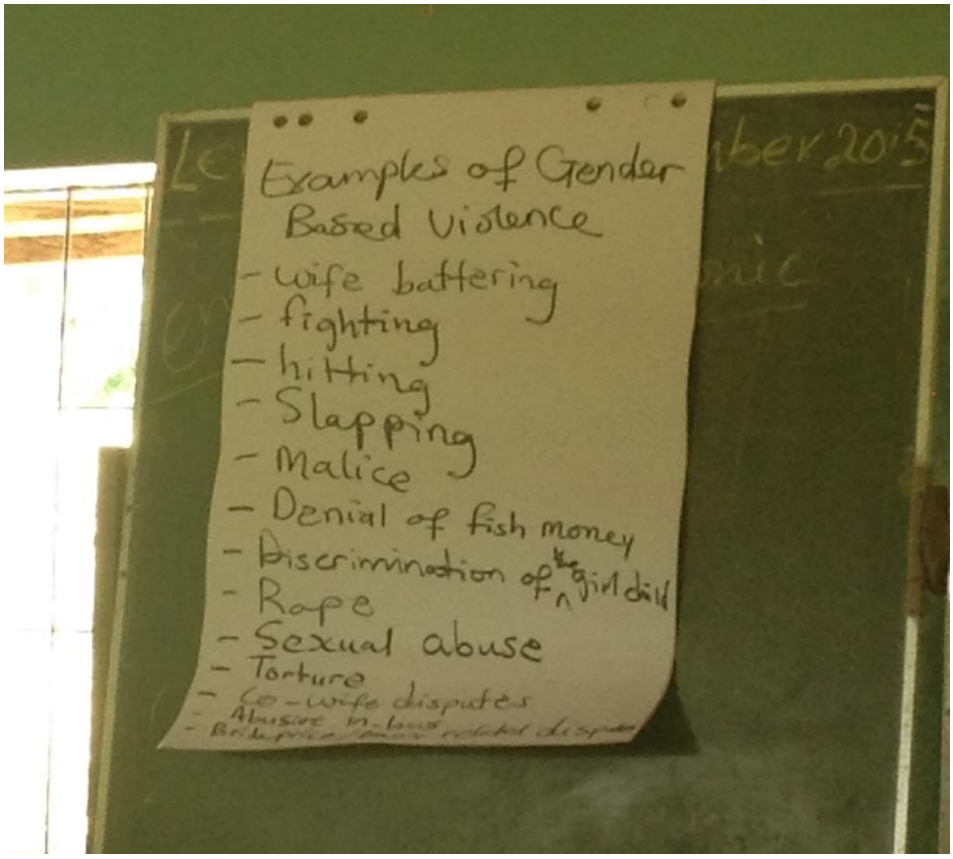


Figure 13

"Examples of Gender Based Violence" taken during the workshop on human rights

On the morning of the second day of the workshop, several men returned complaining bitterly of the trainer's previous emphasis on family planning and birth control. In response, Abie pointed at me and gave me an encouraging wave to acknowledge that what she was saying was true: "Family planning is important! It's common for white people to wait years to have a baby or choose not to have one at all." I gave a small smile and feeble nod while the man beside me grumbled that it was not like that here – children are needed to look after them when they're old. "But in Europe they have social security schemes in place, along with free healthcare, free transportation for the elderly and the government gives you some money to look after yourself!" Her nine years spent in the UK certainly reflected that this was indeed how some governments operated, yet this scenario was not particularly relevant for those living in poverty as seasonal farmers and gardeners in communities in the Gambia. Abie was, in a sense, creating a moral laboratory during this workshop. She was encouraging participants to think about how she felt life should be lived by drawing on women's equality and facilitating thought experiments on the practicalities and implications of these changes, as well as discussing how life might be lived if European practices were implemented.

These workshops (on child protection and human rights sensitisation) served to provide an ideal of how refugees should be within the larger Gambian community. I say that they provided an ideal, or at least the parameters of what it means to be a 'good enough' member of society, because the issues discussed were rife within the host community and it was the prevalence of these 'undesirable' actions (domestic violence, FGM, child sexual and physical abuse) within the Gambia itself that sparked the perceived need for training workshops. Integration and assimilation of the refugee community into Gambian society seemed to be the main goal. When I asked GAFNA members why these types of workshops were put on specifically for refugees, I was told that this constituted a broader shift within the Gambia. The Gambian government decided to set up a committee, comprising the executive directors of various NGOs and other pertinent organisations, designed to focus on informing the population about human rights and ensuring that these rights are upheld. Seeing as GAFNA was heavily involved in this new process, it made sense that they began working on this new role with the population they had the easiest access to – refugees. Refugees acted as a kind of pilot group for dissemination of these new moral values despite these topics (child rights, ending FGM, stopping spousal abuse) being problems within in the larger Gambian community and therefore not an issue solely relegated to the refugee community.

These types of moral ways of being 'good enough' citizens were also being discussed by UNHCR staff members. During my first week at GAFNA I attended the UNHCR's Refugee Status Determination workshop which served to train the organisations working directly with refugees (such as GAFNA and Gambia Commission for Refugees) on how to determine if someone has a legitimate claim to asylum. The UNHCR staff member leading the discussion was based in Dakar but originally from Western Europe. Following the workshop, he told me that he made it a point during his workshops to highlight what he saw as problematic ideas within the Gambian society. For instance, he used the example of a homosexual refugee having a strong case for being granted asylum in another country due to the discriminatory and harmful laws in the individual's home country. Indeed, this is the case throughout West Africa, and the Gambia has strong laws to this effect, with a sentence for 'homosexual acts' carrying a life term in prison.[20] He also used the example of a woman being beaten by her husband. If the police did nothing

[20] This law was enacted by President Yahya Jammeh and was true during the period of my fieldwork. The new President, Adama Barrow, says he will not prosecute homosexuals using this law.

to prevent the abuse, regardless of whether or not the law forbade such abuse, then she had a case for asylum. This example is the one I mentioned in the previous chapter, describing why Abigail fled to the UK to escape her abusive husband. These two 'case studies' used by the staff member show how workshops such as these constitute moral laboratories in which different morals and values are cultivated.

Refugee Cultural Celebration Day: Producing Community

GAFNA sponsored and conducted an annual Refugee Cultural Celebration Day, which took place once a year and was held exclusively for Senegalese refugees. More specifically, it was for those Senegalese who were rural Jola refugees. I was told that, in previous years, they had taken Senegalese refugees from the urban areas, but since funding was decreasing, they decided to forgo renting buses to transport urban refugees to Foni for the celebration. Thus, while the focus is not specifically on urban refugees, I find this example interesting for two reasons; firstly, this cultural celebration event specifically creates community by bringing together Jola refugees and Gambians in a safe, joyous space in which these national differences are completely erased. Secondly, the benefits of this space were reserved for one specific ethnic group – Senegalese Jolas. I will describe the cultural celebration day events below to elucidate how they contributed to a cohesive community.

For the day, each Community Development Assistants, along with a group of refugees and villagers, distributed a particular type of cloth which represented their specific area. GAFNA staff members sported the cloth created by the women in the Bulock cluster. This cloth was a turquoise and red tie-dye pattern that was not without significance. One of the livelihood activities that GAFNA ran was training community groups to create this tie-dye material in order to sell it and generate income. The cloth that was purchased, then, went directly to this community of refugees.

On the day of the event, a GAFNA driver picked me up from my compound and I rode to the site with four other staff members. We made the journey to a small but significant village in Foni called Bujingha. Bujingha's significance was that it was the birthplace and current village of the president's mother. The president's mother presided over this day and there was much excitement over her scheduled speech.

As we turned off onto a single lane dirt track which would, after several slow, bumpy miles deliver us to Bujingha, I noticed an increase in the number of people walking

along this road. The driver indicated to one brightly attired group of women that they could jump into the back of the white pickup truck. This signalled a frenzy of colour and movement as the women hiked up their dresses and skirts and quickly filled the back of the truck before we continued on our painfully slow journey. We finally reached the site of the celebration, by now swarming with a jovial crowd and the occasional drumbeat.

The event itself took place in an open field, on a raised stage with rows of chairs – for the most honoured guests – and a podium in front flanked by rows of chairs underneath large tents for the important guests. People milled about while music played and the occasional enthusiastic individual tried his or her hand at dancing to the beats. We made our way to the main building where the director of GAFNA sat surrounded by friends and his young daughter.

After lunch, which took place in the same building, we moved outside for the ceremony itself to begin. I was told that many people arrived the night previously from many villages within Foni. The army had provided large tents for people to sleep in which were set up in the distance. I even saw some women washing clothes and hanging them out to dry in the blazing sun. I was directed to a section of chairs located to the left of the stage. This is where GAFNA staff were seated in our matching tie and dye cloths. We waited for approximately thirty minutes before two new, shiny, black BMWs drove into the open space and pulled up right in front of the stage. The president's mother and aunts had arrived. I craned my neck to catch a glimpse of the hunched, aged figure. Several older women were being escorted up the steps and my eyes darted furtively between them. "Which one is the president's mother?" I hissed anxiously, aware that this was one of the few chances I would ever get to see someone 'famous'. "She's that one, there!" Adama, a GAFNA staff member, whispered back, pointing to one amongst the trio. "Ahhhh," I breathed, still not sure if I was looking at the right one and did my best not to blink, lest I miss something important.

Once the women were comfortably seated and the cars drove away, a new sound reached our ears. Drums heralded the arrival of a process of refugees representing the surrounding villages. Each group was decked out in their chosen cloth. They marched into the field and in front of the stage, grinning broadly. They formed a line in front of the assembled guests and, once all had marched in, the speeches commenced.

Figure 14:

Refugee Cultural Celebration Day Parade in Bujingha

The speeches contained many thanks to the president and to the work of organisations such as GAFNA for helping refugees and for organising this day. Most were spoken in English and translated to Jola, meaning I could follow what was said. What was far more interesting to me, however, were the pauses and changes in speakers. I began to look forward to these the most as the opportunistic drummers began playing an erratic beat which spurred many of the marchers into the mesmerizing, quick movements that characterised Jola dancing, in which arms were kept relatively low (as opposed to the Wolof version in which they whiz around in high circles erratically) while the knees were brought up high into the chest. The women in particular would dash in front of the stage, entreating those assembled to join them (one of the aunts did), clapping along and ending with a large flourish and bow to the president's mother. The guards located at the front of the stage did not appreciate this nearly as much as I did, and they kept shooing the women further and further away from the stage, stroking the guns attached to their hips anxiously.

After the ceremony, and around the time when large crowds began showing up, began the wrestling tournament commenced. Wrestling is the national sport of Senegal, though it is highly regarded in the Gambia as well (Saine 2012). While we stayed long enough for the men and boys to parade around the clearing in an attempt to show off their muscles and prowess, we left before the wrestling competition due to staff members' busy schedules.

This event, which stirred up much excitement among both staff and participants in the month leading up to it, demonstrated a commitment GAFNA had to its Senegalese Jola refugees. While this group represents the largest proportion of refugees in the Gambia, it is certainly not the only one. This event, however, does much to bring together villages and refugees alike and remind them that despite the frictions that hosting refugees can have

on already poverty-stricken villages, they are, to borrow Grace's phrase, 'one'. An event such as this undoubtedly goes a long way toward easing tensions and ensuring that, if violence escalates in the Casamance again, then communities will not ignore their obligation to help fellow Jolas.

West End Refugee Service

Though refugees and asylum seekers in the UK desired, or were actively in the process of, becoming citizens, attempts to 'teach' or mould them into desirable citizens were relatively few. Certainly, language classes shape desirable citizens in some sense, as do pressures through media interpretations (Khan 2013). Yet classes that taught desirable ways of being in the host community did not (or at least as far as WERS was concerned) exist.

Social programming was virtually non-existent. WERS operated more informally. For instance, they ensured that their kitchen was always open and well-stocked with coffee, tea and biscuits so asylum seekers and refugees could stay and chat for as long as they liked. One exception to a hands-off integration approach concerned the relationship between refugees and asylum seekers and the police. Once a month, WERS invited two local police officers to come and spend a few hours 'hanging out' at the office. WERS recognised that the relationship between the police and the wider community that exists in the UK can be, and most likely is, very different from that which exists in asylum seekers' home countries. To try to alleviate this fear, they invite these officers to come and 'hang out' by having cups of coffee or tea in the kitchen where they can meet clients and introduce themselves. Another purpose they serve is to be available in a safe space in case there are issues that people have that do not get reported because an individual is too afraid to go into a police station. These typically involve racist or other discriminatory actions directed at asylum seekers or refugees by the host population. Thus, while this example does not necessarily foster integration between community members, it creates an awareness of the type of relationship asylum seekers and refugees can expect from interactions with the police forces in the UK.

Like GAFNA, WERS held a special outing for some of their clients once a year. Also like GAFNA, it targeted one specific subgroup – refused asylum seekers. Refused asylum seekers are at a disadvantage because they lack virtually any income with which to explore the wider community, and they remain at the mercy of friends or, more rarely amongst my informants, family. During my fieldwork, this outing was to a retreat centre

called Minsteracres. Minsteracres is located just outside of Newcastle and offers a range of activities, though they focused quite heavily on themes related to fostering a sense of peace.

The outing lasted a day and consisted of a variety of activities, from exploring the on-site gardens and a nature walk to learning the fundamentals of tai chi, pressure points and zentangles. Unfortunately, this last task brought painful memories to the surface for some. Nala, the refused asylum seeker from Somali who was mentioned previously, held her zentangle up to inspect it, turning it this way and that, before throwing it in front of me. "Here, you can take it. Show it to your mom. I don't have a mom so it doesn't matter," she said before walking away. With a heavy heart, I picked up her zentangle, noting how the bright colours were now at complete odds with her mood and tucked it gently into my notebook as a sign that someone still cared enough to admire it.

Figure 16: Nala's Zentagle from Minsteracres

While this cultural day was markedly different from that hosted by GAFNA, it nevertheless fostered a sense of community between the refused asylum seekers themselves, who were sharing an experience, as well as between the community at large,

which they were able to participate in unencumbered. This event allowed refused asylum seekers who received nothing from the government to undertake a journey they would not have been able to afford and experience the benefits that a retreat centre – an arguably very Western and privileged activity – can offer. Later I expressed my surprise with WERS staff members that regardless of the activity, everyone cheerfully participated. They too confided how pleased Minsteracres's staff members were at the level of enthusiasm shown for the activities. This outing, held specifically for refused asylum seekers who frequented WERS, clearly had effects on their sense of well-being.

As shown, both GAFNA and WERS represented a facet of the wider community. They represented a commitment to assisting those who arrived as refugees and asylum seekers and facilitated connections between refugees and members of the host community. Crucially, they generated social capital by distributing information resources such as how to be a proper, or 'good enough' member of society. The represented sites of what Mattingly (2015) called 'moral laboratories' which created a set of guidelines on how life should be lived. This process was particularly relevant in the Gambia where GAFNA hosted a range of workshops on issues affecting the refugee community in the area as well as the larger community. In the next section I look at ways in which refugees and asylum seekers moved beyond a relationship with a refugee organisation and formed relationships with members of the local community.

Engaging with Locals

In the UK, opportunities for asylum seekers to integrate with the wider Geordie community were limited. Individuals lived with only other asylum seekers in addition to being unable to access employment. Education tended to be limited to English classes, particularly for the newly arrived. Therefore, interaction opportunities, and those which many sought out, included volunteering opportunities in the community. For many researchers, participation in voluntary organisations is an important way to measure social capital (Whiteley 2001). These organisations they speak of, however, typically take the form of political or civic organisations, which were not mentioned to me by my informants. Rather, informants participated in organisations that engaged in activities such as feeding the homeless in Newcastle, organising summer events for children or volunteering with organisations like the British Red Cross or the North of England Refugee Service.

Ethnic and national communities are not the only type of community crucial to refugees and asylum seekers. The engagement with the wider host community is also an

important social network that factors into one's well-being. In fact, friendships with nationals were dearly sought in the UK. Though it is an older study, Ager et al's research (2002) on refugees in Edinburgh is pertinent to this discussion. They found that most of their informants placed great emphasis on engaging in activities that allowed them to meet local people in the area rather than those from similar ethnic or refugee backgrounds. They cited a further study by Beiser et al. (1989) who suggested that this focus on community interaction fostered a sense of identity and enhanced feelings of belongingness, serving to protect against the stresses related to sociocultural adjustment. More recently, Schweitzer et al (2007) comment that among refugees from Sudan resettled in Australia, it is the relationships formed with Australians that are key sources of support and coping. These relationships provide informational support which helps the Sudanese individuals in their study adapt to the wider culture. Because of the additional benefits that friendships with locals can provide (such as facilitating integration with the wider community and providing informational support), I have included a discussion on these relationships in this chapter on social networks and social capital rather than in the previous chapter which focused on friendships as a part of one's personal community. It is clear, through my own research, that these interactions with local community members was of vital importance for the well-being for many of my informants.

As previously mentioned, many valued their relationships, and were proud when these were formed with British citizens. I will now return to Kakengo, a refugee living in the UK since 2002, as a perfect example. I met him several times at WERS as well as during a home visit that involved one of his friends. He formally narrated his story to me over the course of three hours, detailing the challenges and the triumphs of his journey. He came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the official language is French. When he arrived in the UK, he had very little knowledge of English and even less of the particular accent in the Newcastle area known as 'Geordie'. He learned much of his initial knowledge about Newcastle culture through his interactions with women, specifically in the romance department. He spoke vividly about his sexual encounters with both 'big' English women (in the physical sense) as well as older English women. Apparently this was the most common way among his friends to gain exposure to English ways. "Big women speak good English," he elaborated. "Slow English for us, you know they will take the time to speak slowly to us to understand. When we free we know how to speak English, it's like I'm free now…I can choose who I can get, so we start getting normal girls." After

he was ‘free to choose’ his own partners, he was able to find women he was happy to have as girlfriends. As he explained, “They teach me English, every day all day I just speak English. I was learning, every day of my life I was learning.” Mastering the language was definitely the first step in beginning to feel like he could engage in the British, and specifically Geordie, community.

The engagement was not without its problems. Kakengo was one of the first refugees dispersed to the Newcastle area. He bore the brunt of racism and discrimination and paved the way for a more accepting community. It was not easy. He related how he felt by saying, “When I am on the bus, I can feel it, I am a black man, a foreigner.” Fortunately, this feeling passed. “It come a day when I see myself just like everyone in town,” he affirmed. “For now, I’m a Geordie.” He took great pride in this new identity which highlighted him as someone who belonged. He elaborated that at his workplace, he is now known as the ‘Black Geordie’ and people delighted in hearing him speak Geordie back to them. While Metykova (2010) comments on how ‘mastering’ a city is what enables migrants in London to feel like a Londoner, for Kakengo mastering the language is what enabled him to feel like a Geordie. This new Geordie identity would not have been possible without the women who specifically sought out young African men as lovers. “If I’m talking to you like this it’s because of them,” he told me. “They help me to have no complaints, no scare, fear, be free man. So I thank them,” he added. His engagement with the local community, though not without its challenges at the beginning, afforded him a new type of freedom which was invaluable and which led to a feeling that he too could belong, could become a ‘Geordie. “They try to make us feel comfortable in Newcastle. And we found all this happiness,” he concluded. Being a part of this community, belonging to the community, was central to his happiness narrative. Therefore, while refugees and asylum seekers in the UK relished the idea of being able to one day return to their home country and visit their families, they recognised that their lives and futures were now based in the UK. Engagement with the local community thus fostered a sense of well-being and was something that many actively pursued.

On this point, it seems that engaging with the community is more common in the UK than it is in either the Gambia or Cameroon. One probable explanation for this was the importance that people in the Gambia and Cameroon put on resettlement. While the more official UNHCR position touts the notion of local integration as the only way forward, many of those I spoke with knew people who were resettled in Canada or Europe and

maintain that it is the only acceptable way forward for them and their families. While more on this will be mentioned in another chapter, it is important to point out that this hope for resettlement dissuaded many refugees from fully engaging in the host community as they were aiming to leave it as soon as possible.

The issue with resettlement is not to say that there was no engagement with the local community. Some recognised the importance of 'getting along' with Gambians while highlighting how it was different than integration. As Grace noted, "Here is like your refugee house. When you come, they take you. You have to know how to sit so that you'll be quiet. This, it's life." The Gambia was more a temporary house; a house in which one was a 'refugee', a term that many assured me was not a permanent label. One had to learn how to get along with the host population and how to avoid conflict. She was quick to assure me that her fellow countrymen are frequently praised for their ability to 'sit quietly' in the larger community. To return to Portes and Sensenbrenner's (1993) sources of social capital, this notion fits closely with bounded solidarity. A sense of bounded solidarity can create a sentiment of "we-ness" and "does not depend on its enforceability, but on the moral imperative felt by individuals to behave in a certain way," (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993:1328). In this way it is similar to value introjections. They note that both sources of social capital contain an element of moral obligation in which "individuals behave in a certain way because they must – either because they have been socialized in the appropriate values or because they enact emergent sentiments of loyalty toward others like themselves," (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993:1332). The largest difference between the two concerns the situation in which they come about (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993:1328). Because it is created through confrontation with the host society, solidary communities exist particularly among immigrant populations. While in general they cite this source of social capital as being useful when it comes to creating and consolidating small enterprises (1993:1329), they do concede that easing "the difficulties of poverty and cultural adjustment" in the form of local clubs is also a function (1993:1330). While the Ivoirians in the Gambia did not use their solidarity in the ways described by Portes and Sensenbrenner, they did recognise their place within the larger society and could see the benefits of their reputation. As one of my informants boasted, "They like having us here, we are the 'good refugees'." They respect their host country's rules and do not get in trouble with the authorities, but it says nothing of feeling like one belongs and certainly does not fit with the happiness that Kakengo mentioned.

Interestingly, in the Gambia, the emphasis on creating friends was largely absent. Except for a few young Senegalese men who shared the same ethnic background as the Gambian community around them, friendships with citizens were something to avoid. As mentioned in the previous chapter, one man in the Gambia avoided friendships because he was afraid to be seen as only forming the bond to get something from them. Others indicated that they felt they were too different to form these bonds with Gambians. Regardless of the reason, many did not seek out and strengthen friend relationships with local Gambians.

William, who was introduced in Chapter 3 and who is in the process of creating a fishing boat project, also commented on his unease with their positionality. As mentioned briefly, he claimed to give legal advice to a group of refugee leaders who were imprisoned in the Gambia's infamous Mile 2 prison. He instructed the men to present themselves and seek asylum in Dakar. Unfortunately, the Senegalese men could not do this and were stuck, much like William. William claimed that he was threatened by a Gambian government official if he engaged in any further political actions. The man told him, "If the government give order to kill [you], it will not take 30 minutes, I'll be on you." This threat prevented him from being able to feel like he could belong in the community. More specifically, it led to him vocally rejecting attempts of local integration, the main policy pushed by UNHCR. The policy on integration was an interesting one to focus on as it was. Though several refugee families had been interviewed for resettlement in Canada and Australia, very few had actually been accepted. Therefore, initially, integration seemed like a good alternative. Its viability, however, is brought into question by the fact that under Gambia law, it takes a minimum of fifteen years of residence in the country before one can even been considered for naturalisation (the ultimate goal of integration) – and this is just one of a host of criteria (Manby 2015:24).[21]

The largest barrier in creating relationships to the host community concerned issues of trust. Trust is generally acknowledged as a key component of social capital (e.g. Coleman 1988; Bjørnskov 2006) As is often the case with refugees, these issues of who to

[21] I did ask one man who had been in the country for over 20 years why he had not sought to become a Gambian national. "My country is a paradise…but it is run by the devil," he told me. Most people say this of DRC, they talk about its wealth in resources and natural beauty, which he expounded upon. Ultimately, he recognised that the faults of his country came down to mismanagement and war. In regards to the Gambia, however, he asked "Why would I want to become a national in a country that I have suffered so much in?"

trust come to the fore when influencing a decision to make friends. Recall Laurent from the previous chapter who claimed that he was unsure of who might be trustworthy, leading him to reject relationships beyond those of his immediate family. Situations such as these are cited in the literature. For example, among West African migrants (consisting of both voluntary and forced) in New York City, there exists a general concern about the basic welfare and safety of children which is seen as a degradation of the value of communal upbringing and disciplining of children (Chu et al 2016). A hesitation to trust the wider community can certainly inhibit the formation of relationships and impact upon a person's sense of relational well-being.

Conclusion

Taking as its starting point that "Humans deliberately make and remake their social networks all the time" (Christakis and Fowler 2010:17), this chapter sought to uncover the main links in my informants' network, as well as the importance of these links. While the last chapter focused on close, personal links, this chapter expanded its focus to look at more distant relationships.

The first, and perhaps most commonly cited network among migrants include those from one's national or ethnic community. Being a refugee complicates this relationship, especially in the case of civil wars or other ethnic conflicts. In fact, Chu et al (2016:797) remark that these cultural community networks or ethnic networks "can be both a positive and a negative resource." This ambivalence existed in the narratives of many of my informants. Most, however, did cite some type of relationship with this community whether they lived in the UK or in the Gambia.

Another key social network included others who were refugees or asylum seekers. While I am reluctant to use the term 'refugee community' as a homogenous entity (see Malkki 1995), relationships between members are common. This relationship comprised both a sense of reciprocity and echoed the 'similar others' mentioned by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) in the last chapter, and these types of relationships provided an important support network for those experiencing a similar situation. Interestingly, those in the Gambia saw themselves not only as one of the refugees living in the area, but also as members of the global refugee community and compare their situation with the situation of others forcibly migrated by conflict.

The final two examples of social networks that confer a type of social capital involves those who belong to the host community. The network which is closest for many of the refugees and asylum seekers I spoke with is that of the refugee organisation – either GAFNA or WERS – they frequent to elicit financial, information and social support. The organisations themselves frequently act as a kind of 'moral laboratory' (Mattingly 2015) which can be seen to create 'good enough' members of societies. That is, through workshops and other social programmes they revealed how life might or should be lived within the society. In addition to this role, each organisation facilitated access to the wider community and sought to do so with special days designed around the integration of refugees. Finally, I ended the chapter with a discussion of the special relationships, even friendships, with members of the wider community to convey the particular benefits that these relationships can provide. Each of these social networks fostered a sense of relational well-being and provided a crucial form of social capital.

Chapter 6: Everyday Happiness

Well-being is a concept that encapsulates a more evocative term: happiness. In the 2017 World Happiness Report, Africans are ranked amongst the least happy people in the world (though, as will be described in the next chapter, they are also the most optimistic) (Helliwell et al 2017). In addition to being ranked rather unfavourably in terms of happiness, Africa also suffers from a lack of research in this area. My informants were in a sense doubly affected – they represent a group of largely 'unhappy' Africans, as well as belonging to the 'unhappy' group of asylum seekers and refugees, both of which are under-researched in relation to happiness. Happiness, as may be expected, is a loaded term, and one that appears quite rarely in relation to refugees and asylum seekers. Indeed, it initially seemed perverse to research happiness amongst those who had undergone a potentially traumatic forced migration. I realised, however, that it was precisely because it was so often overlooked that people were eager to share this side of their lives with me. Indeed, as Colby, an advocate of happiness studies, notes, it can be enormously productive to simply ask people about happiness – what makes them happy as well as unhappy, particularly in a relatively underdeveloped field such as this (in Matthews and Izquierdo 2009:61).

In the literature, happiness is defined in various ways. It is often used interchangeably with well-being or subjective well-being and occasionally with eudemonia. Happiness, then, is seen as either something worthy of study in itself, or as the subjective component of well-being, which is then complemented by an objective component (Matthews and Izquierdo 2009:2). Much research, including migration research, tends to fall in economics, with a focus on the relationship between income and happiness (see Bartram 2010 and Hendriks 2015). While happiness has various definitions in the literature and during various historical periods, many of my informants thought of happiness as a complete state of being – and one that could not be fully realised while one was without refugee status. Happiness was an end to their current situation and was thus future-orientated. Instead, then, I focused on experiences of everyday happiness.

My use of the word "happy" did momentarily confuse some of my informants, particularly those who were used to being asked questions about their lives. As stated previously, WERS allowed students in various disciplines to have access to their clients for

research projects, and GAFNA clients participated in focus groups for UNHCR once every few months. Most people I spoke with, then, were used to speaking about problems they experienced and/or shortcomings of the various actors tasked with their registration, safety and comfort; speaking about what they enjoyed was something new. To explore the everyday aspect of happiness, I used other prompts if informants hesitated or seemed unsure. For instance, I asked people what they enjoyed doing, what gave them joy, what they liked. I was interested in seeing how the idea or motive of happiness figured in their daily lives, or "how they actually go about making their lives happier," (Walker and Kavedžija 2016:6). It was thus positioned in such a way as to be action-oriented, indicating a close relationship with the construction of time which will feature prominently. Laura Bear (2016:494) describes the ethics of right action as 'phronesis' and remarks that it contains "accounts of what time is and what it should be used for". This careful attention to social constructions and meaning provides a useful framing for these discussion with my informants. I wanted to explore the ways in which people understand and actively pursued positivity and what they construed as their sources of happiness within a wider discourse on time.

Interestingly, for many I spoke with (and despite the close link between the two in the literature and which was described in the previous two chapters), happiness was not an interpersonal experience. While certainly some did respond with stories about their friends and family, as detailed other chapters, many responded with quite solitary activities. Their search for happiness took the form of internal dialogues or external solo activities, the latter of which are rarely described in the literature. These activities are subsumed under the idea of hedonic happiness. Hedonic happiness has developed as an area of positive psychology and differs from hedonism. The editors of *Well-Being: Foundations of Hedonic Psychology* (1999) suggest that hedonic psychology "covers the full spectrum from the pleasant to the unpleasant" (Kahneman et al 1999:ix). In particular, they concern themselves with the areas of enjoyment and suffering, rather than solely pleasure (hedonism). Hedonic happiness can be characterized by 'feeling good' and focuses on cultivating activities that create more of this positive affect. This is not to discredit a focus on hedonic pursuits. In fact, many researchers note the importance that hedonic happiness can play. For Steger et al (2013:163) hedonia, like eudaimonia, is related to vitality and life satisfaction and, furthermore, that "the positive effect of hedonia should not be ignored, considering the fact that eudaimonia is difficult to achieve and requires effort." Similarly,

King et al (2006:191) link hedonic aspects of experience with meaning in life, suggesting that "the lines between hedonic pleasures and more "meaningful pursuits" should not be drawn too rigidly." Both argue against the general devaluation of hedonia in academic and public spheres.

As will be shown, these types of pleasurable activities appear frequently in the literature on leisure studies, suggesting an 'everyday' quality to the types of happiness pursued. This focus on the normal 'everyday' quality of activities is unremarkable in the literature. In his research on West Bank Palestinians, Tobias Kelly (2008:353) remarks that "more time is spent watching TV, waiting for buses or preparing food, than it is shooting guns, hiding in basements or burning houses." Much of life is spent being very ordinary even in the most extraordinary conditions (such as armed conflict). Even in the case of those who have fled and reached a safe country, little attention is paid to the "ordinary 'non-events', or everyday life of waiting *between* these events," (Rotter 2016:84). These ordinary 'non-events' (i.e. those outside of armed conflict, the flight, the asylum interview and appeal hearing) that Kelly and Rotter speak of also serve to erase the perceived differences between asylum seekers/refugees and the host populations.

In addition to exploring the ways in which people seek out happy and joyful experiences and activities, I will also comment on the experience of having too much leisure time and the negative consequences of this. Amongst my informants the related experiences of boredom and waiting appear frequently. I will therefore examine the idea of boredom that many fear because they live in a liminal state, as well as how the threat of boredom shapes the type of leisure activities in which my informants engaged.

Positive Self-Talk

Positive self-talk as a self-help route to happiness exploded on the market and remains exceptionally popular throughout much of North America and Europe. It is the topic of morning shows and social media posts. Yet despite this popularity, I was surprised to hear it spoken about so readily amongst my informants. The format that discussions around positive self-talk took typically involved someone encouraging themselves and then using their new-found positivity to help others. While the latter portion does highlight a social aspect of their happiness, I still consider it primarily a solo activity since it occurred after the self-talk itself, indicating that it was more of a fortunate by-product that kept their

sense of well-being high, though not necessarily the original catalyst for improved happiness. Furthermore, this focus on positivity echoes the existing literature surrounding the role of optimism, particularly in relation to resilience.

Optimism, referring to an expectation that good things will happen to you more often than bad things, has become an area of research, particularly in the field of psychology (Zoellner and Maercker 2006). This focus on optimism appears most frequently in relation to studies on coping and resilience. Many find a strong correlation between resilient individuals – and those most likely to benefit from posttraumatic growth experiences – and those who are ranked as being optimistic (see Feder et al 2014; Zoellner and Maercker 2006). While optimism is not necessarily the same as positive self-talk, the two are linked in that, in general, optimistic people are more likely to engage in self-talk, and self-talk is likely to be related to positive feelings.

Positive self-talk does not solely appear within the psychological literature. Within the happiness literature, positive self-talk can be subsumed under what Ahuvia et al (2015) term as internalism. They state that "Internalism is the belief that happiness is produced largely by mental perception," (Ahuvia et al 2015:2). While the purpose of their paper is to advocate for an interactionist approach consisting of both internalism and externalism, the response I had from several informants focused quite heavily on just this one perspective. This focus should come as little surprise; most of those I spoke with had few, if any, material resources at their disposal. They possessed little in terms of finances and many had been separated from their families and friends. Focusing their energy on changing their internal state of mind provided a practical means through which to achieve a reasonable level of happiness for them.

A key component of internalism, which some informants espoused, involves an intentional change in perceptions which results in a psychological change (Ahuvia et al 2015). For one of my informants, this took the form of social comparison. Eleanor, a Liberian woman living in the Gambia, was in a particularly desperate situation. She was a former nun in her fifties. She used to hold a job in the Gambia as a secretary and typist but due to increasing discrimination against foreign nationals, she found herself unemployed. With no family to turn to, she frequently lived with various friends until they became too overwhelmed with the cramped conditions and additional mouth to feed. She thus changed abodes every few months and had very little food and money beyond what she could get

for spending hours at internet cafes trying to find someone to hire her for a temporary typing job. When I met her she had recently been diagnosed with high blood pressure which she claimed made her often feel dizzy and unwell. However, she remained positive by comparing herself with those who had it worse.

Eleanor first began discussing how some people thought that she should turn to prostitution in order to earn some money. She did engage in positive self-talk during this process, but compared herself with others who she implied were 'failures.' She said

> I have to be strong – a woman is a special creation for God. I will not get up [at night to engage in prostitution] because others are doing it – at night, they will not sleep. But I said to myself, 'I will make it. I'm not a failure yet.' And I started to encourage myself. Even up till now, I'm encouraging myself. At the end something will happen. I say to myself, 'Eh, thank God I didn't go that way'.

The self-talk did not end there. Since she refused to engage in prostitution, she had to find other means of survival. During these times, she recalled what she would say, both to herself and to God. "When I'm going I say to myself on the road, I say to myself, 'It's written in the Bible. God say: 'If you don't work you don't eat.' So I say, 'God, I want to eat'." She attributed her relationship with God with keeping her positive during the most trying of times. This solitary, positive self-talk allowed her to feel a connection to others, particularly when it came to comparisons, thereby fostering an interpersonal connection.

Eleanor claimed that she felt the happiest through her interactions with those she felt were worse off. For her, she claimed that happiness occurred "when I joke. When I smile at people because they are more in the streets. They need people to smile at them, so who am I [to deny them that]?" she queried. She continued. "Many people are in the street, they need someone who can handle, 'How are you?' Smile at them. They too need that." When I asked her if she found that people were sad here, she responded with, "Too much. You see people sitting in the wheelchair. You think they like to sit there? I don't think so. Other people you see them [with] their arm and legs [missing] – so many things!" she burst out and paused before continuing. "I say to myself, I say, 'These people, maybe I'm their leg.' What's wrong with the man, God – maybe God gave me normal hand so that person [without an arm] have [someone to help them]. So they need you too," she concluded. She found a source of happiness through self-encouragement, viewing her position favourably when compared to others and using that higher position to help those less fortunate than her. Despite her very limited access to resources, this combination of positive self-talk and

comparison allowed her to feel a sense of happiness in her life. Comparing oneself with others is not uncommon in literature on coping. For instance, Schweitzer et al (2007) note this type of comparison amongst Sudanese refugee resettled in Australia. They claim that these comparisons with others who are less fortunate allow this set of refugees to feel a sense of hope for the future and provided them with a sense of optimism that the worst was behind them. While Eleanor does not frame her comparison as an optimism for the future, she did remark that, like the Sudanese refugees in Schweitzer et al's (2007) sample, she was in a fortunate position despite the difficulties she was experiencing. Others I spoke with echoed this sentiment, with one young man living in the UK responding, "What makes me happy? Just being alive! There's loads of people worse – even in this asylum process." Comparisons with others could improve one's own perception of life, leading them to report a feeling of happiness.

Rather than making favourable comparisons, others I spoke with experienced happiness solely through positive self-talk. Recall Sandra from Chapter 2, the Zimbabwean woman living in Newcastle who spoke eloquently about how, though this process is challenging, she has learned lessons and skills that she never would have otherwise. When I asked her what made her happy, she furrowed her brow thoughtfully and gave me a year: 2012. "2012," she continued when I looked puzzled, "that's when I literally chose. I was like, 'God, I'm choosing to be happy.' And I'm choosing that no one should have my joy. No one should be responsible for my happiness. Happiness – being happy – it is a decision." She paused for a moment before adding, "It's my own responsibility to make myself happy. After that, I started looking at my life in a different way." She highlighted the difficulties someone in her situation faces, but remarked that it wasn't productive to worry about it because "you will drive yourself crazy." "Sometimes you don't have control over certain things so you have to accept that you don't have control over that and let it be," she added.

I probed deeper following her declaration that a conscious choice made such a difference in her life. She told me that she had been spiralling into a depression which began when her brother passed away from cancer. Her life became wrapped up in working long hours, showing up late, talking back to her manager and drinking too much in the evenings. On New Year's Eve, going into 2012, she realised that she was unhappy with her life and the path she found herself on. This led to her decision. "You have to choose to be happy," she clarified. "Find a way. Choose, you choose. So I chose to be happy and I choose to do positive things." Sandra described this happiness as peace. She said, "You

have to be happy from inside out. I have this peace within me. And even sometimes I don't understand it. But I know I have peace." She knew it was hard for someone in her situation, a refused asylum seeker, to be happy, but she was undeterred in the belief of positive thoughts. She admitted that she did sometimes allow herself to "ugly cry in front of the mirror" before going to bed, but when she awakes she always feels better. Crying did help her, but it was important to see this outpouring of emotion as releasing tension rather than a sign of unhappiness. "Be positive, start saying positive things about your life and it will come to pass, it will," she told me. "Sometimes it is difficult when you're in the tornado to believe that but you still have to believe that." This emphasis on choice is echoed even by Viktor Frankl, the psychiatrist who spoke and wrote extensively about his time in a concentration camp in World War II. Even in the direst of environments an individual can face, he notes that all is not lost. "The last of the human freedoms," he explains is to "Choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances," (Frankl 1984:12.) Sandra felt similarly, which is why choosing to be happy seemed a viable option to her. Following this conscious choice, Sandra then went on to create a 'bucket list'. For her, these were inexpensive or free activities that she and her friends could do. Her bucket list included things like ice skating and having her first barbeque in the park. She covered her mouth as she laughed loudly, recalling how poorly she mastered ice skating but persisted nonetheless.

Her personal decision also affected her interpersonal relationships. Her desire to 'do positive things' led her to interact with others. "If I can change people's lives that way, I'll do it," she affirmed. She reflected on this desire to impact on others, stating "Sometimes that's the reason why we go through these things, so you help other people, you know? I just like to do something positive in people's lives like, that's how I cope as well. I'm going through whatever, but for that time I've escaped that thing and I'm doing something positive instead of me always focusing on my problem." She described a situation in which she offered advice to a colleague in an attempt to give her more confidence. "I wanted her to have that juice I was on," she commented.

While Sandra was the most eloquent about choosing to be happy and engaging in positive self-talk, she was certainly not the only one. Lionel, a young Congolese man in the Gambia, also stressed the importance of positive self-talk. He was in the process of creating his own organisation that provided leadership opportunities to young people while fostering a relationship with God, as well as hosting a yearly gospel singing competition.

He had been marginally successful in this endeavour, promoting the competition on the local radio station and attracting a few sponsors, such as the popular Africell phone company and a bank, as well as garnering student enthusiasm from the nearby university. His passion was in building up this organisation. He claimed that it made him happy. Specifically, he said that "It gives me joy to see them [participants] succeed. Cause I don't like seeing people with nothing, with all their talents and no opportunities to explore them, no opportunities to sell them out." He rushed on to add, "So that's what disturb me most with the youths, they have the talent, they have the gift, but not opportunity to – there is not platform to showcase them. So I decided to come up with a platform to showcase them." The creation of this platform coupled with other opportunities for young people was not easy for him to manage on his own. He said that, "Sometimes when I look at myself I say 'Wow, I have a vision that's even bigger than I am. How do I even fit myself into this vision, it's just too big!'"

To keep himself going with this daunting task that he felt compelled by God to undertake, he turned to positive self-talk. Lionel told me, "I just know I always encourage myself, like 'I can do it, I can make it, no matter what, no matter the distraction, I'm still going to push it.'" "So you always think positive?" I asked. "Yeah. I don't allow negative thoughts," he responded. When I probed deeper, asking how he kept these negative thoughts at bay, he said, "I just stay in focus. I don't – sometimes I will feel discouraged, or 'How am I going to do this?' but I just encourage myself, 'You can do it', talk to myself, 'You can do it, no don't be discouraged'. I talk to myself." This positive self-talk certainly impacted on his happiness and allowed him to continue on a path that brought him joy despite the sheer size of it. Lionel believed that this was his calling. He persevered in the hope that an opportunity would come for him to scale up as he simply felt that the Gambia was too small for him to realise his full potential. As he said to me, "I just…I feel enclosed in this place. Sometimes your dreams, your inspiration, can be bigger than the environment that accommodates your vision and your dreams." He kept encouraging himself not only to continue with his dreams, but also to avoid frustration with the limitations of his environment.

As can be seen, positive self-talk was important for many of my informants. The centrality of self-talk and encouragement is also echoed in the literature. For example, among their sample of female African refugees residing in the UK, Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani (2012:99) note that the women "adopted positive thinking and self-talk as a way

of managing their distress by thinking of a positive future." While Lionel's narrative certainly shares the future orientation that Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani's informants had, some informants did find that being positive in the present allowed them to experience a sense of everyday happiness.

Activities and Routines

Pleasurable Activities and Leisure

The most frequent response to direct questions about happiness referred to some type of activity enjoyed rather than a positive mental state. The activities themselves were not radically different from what one could call 'ordinary' activities. In fact, that may be the reason they remain so important. "The ordinary […] is shot through with a residual hope that it still may be possible, and a fear that it might not," (Kelly 2008:354). These activities, then, may be clung to precisely for their mundane qualities, reminding one that one is 'normal'. The activities themselves, named purely for the pleasure they brought to an informant, fall under the broader category of leisure. While leisure was initially defined in a black-and-white manner as simply opposition to work, a plethora of definitions exist which range from subjective feelings about whether one is engaging in leisure to restrictive categories as to what can be included as leisure. Purrington and Hickerson (2013:130-131) define leisure as "behaviour that differs from culture-specific behaviours closely related to immediate survival and other practical necessities of life."

Discourses around the benefits of leisure can be traced back as far as Aristotle, who claimed that "leisure is more important than work because leisure provides pleasure and happiness," (Newman et al 2013:556). More recently, leisure is seen as being a central component of psychological well-being, health, development of friendships and expressions of cultural identities (Hall and Huyskens 2002). Because of its importance and extensive history, leisure studies remain relatively interdisciplinary, with sociology seeming to have the most to say on this topic at the moment (Roberts 2015). Though it has been nearly twenty years since Garry Chick (1998) advocated for a greater inclusion of anthropologists in leisure studies, few researchers seem to have taken up his call.

One of the most interesting aspects of leisure is that it appears to be a universal experience even if direct translations are sometimes impossible. Indeed, the anthropologist Chick (1998) who advocated for stronger anthropological engagement with this field of

research highlighted that not only were some leisure activities universals (such as music, dance, play, recreation sex and use of drugs) but so were the emotions that accompanied these experiences of leisure (such as pleasure, interest and enjoyment) (Chick 1998:116). Other researchers, such as Purrington and Hickerson (2013), echo this universality, but note that it remains under-researched, especially in non-Western and comparative contexts. In terms of translations, Chick (1998:117) comments on the findings of Richard Makopondo (1997) who found that in Kenya, there is no Luo word that can be directly translated as leisure. Rather, this word translates back into English "behaviours or activities that give people happiness or bring back or soothe the heart or spirit." This example serves to highlight the connection between leisure activities and happiness, indicating its popularity amongst my informants.

Leisure takes different forms depending on the person and the surrounding environment, be it physical or cultural. In terms of the former, Chick (1998) highlights various studies which show that leisure activities are related to the quality and quantity of food one has in one's environment. If food is abundant then leisure may be more active, such as wrestling or dancing. If food is scarce, then leisure may perhaps take the form of resting or sleeping. Additionally, Roberts (2015) makes a similar distinction which he frames as active versus solitary. For him, active leisure is something which requires an individual to be social and out of their home (Roberts 2015:855). Solitary leisure is what it sounds like – it is a form of leisure that an individual partakes in alone. He does, however, go one step further and claim that it is specifically active leisure which raises an individual's level of self-reported life satisfaction (Roberts 2015:855).

Leisure activities are particularly crucial for the asylum seekers and refugees who are unable and often very frustrated at the inability to access paid employment, whether that be through laws inhibiting them or through a lack of options. Leisure among refugee populations, however, remains a largely neglected area of study with few researchers engaging in this type of work despite the recognition by some, such as Hall and Huyskens (2002), that experiencing pleasure is vital to overcoming experiences of loss, tragedy and fractured lives. In the absence of work, leisure time is no longer something that must be 'squeezed in' but is rather something that is in abundance, echoing the findings of Russell and Stage (1996:114) in their study of Sudanese women living in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya who call this "the deadening experience of unlimited and aimless time." Newman et al (2013) also concede that though much of the literature highlights the positive aspects

of leisure, increases in leisure time do not necessarily mean an improved sense of well-being across all demographics.

Grouden and Jose (2015:33) remark that "Meaning in life is vital for human wellbeing." Current research, however, yields mixed results over whether leisure activities can create meaning. Through a series of studies, Grouden and Jose (2015) determined that leisure and meaning did, in fact, have a negative correlation, indicating that leisure is unlikely to foster a sense of meaning in life. Others, however, have found different results. For example, a group of social psychologists found a link between hedonic pleasure and meaning in life, leading them to conclude that hedonic aspects of experiences are important in the creation of higher experiences such as finding meaning in life (King et al 2006). Similarly, Newman et al (2013:556) take the stance that subjective well-being (which is a synonym for happiness) correlates with areas of leisure such as visiting family and friends, playing sports or games, watching television, taking tourist trips and using the internet. They do, however, make a distinction between structural and subjective leisure. Structural leisure is defined as time – or its associated activity – which takes place outside of obligated work time. Subjective leisure, by contrast, consists of the time in which one feels like one is participating in leisure.

The challenge that many I spoke with, then, was to transform this time into something meaningful. Given the constraints mentioned above, it was not always easy to do. I argue that many of my informants were ambivalent about leisure. On the one hand, it can bring them pleasure and joy; on the other, too much leisure time threatened to undermine their sense of well-being. It should be noted that I am not covering an exhaustive list of leisure activities mentioned by my informants. Additionally, some leisure activities have been or will be covered in other chapters, particularly when there is a strong emphasis on its usefulness for meaning-making, or when it deserves a more in-depth analysis. Examples of previously mentioned activities include voluntary work activities, church activities and spending time with friends and family. The everyday happiness activities discussed here focus less on the active activities and more on the solitary activities – this is because individuals often highlighted these solitary activities when asked about their everyday happiness.

One of the more popular leisure activities mentioned amongst my informants was music. Music seemed to cut across boundaries and was mentioned equally in both the UK

and the Gambia. Frequently, music represented a kind of solitary leisure activity, to use Newman et al's (2013) concepts. Music was particularly relevant when someone was upset or stressed as it provided either a means of escape or a means of overcoming that emotion. In the UK, one informant noted that "music goes a long way when you're depressed" while another claimed that "When I'm getting stressed or something, I love to hear that music! The slowest music can relax you."

While most listened to music alone, a few informants saw music as a social activity. This occurred particularly when an individual was part of a band. One man in the Gambia enjoyed playing drums in a band, while another wrote songs and became the lead singer. Kakengo, a Congolese man living in the UK, saw his initial involvement with a band as the catalyst for a positive change that culminated in the happiness he enjoyed today. He explained how he came across a project that taught asylum seekers how to play music and, in a way, form their own band. While he had written and played songs before, this project brought him joy by allowing him to do something he loved while making connections in a new city. Kakengo described the importance of this asylum seeker band to me by saying, "The feel of confidence like, 'Oh! We got a band!' I bring 10 songs for start rehearsal with. And that's my happiness starting, you know?" When I asked him to describe what this happiness looked like, he responded, "In the music, I found all things I'd been looking for." Music allowed him to connect with romantic partners who took the time to teach him English. "I was learning, every day of my life I was learning," he recalled fondly. The centrality of music in his life could not be overstated. Kakengo by then had a steady job, but it was music that drove him and music that he spent much of his leisure time engaging with. He even sang me a few lines of a song in Lingala, explaining that he thought of songs while he was working and would later go home to compose it. The most recent one involved a young man and woman with whom he worked. This song was a love song in which the young man was infatuated by the woman, yet the woman remained unaware. After he finished the chorus, he turned to me with a shrug and a wide grin. "If I'm not doing my music, I'm not doing my life," he stated plainly.

The role of music as a leisure activity and source of everyday happiness varied depending on who was speaking. The same was also true of exercise. Like music, however, most of my informants described it as a solitary activity. When asked what made them feel happy/well or brought them joy, several described an exercise routine. In the Gambia, one man responded that he liked to run along the beach in the early morning when it was quiet.

Another told me he liked to do sports. When I asked him what type of sport, he mimicked holding something in each of his hands and swinging it around his body. "Jump roping?" I asked. He grinned and nodded his head. "That's it!" he exclaimed. While 'sport' had made me think of a social activity, this type clearly was not it. The response was much the same in the UK. Kakengo, the musician from Congo mentioned above, told me that he had a secret for keeping his body healthy. Music was for his mind. For his body, he told me "My secret is I keep my body work all the time. Work hard. I never want to make my body lazy. I like to do heavy job." For him to ensure he kept his body healthy, he also worked for a removal company, clearing out flats and houses. Music and exercise ensured that he remained happy – which for him included this element of positive physical health.

Unfortunately, this pathway to happiness could not be realised by all, particularly in the UK. One man told me how he used to enjoy running or going to the local pool to swim. When I asked him if he still enjoyed doing these things, he clicked his tongue and shook his head. "Ah, my friend, this place – what you do – you just come to terms with every situation that comes your way, otherwise you will be insane. That's the truth," he told me. He clarified that he would like to do these activities, but, "You can't afford these things my dear," he explained ruefully. Others also felt unable to access gyms in the UK and were less inclined to the types of strenuous physical activity mentioned above. These people, however, stressed how much they enjoyed walking. "I love walking," gushed one woman. Another echoed this sentiment by saying "I like walking. Walking a LOT. But not running," she quickly added. Interestingly, these walks were often taken alone, making them a solitary activity despite their social potential. Those who enjoyed walking, however, consisted mainly of asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers who came to the UK without a family member.

Another activity that was highly enjoyed – and which had a social potential that was not yet realised – was travelling. I was surprised to hear this mentioned by so many people. Several recognised the impossibility of travelling in their current situation but hoped for it in the future. Sandra (mentioned previously in this chapter) explained that, "The only thing I want to do is travel around and learn different things, different cultures." Another said, "I wanna go everywhere, I wanna travel. Travel…I'd love to go to America, that'd be cool! I got an uncle in Atlanta." While this was very much in the abstract future, others attempted to spend their leisure time enjoying travel. One woman confided in me that anytime she was able to get a bus pass (which usually came with things like college admission or

participating in various projects which covered transportation costs) she would travel on it. She said, "If I get a bus pass – I go somewhere. Go, take a bus, see another place, where I don't know…I can take a bus. Oh," she interrupted herself, eyes widening and her face lighting up in a smile. "I like bus number 22! I go to see my favourite place." She then launched into a description of a small town along the Tyneside coast, declaring her excitement over how clean the streets were and how cheap the charity shops were. "I found a beautiful, nice scarf there – £1! Can you believe it? In Newcastle it would be like £3 or £4!" she exclaimed. These trips, however infrequent, brought her much happiness and joy.

The final type of leisure activity that I wish to highlight involves the use of media. This finding should come as little surprise given that access to television, radio and internet is only increasing. Several informants in the UK described their favourite type of film. One man claimed he loved watching zombie movies to "keep myself entertained" while another was less discerning in what she watched, saying "I watch a lot of movies – I love American movies, especially murder mysteries. I would love to be a behavioural analyst!" While these statements appear to evoke a type of everyday happiness – that of watching pleasurable films – this clearly was not the case for all I spoke with. For instance, Nala complained that she felt tired when she came to collect her weekly allowance from WERS. When I asked her why she felt tired, she explained that, "I'm late to wake up because I'm late to go to bed!" When I questioned why she stayed up so late, she gave a sigh and responded with, "Sometimes I think what can I do? I have no family, nobody support you, ehh…you watch TV you know. I like the action and scary movies." Here she brought her hands up beside her face like claws, mimicking a monster. "Dinosaur – Anaconda!" she cried, making lunging motions. At this we both laughed and began discussing what animals we found terrifying, though this snippet of conversation remained in my mind. Can it be counted as a pleasurable activity if its goal is to distract one from the struggles of everyday life? What if it is merely the removal of unpleasant stimuli rather than the active seeking of a pleasurable activity? The literature on leisure activity remains divided on this issue. The literature on refugee leisure activities, however, does not extend beyond a few articles, meaning that any research conducted with this group is on relatively new territory. I agree with Hall and Huyskens (2002) who state that resettled refugees face many constraints when it comes to leisure, a special condition which has largely been ignored. I believe this condition warrants a more flexible definition of what counts as leisure.

Watching television, and the ambiguities it could bring, was only mentioned by informants in the UK. While many Gambian families in the Gambia do have a television, refugees tend to have less access to financial resources and fewer family members pooling those resources, meaning that many forgo this luxury. In the Gambia, therefore, radio was more commonly mentioned than in the UK, with many of the French-speaking refugees listening to RFI (Radio France Internationale) to keep updated on the latest news. Both groups, however, relied heavily on the internet and revelled in the possibilities it allowed. Two men, for instance – one in the Gambia and one in the UK – specifically enjoyed looking up new recipes. The man in the Gambia was a sous-chef at one of the fanciest hotels in the country and was keen to keep improving himself. He told me that on his one day off, he goes to "check my book, my specials." He enjoyed creating and improving his dishes and was constantly trying new recipes from famous chefs from around the world to prove his skills and, hopefully, attract the eye of a restaurant abroad. The man in the UK was also constantly trying new recipes though for very different reasons. He was a refused asylum seeker who was being supported by a family from his home country that he randomly met on a day out. In order to repay them for their kindness in helping him, he ensured that the family always came home to freshly cooked meal. When I asked him if he was a good cook, he responded with a confident grin. "Me, I know how to cook. I cook loads of types of things – anything! If I fail to know the recipe and the right measurements, at least I'll go to Google!"

While finding recipes was important, he went on to discuss the positive influence on internet access. "The good thing is I have internet, that's the good thing!" he exclaimed with a laugh. "Reading words and news around the world…At least it keeps me going," he added. Others, in both countries, echoed the importance of the internet in making them 'feel connected'. It should be noted, however, that many of the leisure activities generated by internet connectivity were solitary ones. This trend has been noted amongst some leisure scholars, with Turkle (2011) commenting that the use ITs have led to the reduction of both opportunities and incentives for people to connect more deeply with one another or engage in self-reflection. Among my informants, this solitary activity typically involved reading the news of one's home country or the world at large. One young woman in the Gambia told me that having access to the internet prevented her from feeling like she was 'stuck'. "I can know other things that is happening other side of the world!" she told me. "If I don't do that then I am at home. I cannot know anything! La vie ne peut pas s'arrêter à la maison.

Life it cannot be stopped only at home," she explained (her translation). Internet access, then, allowed her to feel connected not to those around her in the immediate, but rather allowed her place herself in the global world, something in which she found significant meaning.

Keeping Busy

The activities described above certainly had a positive impact on those I spoke with and these activities do appear in the literature as positive ways to spend leisure time. Asylum seekers and refugees, however, constitute a complex group where leisure is concerned. While Newman et al (2013) argue that leisure is highly valued and most believe it increases their overall well-being, they were not considering the experiences of those who have too much leisure time. When every day is described as 'leisure' (the absence of work), this can have detrimental effects on a person's well-being or happiness. In order to avoid this negative impact, many of my informants instead heavily structured their leisure time so that it resembled a typical work schedule. For them, what made them happy and improved their well-being was the idea that they had something with which to fill their time: being *busy*. A busy person did not have time to think about the past or dwell upon their current, precarious situation. In this way, then, the conscious structuring of the day amounts to what Moroşanu and Ringel (2016) refer to as *time-tricking.* "Time-tricking refers to the many different ways in which people individually and collectively attempt to modify, manage, bend, distort, speed up, slow down or structure the times they are living in," (Moroşanu and Ringel 2016:17). While the phrase 'time-tricking' is recent, the idea behind it is not. Nancy Munn (1992:111) remarks that "Considered in the context of daily activity, clock time is quite alive, embodied in purposeful activity and experience." This clock time then becomes "endowed with potency and affect" with which "the clock may be 'hated, endured…[and] manipulated'," (Novotny 1989:199 in Munn 1992:111). Keeping busy allows one to feel the passage of time differently and allows an individual to exercise a sense of agency by "stretching and bending time in relation to one's needs" (Moroşanu and Ringel 2016:18). In the case of my informants, these needs revolved primarily around feeling in control, feeling that one had a purpose for the day and preventing one from dwelling on upsetting situations. Thus, this idea of keeping busy was all-important for some of my informants.

Current research on busyness is sporadic as it is a theme that cuts across multiple disciplines. This complication, along with its inclusion as both behaviour and experience,

means that no comprehensive measure of busyness exists (Darrah et al 2015). Furthermore, it is middle-class busyness that both Greenfeld (2005) and Darrah (2007) focus on, with the latter admitting that "the conditions driving it are neither unique to the United States, nor to the middle class" yet studies conducted outside of this remain rare (Darrah 2007:269). The focus is also somewhat different between their studies and mine. For instance, Darrah (2007) focuses on how individuals manage busyness rather than how they strive for it (Darrah 2007). Nevertheless, despite these differences, striving for busyness was a central component of creating a meaningful life among my informants. It should be noted that it appeared amongst most of my informants in the UK, while it remained conspicuously absent amongst informants in the Gambia, for reasons which I will explore below.

Several of my UK informants claimed that being busy had a practical function. Specifically, it prevented them from thinking too much and thus becoming more depressed about their situation and what they had been through. When I met Michael, for instance, he launched into a description of where he goes and what activities he has scheduled for each day of the week. When I exclaimed how full his schedule was – and how busy – he responded with, "That keeps my diary going. It keeps me intact. And that one also helps me get rid of thinking too much, you know. Yeah…when you find yourself busy, it helps a lot." Michael felt strongly about keeping busy and attributed it to his well-being – i.e. it keeps him intact. This was a powerful statement from him. His situation was indeed difficult. He was a Kenyan man in his late fifties who had been living in the UK for nine years. Unfortunately, all of his asylum claims had been rejected, meaning he was a refused asylum seeker and thus relied on the small weekly sum that WERS could provide. He had five children in his home country who he had not seen since he left, and he worried about the advancing age of his parents. He spoke quite candidly about the medications he was taking, and told me quite bluntly, "Already – I'm depressed actually." Keeping busy with activities was thus a key component of his coping strategy and one which allowed him to feel that each day was manageable. "It's just engaging myself, it's just trying to keep myself busy. Engage me, getting involved in different activities, volunteering, maybe where the is a little bit of free time go to the internet, and you keep going," he said. By being a busy person he was thus able to keep intact and keep going. Through these everyday activities, he was able to experience pleasure despite the open struggle with depression. He highlighted it when he commented, "These activities, they also enlighten you." The main

point may have been to keep busy. He did, however, enjoy participating in the various activities.

The importance that keeping busy had on an individual's health was stressed by many informants. Recall Ella from Chapter 2, the Eritrean woman who 'coped ugly' and, in the process, felt that she had fundamentally changed by being unable to feel excitement about anything in order to avoid feeling disappointment. She was also a refused asylum seeker and took any and all classes available to someone in her position. While she had initially studied business in her home country, she was unable to continue these studies and instead took various languages and beauty courses. In addition to these, she also volunteered with several reputable organisations. "That's why I want to volunteer, so the whole week I have schedule, for the whole week. So each day I have something. If you make yourself busy then at night you don't even have time to think, you know? You're tired, then you shower and sleep," she told me. She, like Michael, kept herself busy in order to avoid dwelling on the negatives in her life so she could keep going. This strategy was echoed in Rotter's work among asylum seekers in Glasgow. She notes that, "activity could produce complete immersion in immediate sensation, freeing them temporarily from anxiety about the future," (Rotter 2016:94). Her informants, like my own, "tended to fill their days with a variety and high volume of activities," (Rotter 2016:93). These activities served to keep anxieties both about the past and the future at bay.

While many others stressed this practical side of keeping busy, this was not the only reason for doing so. Darrah et al (2015) remark that busyness is more than merely describing activities in a given space of time. Rather, it also "describe[s] a state of being that defines a way of life, either that of an individual or a society." Being busy has become a way of life throughout much of the world, particularly when a society is dominated by industrial values. In the UK, complaints of "I'm so busy" can be heard in everyday conversation amongst friends and co-workers alike. It has become such a ubiquitous saying that one can even call being busy a way of life. A busy person thus becomes 'normal'. One who is busy, then, represents an "ordinary life". Kelly (2008) notes that among Palestinians in the West Bank, maintaining an 'ordinary life' in the midst of the second *intifada* meant "that people would go to extreme lengths in order to get to work, school or university." Maintaining an ordinary life could also be seen as an act of defiance – of refusing to let the Israeli army 'win' by disrupting normal, everyday life. Though not in a warzone, my informants also strove to have their lives resemble that of 'ordinary' people

when the UK government made it increasingly difficult to do so. This ordinariness, for them, was to be busy and to refuse to let the Home Office further alienate them from the wider society.

An example of the normalising effect of busyness can be seen most strikingly with one of my informants, a young Eritrean woman called Mariam. I met Mariam through WERS; she claimed to be very lonely and deeply unhappy with her housing situation. She and I immediately struck up a friendship and, after explaining my research to her, she agreed to take part. We met once a week for much of the duration of the research. Soon after we began meeting, Mariam became more and more involved in activities. Though at the outset she told me, "*Busy*, I want to be busy," she had yet to achieve it. She began to seek out opportunities and soon was studying English at Newcastle College, taking a maths course and volunteering with two local organisations. When I expressed surprised about how much she was doing, she gave me a sheepish grin. "Do you remember when I first meeting you?" she asked. "I start to become better that day. After that I start college, they give me bus pass and I continued meeting you. I learn a lot from you," she admitted. When I looked somewhat confused, she pressed on, saying, "I didn't tell you, you say to me, 'I work all the time'. I'm so jealous about you. Sorry about that," she quickly added with a small embarrassed smile. "But I wanna do like you because…busy is better for me. I didn't tell you but when I see you, I learn from you. Thank you so much," she enthused. While I was surprised by this exchange, it was clear that Mariam saw me as a normal someone – someone who belonged in the surrounding environment – and strove to achieve that sense of normality for herself. Indeed, when I came back after a month-long pilot study in the Gambia, she proudly proclaimed that since she had accepted a volunteer position on Saturday mornings, "I'm now busier than even you!" Being busy, for her, is a defining characteristic of UK culture and claiming this way of being also led her to claim legitimacy in living there. Furthermore, as Darrah et al (2015:52) note, "certain cultural milieus value busyness and make it a component of meaningful individual lives." Being busy was not only a claim to normalcy, but also a claim that she was contributing to both the community and herself in a meaningful way.

While informants in both countries felt that their lives contained many difficulties, only informants in the UK spoke about being busy. Given this, I suggest that its absence in narratives is more related to the relationship between society and leisure. In the Gambia, everyday activities such as preparing and cooking meals, shopping and household chores

leave less leisure time available for refugees and non-refugees alike. Additionally, Darrah et al (2015:52) remark that "busyness as a social phenomenon is distinct from hard work, and it is grounded in specific cultural milieus and historical moments." Busyness as a social phenomenon simply has yet to infiltrate everyday experiences in the Gambia. Indeed, busyness appears more frequently in industrial societies. The Gambia, by contrast, relies heavily on agricultural work. This is not to say that people in the Gambia were not busy, but rather that they conceptualised it differently. It was not seen as a central component to everyday life or happiness.

Boredom

While much of everyday happiness can be seen as a search for daily enjoyment, it can also be seen as a contrast to another way of being. It seems that everyday happiness and the pleasure derived from various leisure activities or being busy was in contrast not to unhappiness, but rather in contrast to another, more pressing state of being: boredom. The notion of boredom loomed large in my informants' minds.

Boredom appeared to be one of the largest threats to those I spoke with, particularly in the UK. Researchers in various fields make passing comments on this seemingly universal state. The classics professor Peter Toohey traces the history of boredom in the aptly named *Boredom: A lively history* (2011). He remarks that boredom is "one of the most unexpectedly common of all human emotions, and for that reason it shouldn't be ignored, or trivialized," (Toohey 2011:1). Musharbash (2007) notes, however, that it is often overlooked. Anthropology, in particular, has had little to say on the topic of boredom. Musharbash (2007:307) comments on the everyday quality of boredom coupled with the sparse literature by stating that, during the course of her research on Aboriginal Australians, "boredom had been a sizeable aspect of the everyday but that, perhaps because of its normalcy, I had failed to collect systematic data about it." Not only had she 'missed' this topic during her research, but once she began to uncover the centrality of boredom, she realised that anthropology had yet to create useful frameworks within which more fully analyse it. My interest and engagement with boredom developed much the same way. I had overlooked it during research and, only later, realised its importance. Indeed, during the course of my research, people often spoke of their everyday struggles against boredom, making it impossible – on reflection – not to notice the frequency with which it was mentioned.

While debates about how or when boredom came about remain a hotly contested area, all researchers seem to agree on its close ties to leisure. Among the educated middle-class men he spoke with in India, Jeffrey (2010) discusses this overabundance of free time. Many of his informants remain at university collecting degrees, as it were, while they 'pass the time' until they can land a good, stable job with the government. As he says of his informants, "Many students therefore complained of an overabundance of time; they imagined time as something that needed to be 'passed' or 'killed'," (Jeffrey 2010:470). Too much time, in this way, can be potentially hazardous which is why his informants claimed to be engaged in what they called *timepass*. "Timepass was what one had to do because more meaningful ways of engaging with the world were unavailable," (Jeffrey 2010:471). Imbuing, or trying to imbue, a surplus of time with a sense of meaning was crucial. Toohey (2011:151) sums it up nicely by stating, "More leisure provides more opportunity to become bored – that's if leisure time is not well occupied." Leisure time has only been available to the masses in recent history courtesy of the industrial revolution and an eight-hour working day, though evidence of wealthy intellectuals experiencing and commenting on boredom extends into antiquity. More relevant for my research revolves around the question of whether boredom is a Western phenomenon. While the literature seems mixed on this point, I tend toward the assertion made by Toohey (2011). He comments that it is not Westernization that is responsible for boredom, but rather that it follows when individuals and populations are well fed, bringing to mind Chick's (1998) reflection on different types of leisure based on the of food available. So, rather than being a part of Western culture that gets adopted by others, the conditions of modern-day life for many around the globe (in particular relieving people of the time-consuming searching for and preparing meals) seem to allow the freedom and time to have too much freedom and time.

Virtually everyone has experienced boredom at some point in her life. Despite this universality, a concrete definition remains elusive. Toohey, with his emphasis on the history of boredom (2011), attributes simple boredom to experiences that are predictable, monotonous and confining, while acknowledging that a type of existential boredom can exist. Musharbash (2007:307), on her work with Australian Aborigines, links boredom with time, stating that boredom is "a state of being where the experience of time dissolves or stops being of relevance." Meanwhile, O'Neill (2014) remarks that among Romania's homeless population, boredom relates a form of social suffering in which one is cast outside

of society due to one's inability to be an effective consumer, while Svendsen (2005) associates boredom with meaninglessness in one's life. Russell and Stage echo the link between boredom and meaninglessness, noting that for women at the refugee camp in Kakuma, leisure is a burden. Specifically, they state that "the burden of their severe conditions renders their lives without purpose and without personal meaning," adding that "for the women refugees at Kakuma life is an unending expanse of ennui, a routine of lethargy," (Russell and Stage 1996:118). Finally, Mains (2007) comments that, among his sample of young Ethiopian men, boredom is experienced because time has ceased to become meaningful specifically because it is not passed "in the progressive manner that one has come to expect," (Mains 2007:667)

I think it is important to note here that boredom can mean different things for different people at different points in time. Rather than discount any of the previous work on boredom and its subsequent definition, it is more prudent to highlight which type of boredom I am referring to in this section. I am referring to a type of everyday, simple boredom: a monotonous, predictable and routine experience. This experience among my informants had no fixed end date, yet it could reasonably be conceived of as something that would, in the end, produce a meaningful and desired outcome (i.e. refugee status and reunification with family members). Therefore, much is done to avoid a sense of the meaninglessness of empty, surplus time. Within the literature on migration, specifically as it relates to asylum seekers, this experience of boredom is given a different name: waiting.

Waiting literature attaches itself more readily to migrants – especially asylum seekers – than to boredom though the two overlap significantly. Rotter reminds us that to date, "relatively few studies have treated waiting as an event, experience or object worthy of analysis in its own right." This limited research can be broadly subsumed under two categories. The first category of waiting literature tends to focus on the period between filing a claim and receiving a positive decision while the second focuses on the time spent in immigration detention. My research falls firmly in the former category. Among my informants, however, waiting for a positive decision was not always relevant as several had had their asylum claims refused and had exhausted their appeals. Their waiting amounted to either waiting for a change in the law which would allow them another route to refugee status, or more evidence with which to put in a fresh claim. Nevertheless, waiting, which can be fraught with boredom, still remained a salient theme in my informants' narratives.

Waiting does not have to be wasted time. Among her research with asylum seekers in Glasgow, Rebecca Rotter (2016) comments about how waiting can be focused on the present, which allows one to imbue meaning in everyday life, as well as future focused, which aims toward a desired outcome (this part of waiting will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter). The time spent waiting, however, is rarely passive and empty. Similarly, Jeffrey (2010) notes that his informants' descriptions of *timepass* did not connote a meaningless waste. Instead, it was a "skill and source of knowledge" that allowed one to cultivate "useful social contacts and acquired information relevant to their quest for employment," (Jeffrey 2010:474). My own research certainly corroborates this active component of waiting. As highlighted above, informants went to lengths to describe how they organised and spent their days and weeks. This structuring was particularly salient for asylum seekers who had been in the UK for a significant period of time, with some waiting for as long as fifteen years. In order to change the time spent waiting for a positive decision on their case from wasted boredom to something more productive, the emphasis was instead on concrete activities that provided a sense of joy, purpose and meaning in their lives.

It is interesting to note the relationship between the most commonly cited activities that bring people everyday happiness and the literature on boredom. Music, the first leisure activity mentioned, features prominently in the literature. Svendsen (2005:140) cites Schopenhauer who said "as long as the music lasts, we escape boredom." This focus on music is also taken up by Toohey (2011:177) who notes, "It's also possible that music is a more powerful source of enrichment and stimulation than might have been expected." The power of music was central to several of my informants' narratives on their everyday happiness. The importance of exercise is likewise mentioned, with Toohey (2011) pointing to research examining aerobic exercise as a possible cure for boredom.

One of the more interesting findings comes from looking at travel as a possible escape from boredom. Toohey (2011) calls this desire for travel dromomania. Dromomania gained in popularity in Europe, particularly France, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He notes that those who 'suffered' from dromomania experienced an uncontrollable desire to leave for a distant shore. While I give no credibility to dromomania as a type of illness (much like today's 'wanderlust' is not an illness), I do agree with the assertion that "travel is one way to escape boredom," (Toohey 2011:75).

Certainly, many of my informants highlighted the joy they derived from travel and many hoped that, once they received refugee status, they would be free to travel the world.

The best 'cure' for boredom, suggests Toohey (2011) is variety of experiences. This variety, he notes, also protects against "the agitation, anger and the depression that can follow on from unchecked chronic boredom," (Toohey 2011:175). Some of my informants explicitly linked these negative emotions with boredom, highlighting how keeping busy saved one from feelings such as depression. Michael, the Kenyan man living in the UK mentioned above, commented, "The best thing is just to try and cope up, ya know. But there are so many activities that you can involve in to help you kill your time and to avoid you being idle because when you're idle, you're bored, and that way you easily get depressed." Lionel, the young Congolese man living in the Gambia, linked boredom with frustration; this was his motivation to keep himself busy. In describing his situation, he said, "Sometimes it's really boring and frustrating …but work keeps me busy and my computer – that's my best friend!" He laughed at this, before adding, "[I'm] always on the computer, looking for more ideas, what to do next. I just don't like being bored, so I always keep myself busy. And I have too much of energy, that's one thing I know I have. I can multitask," he finished with a grin. For these two men, and others, keeping busy allowed them to stave off feelings of boredom which, when unchecked, could turn into anger, frustration and ultimately depression.

Boredom, as a topic of research, only struck me toward the end of my research while I was in the Gambia. One of my informants, Laurent, complained of feeling bored on an intellectual level. His complaint was unique amongst my informants in that he was not trying to pass the time or avoid thinking. Rather, he felt as though his intelligence was suffering through lack of stimulation. This boredom stems from the fact that he was an educated and influential man in his home country of Côte d'Ivoire. Unfortunately, he was targeted and severely beaten when he spoke out against the government. During our talk, he even paused and turned around, raising his shirt up to expose his middle back where wide pink, puckered scars testified to his story. He now found himself, along with his wife and three children, barely able to afford rent and food among the urban poor in the greater Serrekunda area. He expressed frustration at many aspects of his life, including the Gambian community around him. He lamented what he saw as the poor language capabilities of Gambians. While many Gambians know several local languages, English is not as widely spoken as would be expected given that it is the official language and is the

language of instruction in the schools. He laughed incredulously and told me how, in Francophone countries, everyone learns and speaks French perfectly. He wanted to improve his English skills in the country and give his children the opportunity to become fluent in English as well, but he found this difficult when he or his wife was discriminated against for not speaking Wolof. Though he went on at length about the language barrier between himself and Gambians, what he was really talking about was the gap in what he perceived as intelligence.

Laurent and I had several informal 'chats' as well as a formal interview. During one of our chats, he had appealed for me to find him a 'pen friend' that he could exchange messages with, preferably through email. Given his aversion to making Gambian friends (stated above), I quizzed him on his desire for pen friend. He explained why a pen friend was important by stating the following:

> I really need someone to talk to. I really need someone to talk to. I feel bored. Honestly! I feel bored. No contact, no exchange, no exchange of ideas. No debate, no nothing. I just there. **pft** Even the knowledge that you have, you can't share it, you can't put it in, you know, exercise. It is just kept in you. There is no opening. **Sighs** […] Imagine that something like that happens [like in my home country]. What will be our case? We are already in the bush, we have no background [family]. And here too, where we were hiding ourselves, fire comes there. What do we do? So, if you don't have anybody you talk to, don't have anybody you share idea with, you don't have anybody you really feel comfortable with because at least, you know, you will now think the person as one of your close family members, you feel comfortable with such people. You don't have any contact in that area. It would be…catastrophic!

Laurent ended that narration with a hearty laugh, but it was clear that it was not a light-hearted conversation. He began by pointing out the importance for a friend which suggests, given that he knows I am a university student in the UK, that he felt he needed someone of a certain educational level with which to communicate. He certainly did not feel that this person could be found in the Gambia. The lack of meaningful exchange, of exercising one's mind, impacted on his well-being as he felt that the quality of his social relationships was not fulfilling. He ended on a more needs-based note – he was afraid of being cast out with nowhere to turn should this 'fire', or unrest, reach the Gambia. While he felt bored, he sensed that this boredom could easily turn into something much worse if stability was not protected. Kelly (2008:365) reminds us that "the sense of the ordinary was always fragile" among his Palestinian informants. This same sentiment can be seen in Laurent's narrative as well. It is important to note that he was not just wildly speculating; I met with

him in February of 2016 and the current president, Yahyah Jammeh, was up for re-election in November 2016. As early as April, President Jammeh had begun openly suppressing demonstrations that led to multiple arrests and the death of the opposition party leader, Mr. Solo Sandeng, which led to international condemnation, most notably by the United Nations (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner). In fact, shortly after this disturbing news I received an email from a refugee in the Gambia telling me that the situation reminded her of what happened before her country was torn apart by civil war. She told me that the country seemed tense, shops were closed and "anything can happen at any time". Laurent's fear, therefore, was not an unfounded one given the impending elections and Jammeh's seemingly increasing mental instability (personal communication with UNHCR-Dakar staff member). He was ensuring that the friends he made, the friendships he put time and effort into cultivating, could be beneficial not only to his mental facilities but also to his and his family's survival in addition to withstanding the effects of any further upheaval.

Conclusion

Happiness is a topic that is underexplored among refugees and asylum seekers. Given the difficulties they faced – and are still facing – many struggled to say definitively that they were happy. Instead, the topic revolved around a type of everyday happiness. A focus on the everyday makes sense following the hardships and struggles that asylum seekers and refugees face and are still facing, such as family loss, social disruption, financial destitution and discriminatory practices. As Veena Das (2007) demonstrates in her work, recovering a sense of the 'everyday' remains crucial to those who have lived through violence. Amongst my informants, this everyday happiness in the wake of violence encapsulates what brought someone pleasure or joy. Typically, this type of happiness is called hedonic happiness.

Activities that brought about everyday happiness were overwhelmingly solitary ones. Engaging in positive self-talk was common amongst my informants, as was engaging in certain solo activities. These activities were listening to or playing music, exercising, travelling or engaging with media. Though these activities are largely unremarkable when compared to the larger population, refugees – and asylum seekers in particular – occupy a relatively unique space in that leisure time is in overabundance. Thus, while these activities

are enjoyable, they are confronted with the problem of having too much time in which to complete them, rather than too little. Keeping busy is one way to combat this abundance.

Keeping busy is important for several reasons. Firstly, it allows one to structure one's time in a meaningful way that clearly allows one to feel the passage of time. Activities are finished; new ones begin. They are also evolving and changing depending on the time of year. Secondly, by allocating time to activities, one avoids empty time where one can think too much. Thinking too much provides a risk that one will become upset and possibly depressed about one's situation. Thirdly, keeping busy had important sociocultural implications – being busy, especially in the UK, was what 'normal' people did.

Leisure activities and keeping busy were also in direct opposition to a decidedly unfavourable state of being for refugees and asylum seekers: the state of being bored. While boredom itself is not necessarily a negative emotion, it carries deeper implications for this group of people. Specifically, being bored gives individuals too much time to dwell on their past traumatic experiences as well as their current situation which many find unsatisfactory. This is particularly the case with asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers, for whom waiting has an indeterminate time limit.

As this chapter showed, everyday happiness was realised by asylum seekers and refugees. While escaping more undesirable states, such as boredom, may be the initial catalyst for seeking out leisure activities that one enjoys, it nevertheless remains that they do derive enjoyment and pleasure from these largely solitary activities. Despite the lack of options to drastically change their situations, they can change how they perceive and engage with the world around them. As Toohey (2011:181) notes, "the most obvious counter-measure to enforced boredom is the capacity to use empty time well, to be able to turn empty time into enjoyable free time." This was the goal of my informants took to make their present time more pleasant. The next and final chapter will expand on the theme of temporal well-being to explore how my informants engaged with notions of hope and the future.

Chapter 7: Hope and Mobility

"He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*." – Friedrich Nietzsche

The above quote was often cited by Viktor Frankl, the famous psychiatrist who was imprisoned in a concentration camp during World War II. He coined the term "logotherapy" to describe the pursuit of meaning in life which he claims is the meaning of human existence. He states that "Logotherapy focuses rather on the future, that is to say, on the meanings to be fulfilled by the patient in his future," (Frankl 1984:120). He developed this idea after noticing the link between well-being (even life itself) and an orientation to the future. In particular, he commented on how a prisoner was "doomed" if he lost faith in the future. A striking example of this occurred just after Christmas. Severely malnourished and nearly frozen, many of the prisoners kept themselves going with the idea that they would be rescued and reunited with their families by Christmas. When Christmas day came and went with no change in their circumstances, many men simply gave up. Their envisaged future was shattered and, unable or unwilling to create a new one, many men perished. Frankl notes that the highest death tolls always occurred during this time period, and it was the rupture of this future-orientation that he attributed to the higher mortality rate.

While hope may have the power to literally save or destroy lives if one ascribes to Frankl's assertions, what exactly is it? Hope as a concept remains a rather murky one, and it is often tied to other concepts within a range of disciplines to help explain both what it is and what it is not. For instance, Pine (2014:S96) sees hope as a "complex, many-layered notion resting on the capacity for imagination, on a sense of time and of temporal progress, on a desire to believe in a better future or in the possibility that something can change, and to some extent on uncertainty." Clearly, many other concepts are at work here. In general, this definition seems to match what other scholars believe, namely that a sense of time and progress are seen as crucial elements of hope. Jackson (2011) echoes this finding while adding in the element of agency. He contends that "A sense of hope, a sense of a way out, is crucial to this ability to endure. Equally critical is a sense that one is able to act on the situation that is acting on you – that one can give as much as one can get," (Jackson 2011:184). An emphasis on uncertainty or doubt is also important. Mar (2005:366)

stresses this link, stating, "hope is never hope without the presence of doubt, an element of ontological insecurity, either about gaining a hoped-for object or state, or about having the capacity to achieve that outcome." Hope, then, must always carry with it a sense of risk that one may not be able to achieve one's desired future. Tong (2015) also recognises that a precondition for hope is a situation fraught with difficulties to overcome. He labels this a 'critical emotion', claiming it "sustains people when they feel helpless, enabling them to focus on their dreams despite what others perceive to be crippling obstacles," (Tong 2015:200) and a situation in which one is not fully in control. Similarly, Mattingly (2010:3) links hope with despair, noting that "It asks for more than life promises. It is poised for disappointment." A key component of hope, then, is the very real possibility that it will never come to fruition.

Other concepts relate closely with hope. One such concept is optimism. Some authors link optimism so closely with hope that a suggested definition of hope is actually "optimism regarding the future" (Thin 2012:137). Both concepts are future-orientated and a close, even overlapping relationship between the two seems intuitive. Other concepts remain far more contested. Tong (2015), for instance, rejects wishing and fantasising as a form of hope. For him, hope tends to be more action-oriented and implies a stronger commitment to achieving a desired goal. Crapanzano (2003) remains more ambivalent about a conflation of desire and hope. While he recognises that they are often used interchangeably, he asserts that desire demands action and presupposes human agency. Hope, therefore, assumes a more passive role in that it depends on some other agency to be fulfilled (Crapanzano 2003:6). For the purposes of this chapter, I will follow the example set forth by my informants who conflated hope with similar concepts such as desire, wants and even wishing.

This chapter is about how hope is conceptualised and practiced, particularly regarding mobility and movement. Hope is often linked with migration in general, with scholars citing hope for a better life as one of the defining 'push' factors. While forced migration is different from economic migration, similarities regarding their expectations in a new country can be found. Indeed, while forced migrants' primary concern is the safety of themselves and their families, the implications of where they settle (or wish to resettle) are not lost on them. As Salazar and Smart (2011: ii) note, "People link horizontal or geographical mobility almost automatically with vertical – economic (financial), social (status), and cultural (cosmopolitan) – 'climbing'. In sum, mobility entails much more than

mere movement; it is infused with meaning." This meaning is often future-orientated, particularly when one is not yet a refugee with its associated benefits of which stability is one of its most important. Hope, however, must be kept alive during this potentially lengthy period which may in turn lead to a sense of its impossibility to achieve. Yet as Mar (2005:365) states, "The social analysis of hope must encompass the time of waiting, spatial and social movement, expectation and achievement, all of which are fundamental to the emotional experience of migration." While these emotional experiences may be driven to the extreme in cases of forced migration, they are nevertheless crucial to many people's constructions of their lives, both in the present and in the imagined future.

While I have laid the groundwork for understanding hope as a concept and its importance in the migration literature, it is important to look briefly at the literature on hope in relation to Africans. Recall how the 2017 World Happiness Report labelled Africa as the unhappiest continent. This unhappiness, however, is only part of the story. The report found that most of those interviewed felt they could be happy if they could change several things about their lives. This hopefulness for changes in the future leading to happy, fruitful lives points to the high degree of optimism among African peoples (broadly speaking). The authors of the report claim that the high degree of optimism on the continent may be 'exceptional' and went on to assert that, "African people are essentially optimistic, most of all the youth who have their lives ahead of them. This optimism might serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy for the continent," (Møller et al 2017:111). Given the low levels of happiness reported on the continent, this finding comes as a shock. Yet there is a deep-seated belief, particularly among young people, that the future will be better than the present. This finding may be skewed by the disproportionately youthful population on the continent and their tendency to optimism. The authors of the report, however, describe the 'astounding resilience' of Africans and point to another possible reason for this finding: religion.

Hope as a concept has long been a popular topic among philosophers and is a key theme in many of the world's religions (Tong 2015; Eltaiba 2015). Indeed, Mar (2005) comments on the link between hope and Christian and utopian ethical traditions throughout much of the Western world. Religion is certainly a key theme among African researchers, with many scholars commenting on both the general optimism of Africans and the high degree of religiosity. Religion, as I have shown in previous chapters, pervaded all areas of several of my informants' lives. A belief in God oriented many towards the future. They

felt that God had seen them safely through the situation from which they fled; He could not abandon them now while they were still suffering. As Koffi, an Ivorian man living in the Gambia told me, "When you're far from home, far from your families, other things, the closest person you could ever think of is God. So He keeps you moving, and the faith keeps you moving, and hope for future that makes you teacher. Like [Nelson] Mandela was saying, you can't take the hope of Africa from him. Africans always hope for future." While religion certainly played a role in my informants' hope and optimism for the future – and certainly the belief in an afterlife relates to a form of spiritual mobility – it is beyond the scope of this chapter to more fully engage with this theme other than to acknowledge its importance.

The rest of the chapter will be devoted to exploring themes around hope and other forms of mobility. This idea of a hoped-for future, which overlaps considerably with notions of 'the good life', featured prominently in talks with my informants. This focus on time is relevant in today's discussions. Bear (2016:489) remarks that "By paying attention to time, we can critique and measure inequality in new ways. A focus on the varying ability to plan a life across classes, genders, and racial groups has much potential." This chapter addresses this gap by examining these future life plans, revealing inequalities in the process. Most of the discussions with my informants revolved around future plans for mobility. While certainly mobility shaped their past and present narratives by way of explaining how they ended up where they did, it was also the focal point for their future narratives. Most engaged with mobility by expressing desires for a type of geographical mobility – moving to, or between, countries. Others engaged in various types of imaginative mobilities, such as nostalgia, while several commented on their present state of immobility, both in the geographic sense as well as the imaginative sense. Finally, I will end the chapter with a discussion of hoped-for social mobilities which revolve around the benefits of receiving a positive status, including employment, education and pursuing romantic relationships.

Geographic Mobility

The most frequently cited type of hoped-for mobility was geographic mobility. People wanted to physically move between countries. In fact, this drive for movement was so strong that many could not envisage a future in which they remained where they were at the time I spoke to them. Mobility weighed heavily on their minds, and they conceptualised their present as a 'waiting period', after which this mobility would come to fruition and

they could finally realise their ideas for 'the good life'. This idea echoes the World Happiness Report's (2017) title of the chapter on Africa: 'Waiting for Happiness' in Africa. Though my informants recognised that their lives were no longer in immediate danger, their future was not found in simply a safe haven.

The Gambia

The direction of these hoped-for mobilities was different depending on the country one found oneself in. For instance, in the Gambia, resettlement in a third country was the most talked about subject. All hopes centred around resettlement. The position of UNHCR is that voluntary repatriation is the best option where possible, followed by local integration if that is not possible. Resettlement was very much a 'last resort' option (Crisp 2003). Despite the unlikelihood of being resettled, it was nevertheless the primary focus of those I spoke with. These resettlement hopes were typically projected outside of the African continent. North America and Europe were the most common targets, though a spate of resettlement interviews conducted by UNHCR before I arrived claimed they were also looking to resettle people in Australia. Still, the most common hoped-for countries I heard were the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany.

The rationale behind resettlement was manifold. Firstly, the Gambia ranks as one of the poorest countries not only in Africa but in the world, with over half of the population described as being in "multidimensional poverty" (EASO 2017:41)[22]. While many Senegalese came from rural areas and thus were used to a similar standard of living, others came from the developed urban areas of countries that, prior to their destabilisation, enjoyed a much higher standard of living, as is the case with Côte d'Ivoire. Thus, remaining where they were in a state of relative poverty with little opportunity for upward mobility in the form of higher paid jobs or schooling opportunities for their children was not seen as a viable option. Furthermore, though officially refugees in the Gambia were granted the same privileges as Gambian citizens, this rarely happened in practice. Given the high unemployment rate in the country, many employers preferred to employ Gambians.

Another reason behind resettlement includes the difficulties in gaining Gambian citizenship. The Gambia has one of the strictest policies related to citizenship of any

[22] Alkire and Santos (2013:246) cite the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative which recognises multidimensional poverty as covering "three dimensions – health, education and living standards – using ten indicators: nutrition and child mortality, school attendance and years of education, access to drinking water, improved sanitation, electricity, clean cooking fuel, non dirt floor and two small assets or a big one."

country in Africa. For instance, recall that one must live in the Gambia for fifteen years before one is entitled to seek citizenship (Manby 2015:24). While many in the country were in what is classified as a 'protracted situation' (defined as a displacement lasting longer than 5 years), this often fell well short of the required time frame.

Finally, and perhaps the largest push factor for resettlement, includes the high mobility of Gambians themselves. As mentioned in a previous chapter, many Gambian households have at least one family member living abroad, most commonly in the United States. Furthermore, many of those holding senior positions (including the newly elected president, Adama Barrow) were either educated abroad or worked abroad for several years before returning to the Gambia to take up their high posts. More recently, the less affluent members of Gambian society were also seeking to move out of the country due to the lack of employment opportunities and the desire to both earn a respectable wage and earn prestige for themselves. EASO's (2017:23) country report on the Gambia asserts that young Gambian men grow up with "society's expectation that they must one day go away and earn money for the family. Migration has taken on the function of a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood." The sheer number of young Gambians choosing to go the 'Back Way' into Europe has garnered international attention. During my fieldwork in the Gambia, nearly every day I drove past a large baobab tree near my compound whose base was painted in the colours of the Gambian flag and proudly bore the words, 'It's not a Back Way but a Black Way'. I was told that most people had at least one family member who attempted to go this back way into Europe. The 'back way' typically describes the path between one's home country and Europe. For Gambians, this path took them from the Gambia, through Senegal into Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and into Libya before finally culminating in a dangerous boat journey to Italy (EASO 2017:23). Though the Gambia is the smallest country in Africa, it ranked sixth in the number of countries who citizens attempted to reach Europe through this notoriously dangerous 'back way' and remains the largest sender of African work- or asylum-seekers arriving in Italy per head of total population (EASO 2017:23). Indeed, the magnitude of this migration cannot be understated. It was even reported that in the home village of the previous Gambian president Yahya Jammeh, 600 of the approximately 4,000 inhabitants undertook this perilous journey (Telegraph). In fact, in 2013 the Gambia had the highest net migration in all of Africa (EASO 2017:22). This mobility can be described as manifested hope for a better future. The belief is that all will be better if one undertakes this dangerous passage

because then one will be able to realise 'the good life' in which one can support oneself and one's family. Though some researchers have worked with and written about the movement of West Africans in this way, noting that most migrants "know and resign themselves to the risk of death in the desert," the possibility of "a sense of existential direction and empowerment in an otherwise unresponsive world," is simply too great for many to pass by (Lucht 2015:120). Movement and mobility are thus pervasive in Gambian society.

Given the sheer scale of movement of Gambians to realise a better life, it is little wonder that those who have arrived there fleeing conflict would also be imbued with this desire for mobility in order to realise a better life for themselves, especially when this is coupled with relatively low standards of living and the difficulty of becoming naturalised mentioned above. Only a few mentioned the possibility of ever returning to their home country. The Liberians and Sierra Leoneans living in the Gambia had already been individually granted the right to remain in the Gambia since those without extenuating circumstances (related to the violence and threat that they experienced before they left or that they could face upon their return) were repatriated by UNHCR once the country was deemed safe enough. These refugees, then, were certainly never entertaining the possibility of going back. Only one West African, an Ivorian, considered a hypothetical return home. For him, however, certain conditions had to be met. He described these conditions, which centred heavily on his safety, before murmuring, "I won't bother going back there, no no, unless, unless…I'm sure that things are in place for me to go back. Unless I really notice that," he emphasised. For him, however, these conditions were unlikely to be met anytime in the near future and therefore resettlement was where he pinned his hopes.

The Senegalese refugees I spoke with, rather than envisaging a return to their nearby home country, instead saw this proximity as the reason that their resettlement was imperative. As mentioned previously, Senegalese refugees were by far the largest group in the Gambia with most living near on the border between the two countries. The ethnic groups of the two countries are similar and share much of the same culture and history before the Gambia came under British colonial rule in 1821 (Saine 2012:25). While I was unable to interview rural refugees, I heard from GAFNA staff members that repatriation in the near future was unlikely. Most of those who fled were farmers and their fields were now full of landmines, meaning most would be unable to feed themselves, let alone gain revenue from their fields. Therefore, they were most likely to remain in the Gambian

villages permanently or until that area of the country was made safe and the fields were demined. The refugees who settled in the urban areas, however, saw neither of these possibilities as satisfactory. Bakary, for instance, described his situation to me. He had fled the Casamance region of Senegal in 2007 with his wife and seven children following the public execution of his wife's mother after she defied the rebel group. He fled, along with the others from the village, as shots were fired at their backs. A bullet grazed his skull. He turned around and showed me the scar from it, clearly visible through his short-cropped hair. When I asked how he felt being in the Gambia, he sighed and said, "It's not safe. It's too close. Even myself, sometimes I used to dream these bad thing. You see, you can go by foot to Casamance – by foot!" he exclaimed. "So I'm praying for me to be resettled." When I asked him what his hope for the future was, he did not hesitate. "Resettlement", he responded immediately, "so I can take care of self and education for children. I don't pray for me to be here next year!" he cut in with a laugh. He further went on to explain, "What I'm thinking right now, if I have the resettlement, I think that one is better than helping with this and that [small amounts of assistance]. When I have resettlement, when I go there, I do my future, I prepare for my future. And my daughters and sons will be able to learn," he concluded. Clearly, not only did he feel somewhat unsafe living in the Gambia, but he also suffered from the poverty and lack of opportunities in the Gambia both for himself and for his children. He envisaged a time where he could 'prepare for his future' – meaning work to provide for himself and his family – as well as one in which his children could do the same. At the time of our interview, he and his family were squatting in an unfinished building, with only two of the children being sent to school due to the transport costs. Mobility was the only way Bakary saw to pull his family out of poverty and finally be able to 'do' his future that he dreamed of.

Resettlement – physically moving to another country – was the only future that many entertained. Recall Grace, the Ivorian woman who lived in the Gambia with her husband, a French teacher at a local school, and their two sons. She had befriended several Gambian women, one of whom had close connections to the United States. Her friend had actually flown back to the US to have her baby. The US, therefore, was foremost on her mind. She excitedly told me how cheap fruit and vegetables are, bursting out that her friends can afford to eat them every day! "Up to now we are hoping!" she exclaimed when I asked her what her hopes for the future were. "My desire for go America. If I have an opportunity…look, if you take me to America, these babies [her children] – I can take care

of them. That place [the US], I will surely eat, my children will be fine. It's more than here my sister, I'm telling you. Here we are suffering," she stressed with her hands, palms facing up in a supplicating manner. For her, a hoped-for future was moving to a Western country where she and her children could finally enjoy their daily fruit. Her hope was buoyed by the fact that she had had a resettlement interview some six months prior with UNHCR officials. They told her that they were interviewing potential families for Canada or Australia. Interviews such as these tended to create a type of suspended present – a liminal state in which one was poised, waiting, for a life change that may or may not come to fruition. This liminal state was fostered through the work of hope. Resettlement interviews created a collective culture of hope among refugees in the Gambia. Even those who had not been invited for those interviews knew that they had occurred and they, too, were hoping and waiting for their chance to demonstrate how they were worthy of this perceived improved future. Hope constructed and maintained by murmurs of possible resettlement could thus be said to be contagious (Thin 2012).

The UK

Those in the Gambia could only hope for the day that they would be resettled in the UK. The UK was one of the countries that represented an end point for them: the end of suffering and the beginning of what they saw as a future worth living. The refugees and asylum seekers I spoke with who currently lived in the UK, however, had very different views on the matter. While several commented that they were grateful to be in a safe country, it was not the utopia that it was imagined to be by others. It was rare to hear someone say that they would resettle in a third country if they got status; only one person, a refused asylum seeker called Ariko expressed a desire to leave the UK if given the chance. Recall the conversation I had with him in the last chapter during which he claimed that what he enjoyed and what made him (or would make him) happy was to travel and ultimately go to the US to live with an uncle he had in Atlanta, Georgia. For him, then, he relished the day of finally being mobile enough to travel and stay with a beloved uncle in the US. A few hoped that they would be able to move to a different part of the UK. One woman explained to me, "I know my hope not bad. My hope I will go back to help them again. To London. I know every corner," she boasted. She saw her hope to return to the place she knew best as one that could easily be realised and she clung to this, what she saw as a 'good' hope of returning to her family and friends in London. This desire to move was not uncommon, especially given the practicalities of the UK dispersal programme. As

Zetter et al (2005:171) note, this programme was implemented with the idea of moving asylum seekers away from the London area until their status was determined in order to relieve housing pressures in the South East of England. Unfortunately, as this informant highlights, this dispersal programme "has fractured the connection between refugees/asylum seekers and their well-established frameworks of community support and organizational structures previously available in London and the South East," (Zetter et al 2005:172). The rest of my informants, however, had other ideas of where their newfound mobility could take them.

For most of those I spoke with, receiving status if they were an asylum seeker meant a very specific mobility: returning to their home country. Recall Michael, the Kenyan man discussed in previous chapters. His hoped-for happiness took a very specific form. He could only see himself happy in the future if he was able to return home, even for a brief visit. Originally I had asked him what made him happy, and he responded as follows:

> That is a very interesting question because I don't think there is anything which makes me happy as such. The only thing which can make me happy is maybe the day I'll be able to go back to Africa. Go back, reunite with the family and some people I've been away from now for almost a decade. So that will be very very very important for me. For me, that the only which will make me happy. Otherwise, I'm not happy, I'm not sad, because I'm alright here. It's only that there are a lot of stressful issues, especially with the Home Office.

His happiness intertwined with his hope that he would return home in the near future. He explained to me that his parents were getting older and he wished to see them before they passed. His children had all grown up and were starting families of their own. He even told me that if he got status, he would be happy to meet them just across the border of a neighbouring country because he still feared being trapped in Kenya in a dangerous situation. His account echoes what Westcott (2012) describes in her article on migrants' friendships. She remarks that "The fantasy of returning home can be a way for the migrant to cope with their life after migration," (Westcott 2012:91). While Michael admitted that he was 'alright' here, mainly because he was safe, he did not describe himself as happy, nor did he see a source of happiness in present life. Happiness was the end reward of a future return to Africa.

What is interesting is that a majority of those who dreamed of returning home envisaged short trips only. They felt that the UK was a permanent place of residence and as such it would be their home base. This idea is not unheard of in migration literature.

Hunter (2011) highlights this trend, citing studies in which West Africans living in France were unable to return home permanently, as many wished to do so, for fear of losing their pensions as well as being unable to access French health care should they need it. A permanent return home, while desirable, remained an impossibility if one wished to retain one's elevated prestige as having access to capital provided by the French government. It seemed that many of my informants were, consciously or unconsciously, aware of this predicament and realised that a cyclical type of migration would characterise the rest of their lives. An exception to this were Mariam and Ella, the two young women I spoke with from Eritrea, whom I have previously described in this thesis. For them, if their country became safe enough to return to without severe repercussions then they would seize the opportunity. Mariam was the youngest person I spoke with in the UK at only 19 years old. She confided in me that if she got status, she would love to move to Scotland. When I asked her if she had ever been, she shook her head and explained, "No, but I love it! Until my back to home," she added quickly. When I asked her if she would ever choose to stay in the UK, she hesitated then explained, "The first thing is, I want to see my family. I love them so much. I *miss* them," she stressed. For her, returning home permanently would be the optimal choice. Barring that, Scotland was a distant second. The other woman, Ella, now in her early 30s, was more direct. After being refused asylum several times, she did not want to remain in the UK but felt she had no other option. She felt frustrated in her current situation and explained to me, "I always say, if I have the option of going home, I will just grab it together and go!" she exclaimed. "But I don't have that option and it makes it so difficult," she added dejectedly. Leaving the UK altogether and going back to her home country was her ultimate goal, but one that she could not see materialising anytime soon due to the current political situation.

Rather than hoping and dreaming of a return to their home country, others were far more active in making this a reality. In this way, they were actively cultivating their hope rather than engaging in the passive wishing that Tong (2015) described. One such woman was Olimatou, the Gambian woman introduced in a previous chapter. Whenever someone returned from visiting family or friends in the Gambia, she specifically requested that a small smoked fish be brought back for her. According to tradition, one ate this fish before one left to ensure that one would return home. She ate it before she originally left and she continued to do so. This was one of her physical acts to ensure that she would eventually return to see her family in the Gambia. Olimatou was an interesting case in that, though

she constantly spoke about her life in her home country and kept in daily contact with her relatives, like many of the refused asylum seekers, she never spoke of returning to her home country permanently. In fact, in her current situation, she could not. During our friendship she married a former refugee turned British citizen and was thus granted a spousal limited leave to remain visa, which could then turn into indefinite leave to remain and finally citizenship. Before they married, however, she had to get approval from the government to do so since this would change her status. She was granted the right to marry him in part because she was her husband's carer. He underwent kidney dialysis three times a week and, with her background as a nurse, she was the ideal carer for him. Her husband, for his part, was granted status then citizenship because his home country lacked the proper facilities to ensure his survival with his condition. The Gambia was in a similar situation to the husband's home country in that its hospitals did not have the equipment or appropriate infrastructure to ensure he could manage his condition. Therefore, returning to the Gambia to live was not an option for them. Nevertheless, Olimatou hoped only to be able to regularly visit her beloved country and cultivated this hope not only through eating the small local fish, but also through building her own compound.

Olimatou was constantly in the process of securing materials for her house and calling in favours for the construction. Any time she and her husband could save even a small sum of money, she immediately sent it home to the Gambia. To be sure, some of it went to her two sons still living there, but the rest went to buy cement for her house. The house was situated next to her brother's compound where her sons lived along with various cousins. Undoubtedly she was constructing this house not only for herself, but also for her sons. Still, she referred to it as her house and became agitated when its construction had to be halted. For instance, she told me how wind had knocked over a tree in her brother's compound, smashing a part of the fence and leading to several of his animals escaping. Her brother, who also lived in the UK, claimed he did not have the money to repair the fence despite having a job. Olimatou was visibly irritated as she relayed this story to me. "My father always told me that I should be the man of the family! My brother has no responsibility. What could I do? I had to give the money for my house and instead told them to fix the fence," she said with an agitated sigh. She often told me stories like these, where she stepped in to ensure the well-being of the household. This positioning led her to actively cultivate a hoped-for return to the Gambia, most notably through the construction of a house, not just for herself but also for the rest of her family, despite the looming

obstacles preventing a permanent return. Achieving a sense of geographic mobility – and preparing for what she saw as its inevitability – was an important part of her future.

Figure 16. Olimatou's house under construction in the Gambia as of May 2015

Imaginative Mobility

While most of my informants actively hoped for a form of geographic mobility irrespective of which country they currently resided in, it is striking to note other forms of mobility invoked during our interviews. In this section, I look at forms of imaginative mobilities and immobilities that cut not only across geographical distances but temporal differences as well. Here, as before, striking differences occurred between those settled in the Gambia and those settled in the UK. Specifically, engaging in a form of mental (im)mobility seemed to arise only during discussions with my UK-based informants. These (im)mobilities took two distinct forms: informants either engaged heavily in nostalgia as a form of mobility that cut across time and distance or they felt completely immobilised by their current situation.

Nostalgia

To begin with, I will focus on the amount of nostalgia exhibited by several of my informants. It was not uncommon to arrange a meeting with a UK-based individual, enter the room and immediately be greeting with pictures of their homeland. Most of those I spoke with had smartphones and could easily access either Google images or their own social media (typically Facebook) photo albums. Those who showed me pictures delighted in showing me their hometowns and local churches or naming each of their family members in a particular photo. Mariam, the young Eritrean woman mentioned above, loved to reminisce about her 'back home' (as she called it). She enjoyed showing me pictures of her home town and went to great lengths to try and find the English name and picture for a particularly delicious – and missed – local fruit. Her imaginative mobility frequently transported her back to a seemingly blissful childhood where she seemed to live a very carefree life. She regaled me with stories of her feistiness as a young girl and how she felt the need to prove she could do anything the boys could do. Synnes (2015) comments on how nostalgia can be seen as a vital component of the continuity of personal identity. By retelling these stories, Mariam endeavoured to keep this aspect of her identity to assure herself that she was still this person. Most of Mariam's nostalgic memories took a similar form. She would tell me stories about how she had somehow pushed the boundaries of some convention (most likely things that respectable little girls shouldn't do in her village) and made her parents worry, but in the end she was safe and with her family. Her stories always contrasted the supposed danger she was getting into with the inevitable warmth and safety of her family. "Life was simple then," she told me one afternoon while we were chatting at the library, "I was happy." Thinking back on her idyllic youth, her face darkened and her eyes started to fill with tears. She missed her 'back home', and unfortunately her situation seemed unlikely to change anytime soon. "Like Eritrea, it's nice place for me, you don't stress about anything, it's so nice for me," she emphasised. "But what can I do, with the government?" she asked helplessly. For now, her memories were the only remnants of her home that she could carry with her, a home where danger was tempered by the ultimate sense of safety and love.

Nostalgia, typically in the form of stories like the one Mariam told me, is relatively common in migration studies. Westcott (2012:91) describes a migrant's desire to visit one's home as a "dream" or "myth" which "relates to general feelings of nostalgia or specifically missing old friends," (Westcott 2012:91). Moreover, she uses the word

'fantasy' to reflect that the migrant may experience homesickness for a place that no longer exists and for a community with whom social ties are weak or non-existent for the migrant (Westcott 2012:91). Sonia Silva (2015:145) comments on the power that nostalgia can have. She sees it as a way of overcoming immobility by "reminiscing about the past and telling one's life story to friends and visitors, including the anthropologist." Therefore, since it is not possible to physically return, one can return there in an imaginative horizon, embellishing the ease and bliss of that former time. Toohey (2011:162) echoes this statement to a degree, though he claims nostalgia functions not as a way to overcome immobility necessarily, but rather sees it as a "sentimental and slightly romantic yearning" to overcome the boredom experienced in the present. The focus of these nostalgic stories, he notes is, "often related to home or to childhood, or to a time when the sufferer felt happier, more rooted, 'at home'," (Toohey 2011:163). While I was prepared for nostalgia stories such as these that focused on one's childhood or 'back home', what I was not prepared for was a form of nostalgia not for a different place (like a home country) but for a different time. This type of temporal nostalgia is itself relatively common, though it typically occurs among older populations who have lived in the same area and are very ambivalent about any changes that occur. Because it is a reaction to changes in a particular location, it does not appear in migration studies. Several of my informants, however, did engage in this form of nostalgia. Those who spoke about this temporal nostalgia reminisced about their lives in the UK prior to becoming refugees or refused asylum seekers. Recall Sandra, the upbeat Zimbabwean woman mentioned in previous chapters. I spent several hours with her during our formal interview. During this time, she spoke at great length about her time in the UK prior to putting in an asylum claim. She was a student at a university in the UK and, to help her financially while she studied, she also worked at popular fast food joint. She spoke fondly of her time there, becoming increasingly animated and laughing loudly while telling me stories of the more challenging customers she faced and how her hard work and dedication led to her becoming a manager in a few short months. "Ah, it was a fun journey," she murmured contentedly after she had finished. The rest of the interview – during which we spoke about how she arrived in Newcastle, what she was doing here and how she was managing as a refused asylum seeker – was much quicker in comparison. It was clear that she missed this earlier time in her life as a student and worker.

Another informant also engaged in this temporal nostalgia though with a significant difference: he had refugee status. This is significant in that one could argue that Sandra preferred to think and speak about her time in the UK prior to the hardships of life as a refused asylum seeker. While this may indeed be the case for her, her situation was not the only situation in which an informant engaged in temporal nostalgia. Recall Kakengo, the Congolese musician who was also known as the Black Geordie, arrived in Newcastle in the early 2000s. While he was awaiting his asylum decision, he became heavily involved with British women in the area who took it upon themselves to teach him how to speak English. For several hours he described in detail his situation when he first arrived in the Newcastle area, laughing equally as hard about the ignorance and racism of some citizens and the mischief he would get into with several of his friends and his girlfriends. At the end of our interview he wrapped me a warm hug and thanked me for talking to him. "You always find people who try to remind you who you are. Like today, I'm here for you, for the interview. You bring my memory back. It's good, this is the people that was a part of my life," he explained. By speaking with me he allowed himself to relieve his past, a past that he recalled fondly. Though these past times were far more uncertain than his present situation – he currently had a stable job and a strong grasp of the language and local customs – he nevertheless enjoyed speaking about his life during his first several months in the UK and expressed a nostalgic fondness for these earlier days.

Immobility

After a high degree of initial mobility (such as that experienced during flight), it is interesting to note the effect of immobility on those I spoke with. The UK, like many Western countries, does not allow asylum seekers to move around between countries nor does it facilitate movement within a single country. To do so in within the UK borders would mean that an asylum seeker loses his or her free housing (Dwyer et al 2016). Even to move within the country after one has received a positive decision (i.e. refugee status) it remains difficult to become mobile again. I can recall several instances where a refugee with newly-found status came to WERS and asked for help in accessing local services such as how to apply for council houses. Staff members would then have to patiently explain to bewildered refugees that though they had status and were entitled to benefits and council houses, these could only be offered in the area in which one lived while applying for asylum. To receive government assistance, one would have to move back to where they lived previously. This was a particularly difficult situation for refugees who had just

received their status as many assumed that once they received their status they could move closer to family and friends living in other areas of the UK. Unfortunately, this was not the case. While certainly geographical immobilities were a source of frustration for many, those I interviewed focused on another type of immobility – imaginative immobility.

I use the term imaginative immobility as the inability to be able to conceive of or speak about a future. This immobility calls to mind Bear's (2016) notion of temporal inequality. The response to "Where do you see yourself in the future? What do you hope to be doing?" was met by some with a blank stare or a sad smile and a quiet admission that one effectively had no future in one's current situation. It was in a sense the opposite of hopeful: it was hopelessness. Tong (2015:198) associates hopelessness with "a lack of enthusiasm, a motivational tendency to give up, and a dearth of positive expectancies." Griffiths (2014) relates this feeling of hopelessness to a situation she describes as 'suspended time' or directionless stasis. Those caught in this temporal vacuum tended to see "no purpose, fairness or progression to their incarceration" and life was experienced as "irrational, meaningless and endless time" that exhibited no progressive trajectory (Griffiths 2014:1997). Her description calls to mind Guyer's observation that "People everywhere live with comparable exhortations and rhetorics now, whose terms of reference, such as dates on the calendar, give the impression of us all living in the same world at the same time, although the lived disciplines and ruptures create quite different trajectories," (2007:418). The ruptures experienced by many asylum seekers and refugees led to many experiencing time differently to those in the community who were not forced migrants. While those in Griffiths' study consisted of asylum seekers held in immigration detention, the parallels between her informants and mine were striking. Many of my informants commented on the effects of this directionless time with its lack of noticeable progress. One informant, for instance, told me that he felt as though he was being "held in traffic," calling to mind metaphors of being 'stuck' – both ways to phrase immobility. As Jackson (2011:94) states, "We need to feel that we are on the move, getting somewhere, rather than stuck or bogged down." These metaphors call to mind the slowing down of time and, in today's fast-paced world, are seen in a negative light (Griffiths 2014). One informant described his feelings on his inability to plan for the future, telling me "You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, you can't plan the future when you don't know where you're gonna be tomorrow, that kind of thing." Because many individuals had insecure living conditions (living with family or, more likely, moving between friends) and a lack

of status, their primary conceptions of a future seemed to be tied to a stable geographic location. This sense of stability was not realistic in the present, meaning any future hopes could not be imagined.

Others felt that their inability to plan for the future was tied with what they saw as the fundamental unfairness of their situation; their belief in a just world had all but disappeared. Rebecca Bryant (2016) describes this as the 'uncanny present'. An uncanny present refers "to a particular sense of present-ness produced by futures that cannot be anticipated," (Bryant 2016:20). Ella, the Eritrean woman who was 'coping ugly' in the first chapter, felt unable to envisage, let alone speak about, a future. She hesitated on the question, then said in a rush, "As I told you, I cannot plan anything, so that's the problem. I know what I want in life but…I cannot plan. So that makes it difficult," she added. Her desires were not seen as a realistic future option – not even something one could pin one's hopes on. Her present situation as a refused asylum seeker felt so precarious that she could not envision what a future would look like – and she felt that hoping for things she desired was a fruitless task that would only bring about more disappointment and discontent in her present situation. Her inability to conceive of and verbalise a hopeful future is closely tied to Thin's (2012) assertion that hope – and by extension trust in the future – is intimately linked with trust in other people. Ella had lost her trust in those working for the Home Office and therefore felt she could not hope to receive a positive decision on her status.

The two forms of imaginative (im)mobilities mentioned above only relate to asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. It is here that I wish to highlight that there is indeed a difference between to the UK and the Gambia in respect to nostalgia and immobility, and put forward a few possible explanations as to why. To begin with, the difference between UK-based (refused) asylum seekers and Gambian-based refugees must be addressed. As mentioned throughout the thesis, the UK discourages asylum seekers, and to a degree refugees, from moving around the country due to strict rules regarding their accommodation. To refuse the accommodation would mean the contract is revoked and they are then responsible for arranging (and paying) for their own (Dwyer et al 2016:2; Rotter 2016:84). While refused asylum seekers have slightly more mobility, they often lack the funds to move around. This leads to individuals feeling immobile. Physical immobility translates to mental immobility and renders many unable to even envision a hypothetical future given how little control they feel they have over their present life. Too many uncertainties, rather than allowing for a multitude of possibilities, lead to an

obliteration of hopes and possible futures. Gambian-based refugees did not experience this physical immobility which could explain why there was no mention of an impossibility to hope.

Nostalgia also experienced this dichotomous separation based on geography. While both groups did mention their lives in their home countries to me, it was not in the same way. In the Gambia, people often made passing remarks about how they missed year-round rainfalls that meant food was always available, or discuss particular dishes they used to make with local ingredients. Unlike the UK-based informants, they did not divulge personal stories about their experiences of childhood and what it was like growing up in their home countries. In fact, many expressed that it was simply too painful to think about their lives before. Evette captured this trend by stating plainly, "Sometime I think about home before. If I think sometime I'm sad. It not easy, so I don't think about it too much." This seemed to sum up people's feelings about their home in the Gambia. Interestingly, however, those in the Gambia were often more direct in speaking about *why* they fled than those in the UK. My initial question for both groups of informants was the same: "When did you come into this country?" Those in the Gambia launched into the situation surrounding their flight as well as the year in which it took place, often telling me stories of fleeing by foot into the forest and walking to the Serrekunda area. In the UK, however, none of my informants told me exactly why they left in response to this question. Some did, however, later divulge to me the situation surrounding why they had left, but this revelation occurred only after we had become more familiar with one another.

The frankness with which refugees in the Gambia launched into their flight experience took me aback. Because I had spoken with those living in the UK first, I had assumed that they would respond to this question with the year they arrived and details of any subsequent movements within the country. In thinking about the two groups in general, it seems that the difference between them comes about from the process of seeking asylum as a whole. The process is relatively straightforward in the Gambia. One has to present oneself at the Gambian Commission for Refugees in the capital of Banjul, where one describes why one left (filling out an application if one is literate) and, after stating their case, they are granted refugee status and given a Refugee Identity Card. This is the process unless the Secretary of State publishes an Order in the *Gazette* declaring recognition of refugees on a *prima facie* basis (Gambia Refugee Act 2008). I did not hear of any stories in which someone was denied status. This is not to say it did not or could not happen, but

given the broader definition of a refugee employed by the OAU's 1969 Convention that sees general violence as a recognised precondition, it is safe to say that far fewer people are refused status than in most of the Western countries such as the UK. It is this ease of seeking asylum, and relatively uncomplicated psychosocial impacts of it (Zanker 2018), that I believe led to people being unafraid or unashamed to divulge their flight experiences to me.

The UK was a vastly different environment in which to seek asylum. The process itself is much more complicated, often including a refusal at some point (Good 2004; Rotter 2016; Burridge and Gill 2016), while those awaiting a decision remain at the whim of the dispersal policy and in receipt of approximately £36 a week (Burridge and Gill 2016). In fact, in the UK, much has been written on the difficulties in seeking asylum (for example Good 2004; Burgess 2010) and the "policy of deterrence" practiced (Rotter 2016:84), as well as the retraumatisation of this period (Silove et al 2000:606; Burgess 2010), leading many researchers to conclude that the asylum process itself can cause posttraumatic stress disorder among asylum seekers. Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani (2012) highlighted this issue among African asylum seekers in the UK. They comment that the asylum process can "serve to decrease resiliency and coping" and that their informants suffered from "feelings of uncertainty about the future and fear of being sent back which women felt affected their ability to cope and increased psychological distress," (Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani 2012:103). For many of my informants, the initial assessment interviews were immensely stressful because they were perceived to be couched in a culture of disbelief. In other words, rather than accepting what a person is saying about their reasons for asylum, Home Office workers instead take a position of suspicion, looking for any holes or inconsistencies in a story to claim the person is unreliable or untruthful to have the case thrown out (Good 2004:13). As one informant told me, "Even though you are telling the truth about something, sometimes they refuse it, as if you're lying about something. It really hurts." The culture of disbelief is a shock to many I spoke with who claimed they were made to feel like criminals who had done something wrong or like liars. I believe it is because of the stress and potential trauma of seeking asylum in such a hostile country as the UK led to my informants omitting their reasons for seeking asylum.

Social Mobility

A third type of mobility emerged during my discussions with informants. This type of mobility was social mobility. Not surprisingly, all of the refused asylum seekers I spoke with in the UK commented on one day receiving refugee status, with many pinning their hopes and future goals on doing so. Some were more action-oriented than others. For instance, instead of merely wishing that one would get a positive decision on their status, several of my informants actively advocated on their own behalf. Isaac, a refused Ugandan asylum seeker, told me that he had actually found a change in the law and contacted his solicitor to enquire about it. His solicitor admitted to being unaware that this change had taken place. Isaac said, "What helps me is that that law was passed in – they made my decision in March, and they didn't send it [notification of the decision] until May. When I got it, the law was passed in April. You see, some of these things, God also works in a way, in a miraculous way he can keep something away from you and then give it to you; take away with one hand and give you with another." This new change in the law meant that, because he was not informed of a negative decision before it was passed in April, he was eligible to put in a fresh claim under a different set of guidelines. In this way, then, Isaac is 'practicing hope' (to borrow a phrase used by Mattingly 2010 and Pedersen 2012). Hope, in this way, became work that one must carefully cultivate. By practicing hope and engaging in a form of hope as work, he was positioning himself as someone worthy of status by constantly updating himself on any changes and was thus someone who, because of his actions, felt that he was more likely to achieve this goal of receiving status. Others I spoke with similarly practiced hope. Esther – the woman who was married to a pastor who revealed they had received humanitarian protection during a sermon – also engaged in this process. She took extra care in her appearance to avoid the dehumanising element of seeking asylum. "I don't want them [others] to look at me as an asylum seeker and I won't look well, no! Even an asylum seeker you can look good, you can dress well, you can look beautiful," she stressed to me. She assured me that though she and her family only had access to donated clothes or those purchased cheaply from second-hand shops, she always 'dressed the part' of what she felt was a respectable member of society. This was her way of practicing hope. The importance of Isaac and Esther practicing hope cannot be overstated. As Pedersen (2012:141) notes, "…it is during moments of hope, and during these moments only, that they are seen (by themselves as well as by other people) as whole persons." It was in the creation of these hopes that they presented themselves as whole, worthy persons. In terms of presenting oneself as worthy, it is interesting to note that unlike

other findings (such as Griffiths 2014), my informants did not see the time spent waiting for a decision as an indication that one has somehow 'earned' a positive decision. In fact, several of those I spoke with expressed the opposite, with one woman saying, "People from my country easily get papers – so what went wrong? I'm not a bad person, why is all this happening to me?" For her, waiting was a sign that something was wrong, not something that generated hope.

Employment and Education

The hopes revolving around social mobility are those that have been spoken about previously in this thesis: namely, employment and education. While employment and education initially seem like concrete categories, I argue that this is not the case. Instead, I follow Crapanzano's (2003:19-20) line of thinking when he states, "The objects of hope and desire are always more than themselves. They are multimeaning symbols…they evoke a world, a society, a moral order, a psychology." In this way, then, a desire for employment or education contains within it far more than a means to get a desirable job. It means that the world is a just one, in which individuals can act to support themselves autonomously. It also means that they are viewed as full-fledged citizens who have a right to belong in that community. In this way, then, it contains a whole host of meanings. Those I spoke with, however, frequently referred to these two broad categories as the object of their hopes.

Most stated that they were desperate to get status so that they could pursue their dreams of an education or work to support their families. Sandra was focused on resuming her studies. Though she had completed a course in the UK prior to claiming asylum, she was eager to get back into university life. She had a clear idea of what she wanted to study and what career she hoped to go into. "I'm thinking that when my things are resolved, I'm *hoping* that maybe I can start psychology or something so that, just to, blend the marketing and psychology part. And then go into brand management," she clarified. She knew where her interests were and dreamed of turning it into a viable career. Others also had clear idea of what careers they would like to pursue. Isaac had two possible future careers. He explained to me, "I actually think of if my status goes through, I want to go into the trains. I'm very much interested in those things. One day I will drive a train. If I don't do that then probably I will go into ambulance. Because I'd really like to run and help someone who is in danger, do a rescue at least," he explained. Though these were vastly different, they represented two types of enjoyable, worthwhile employment in his eyes and it was merely his lack of status that was preventing him from realising it. They also point to what

he saw as worthwhile endeavours such as rescuing people, which put him in the category of a considerate citizen who helps others. Others, however, were less discerning in their specific careers than Sandra and Isaac, commenting that any job would do. Nala was one such person. As she explained to me bluntly, "You know, for me, I look [for] the job if I have ID to work. I'm so happy." "What do you want to do?" I asked her. "Just cleaner is okay. If I have ID is okay to work. Every day I come [and ask someone for money saying] 'Please, please'. If you work, is no more stress because you busy, you have money and not go to someone to [ask them to] give money. You know sometimes no good to go to someone everyday…bad idea. But work – I so happy!" For Nala, just the ability to work even in unskilled labour represented a future worth hoping for. Her comments call to mind the discussion in Chapter 6 on the normality that being busy conveys. In general, a person works and keeps busy. This type of 'normal' life was what Nala hoped for. Thus, though each informant had a specific hoped-for future that matched his or her own interests, the focus on education and employment was nearly universal.

Education and employment also featured prominently in my discussions with informants in the Gambia. While most desperately wanted resettlement, others noted that they would like to pursue their education in the future. One informant, Koffi, blended the two. He was an educated man in his home country of Côte d'Ivoire. His hope for the future was to continue with his studies, with the ultimate aim of becoming mobile. He told me, "We always aspire for better things and to a better future. I'm trying to study because I know once you are educated, there is no limit for you. You can go far far far, if you want, that's it. I really want to push my education, that's my dream. … Any good opportunity comes my way, I believe I have to grab it," he emphasised, grabbing the air in his fists. Education, for him, meant the possibility of employment in another country, ideally one in North America or Europe. Others were pursing their education in the hopes that they could find a job. Kaddy said, "I'm doing IT, I don't know if I finish my IT if I can get a job, then job is important in my life, to get job you can take care of yourself, you can be independent. … I am wishing for a very durable solution," finished, echoing the words used by UNHCR to describe refugee situations. For her, pursuing her education was a type of action which oriented itself towards her future hope: a good job and the various social meanings imbued within it. Rather than a passive wishing, then, she was actively seeking the object of her future goals.

Romantic Relationships

The final type of social mobility I would like to highlight revolves around the initiation into full-fledged adulthood. For my informants, this took the form of marriage and children. It could be that this represented the norm as it did for Kelly's (2008) informants. The Palestinians he spoke with expressed a desire for an 'ordinary' life in the midst of an extraordinary situation (the second *intifada*) which led many to focus heavily on lifecycle processes that related to marriage and parenthood. For them, the "ordinary […] represents an ethical aspiration, rooted in concrete social relationships," (Kelly 2008:366). In the case of Jeffrey's (2010:477) informants, their lengthy stints as students with little opportunities for worthwhile employment prevented a sense of "progression to adulthood" despite their age. This sense of temporal disruption links with Griffiths' (2014) concept of suspended time. Experiencing time as suspended prevented many of her detained asylum seeker informants, and my informants, from achieving these social goals. This obstruction led to an exclusion of social ageing and, she argues, points to the "infantilising tendency of the asylum system, with its structural impediments against adult-like self-determination," (Griffiths 2014:1998). By prohibiting individuals from achieving these social markers of ageing and progress, like education and employment mentioned above and marriage and procreation mentioned below, the asylum process rendered individuals in a liminal situation where they felt unable to become full-fledged adults. Like the other forms of social mobility mentioned above, becoming an adult through marriage and reproduction was intimately tied to refugee status for many of my informants.

Among my informants, the preoccupation with romantic relationships leading to marriage and children was slightly more pronounced among women than men. This is not to say that it was not mentioned by men. One man, in fact, felt this lack of a romantic relationship deeply. Yasir, mentioned previously in the thesis and who had spent over a year in immigration detention, expressed frustration at his situation. He commented on how he felt deeply unhappy with his situation as a refused asylum seeker. He told me, "If today I die, I die not happy, I die homeless…it's not fair sometime because everybody in this world, at least once they have to feel happy, then alright he die. But if I die now, I know I wasn't happy in my life. I have no kids, I didn't finish my studies, my dreams never come true, so why should I die early?" he burst out in a frustrated tone. He went on to explain how he was unable to change his situation, saying, "I can't date now because I have nothing – basic thing a girl needs is flowers from her boyfriend! When I get my status, I

will get a job and say 'Now I can date'. Almost there! I'm not giving up, I'm not giving up yet," he ended hopefully. His told me that his hope has come back because his asylum case was finally reopened after being in immigration detention, and it seemed promising that the high courts would grant him some form of leave to remain. His hopes for happiness and to reach a stage where 'one could die happy' hinged on receiving status so he could begin to live a meaningful life, free to pursue romantic relationships, father children and possibly finish his studies.

While Yasir felt the absence of a romantic relationship most acutely, the women who commented on this subject focused on the absence of children. Sandra, wanted to skip dating altogether and go straight to being a married mother. "I just want to wake up married!" she burst out, "with my babies like, 'How are you Mommy?' I just want to be a mommy. That part – I really want that now," she stressed. "I just want to have something where I can say, 'This is home'. That is one of my biggest prayers. I've been independent for a long time and I'm tired," she said with a big, exaggerated sigh. She craved the sense of security that a partner and children brought with them. Unfortunately, her situation as a refused asylum seeker prevented her from reaching this stability. "It's very difficult if you don't have papers as well. Because sometimes you might meet someone who really really [you like]…and they'll be thinking, 'What is she gonna bring to the table?'" she asked with a laugh and a shrug of her shoulders. Much like Yasir who felt like he could not pursue a relationship without the means to buy a woman a gift of flowers, Sandra felt she could not enter into a relationship without showing she had something of value in terms of a career or even the ability to pursue a career. Many young, refused asylum seekers felt in a similar situation. Ella bemoaned not only her lack of refugee status, but the lack of official documents this signified. "I'd love to start my own family but if you take it like that…let's say I decide to get married even tomorrow, I cannot get married. Because I am asylum seeker without any documents, I only have ARC[23] card," she ended in a whisper with tears filling her eyes and escaping down her cheeks. She took a deep breath and continued tearfully in a low voice, "And ARC card is not considered as a document. So if I want to marry legally, if I fall in love with someone, I cannot plan my marriage, no, I can't. And

[23] An ARC card is an Application Registration Card, given to asylum seekers when they apply for asylum. It contains relevant information about the, such as name, nationality, date of birth and picture. More information about an ARC card can be found on the government's website at the following address: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257376/applicationregistrationcard.pdf

then I cannot start a family without a wedding, that's me. What I want is I was to get married and then I want to start…I make babies, that's me," she finished plaintively with a small smile, still visibly upset. Her lack of status frustrated all her attempts to work towards her hoped-for future in terms of a relationship and children.

Though the above examples come from the UK, the inability to marry and start families was not confined to the individuals living there. The main difference between the UK and the Gambia is that many asylum seekers came to the UK alone and without families. In the Gambia, the situation was the opposite. Most came with their nuclear or extended families. Of the few that I spoke with who came alone, all but one had since found partners in the Gambia, married and subsequently started their families. The one who had not done so was woman in her late twenties called Kaddy. She fled the Casamance region of Senegal with her parents and siblings in the early 1990s. Since then, several of her family members had taken ill, leaving her mom and brother unable to work. To help support the family, she was making and selling fish pies and bags of charcoal. While she recognised her obligations to her family, she was becoming frustrated by the lack of change in their circumstances. She told me she wished she could focus on herself and marriage instead of her family, especially since she was becoming older. "I don't know when I can care of me, for myself, you see? It time now to make family," she explained to me. She felt torn between helping her family and starting her own, which is what she desperately wanted for her future. She, like many of those in this situation – young, single, childless – felt time acutely and worried at the delay in reaching these social milestones, as the above examples highlighted. These stories echo those of Jeffrey's informants, for whom "the failure to acquire secure salaried work not only threatened young men's social and economic standing but also jeopardized their ability to marry and thereby fulfil locally valued norms of adult masculinity," (2010:472). Social mobility was hindered for my informants through an inability to achieve a sense of full-fledged adulthood, complete with romantic partners and children of their own.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the interplay between hope and differing forms of mobility. These mobilities echo Silva (2015:146) who notes, "Being alive is to move – across physical space, across a life journey in storytelling, across the distance between one and

others in basket making, Skype, and Facebook." My informants craved this movement in its various forms and structured their future hopes, where possible, around it.

The main form of mobility discussed was geographic mobility. Most people wanted to move, or be able to move, to or between other countries. While those in the Gambia were desperate for resettlement in a third country, those in the UK wanted to be able to return to their home countries to visit friends and family. This return, however, was rarely envisaged as a permanent one. The ability to return home existed with the knowledge that it would never be a permanent home again. Instead, those in the UK wanted to return home for short periods of time while maintaining their permanent residence, and its subsequent benefits, in UK. This type of cyclical migration has been noted in the migration literature (for instance, see Hunter 2011).

The second form of mobility concerns imaginative mobility. This type of mobility encompasses various forms of nostalgia – both geographical and temporal – as well as imaginative immobility. Imaginative immobility refers to the inability to conceive of and plan for a future. Both of these types of imaginative mobility (nostalgia and immobility) occurred during interviews with individuals living in the UK and were absent from interviews with those living in the Gambia. Possible reasons for these glaring differences were discussed and included degrees of mobility among the two groups as well as the differing asylum processes.

The final form of mobility concerns social mobility. Unsurprisingly, those in the UK without refugee status hoped to receive a positive decision in the near future – once this decision was given, they envisaged scenarios in which they were free to find employment and pursue educational opportunities, both of which are prohibited in the present. These findings echo those of Jeffrey who notes that among his educated yet 'self-consciously unemployed' Indian informants, a lack of access to quality education and to employment opportunities "had precipitated widespread feelings among young men of having surplus time, of being detached from education, and of being left behind," (Jeffrey 2010:466). Access to these (quality education and employment opportunities) allows one to feel like he or she has control over his or her life and is, in a sense, 'progressing'. Indeed, many were actively engaged in cultivating this future for themselves by engaging in practices to expedite this future, such as researching changes in policies and contacting their solicitors. Others took different approaches to prove their worthiness of receiving

status, such as ‘dressing the part’. Irrespective of the actions undertaking, these practices can uniformly be seen as practicing and cultivating hope.

A last type of social mobility that was highlighted by my informants concerned romantic relationships and starting families. Those who were young, single and childless felt their situation acutely and desired the ability to become full-fledged adults. The social pressures put on these individuals led to frustration in their current situation. Those in the UK felt unable to pursue this future hope because they lacked refugee status and therefore felt they had little to offer a partner while those in the Gambia felt torn between their desires to help their family financially and to begin one of their own. As it was, many were merely passively waiting for the time that they could actively work towards this hope.

These three general types of mobility represent the future hopes of the asylum seeker and refugees I worked with. It is interesting to note the conviction with which individuals believed a change in one of these factors would lead to an immediate increase in their happiness – a type of ‘dreams coming true’ scenario. While it will undoubtedly lead to an initial surge in happiness, it is evident that many individuals stop imagining, or planning, for a future beyond these possibilities. They either do not anticipate the new hardships embedded in a future change, or, like most people, they fall victim to affective forecasting, which shows that in general, people are poor judges of determining what will bring them happiness in the future (Wilson and Gilbert 2005). Nevertheless, those I spoke remained convinced of the worthiness of their future hopes for mobility and were assured that it would finally bring them the happiness they sought.

Chapter 8: The Multiple Influences of Religion on Well-Being

When discussing well-being and happiness in the lives of my informants, it was impossible to ignore a large theme that not only reinforced the three domains of well-being that I outlined in this thesis, but actually cut across them as well: religion. Religion permeated every major aspects of my informants' daily lives. These findings on the pervasive character of religion echoes Eyber's work. She notes that religion appears in every aspect of daily life in many places and "constitutes as much part of everyday discussions as does talk about poverty, conflict, family problems, health and illness and other daily topics of conversation," (Eyber 2016:202). This certainly was true among my informants and made it more challenging to study well-being when the idea of religion featured in multiple aspects of everyday life. Though some arguments against a definition of religion as a Western intellectual and political act exist (Asad 1993), religion is generally understood as containing "physical/ritualistic and verbal behaviors, the concerns with good or correct action, the desire to achieve certain goals or effects, and the establishment and perpetuation of communities," (Eller 2007:9). Furthermore, it engages with "nonhuman and typically 'super' human being(s) and/or force(s) with which humans are understood to be in relation – a recognizably 'social' relation – that is mutually effective," (Eller 2007:9). As mentioned previously, all of my informants identified themselves as belonging to a religious group in either Christianity or Islam.

The difficulty in addressing religion earlier in this thesis stems from the fact that it pervades daily life to such an extent that it cannot be distilled into a single theme. Take, for instance, the story I relayed in Chapter 2 about Esther and her husband, the pastor. The husband had come from Nigeria to study at Northumbria University with his wife and children following him. Unfortunately, they had been unsuccessful in their attempts to renew their visas and had been advised to apply for refugee status. While I focused my attention on the religious testimony of her husband that highlighted the growth they have experienced by going through these series of hardships, I could have just as easily used it as an example of how religion brought the family closer together which in turn fostered a sense of well-being (particularly for Esther as I spoke with her at length), or how that moment in the church when the pastor revealed that they had been accepted as refugees acted in a way to strengthen ties with members of the wider refugee and immigrant

community in that area of Newcastle. Furthermore, I could have focused more attention on the interview itself with Esther to highlight the role that religion played in her everyday life by providing her with a platform to begin her female empowerment classes or how her unwavering faith in God assured her that she was on a journey where the future would be worth the pain of the past. It was not inappropriate to focus my attention on the posttraumatic growth domain of spirituality when describing the pastor's testimony, but it was done with the realization that this story was but one way in which religion impacted deeply on the well-being of Esther and her family.

The focus of this chapter, then, is to complicate the rather clean picture I have painted of well-being in the previous chapters. As the above example highlights, the inclusion of one domain in particular – that of religion – makes distinctions between the other domains less clear. Religion does not merely sit beside but rather within the preceding three well-being categories I have outlined thus far. While the intertwining of religion through and across these categories may be seen as a limitation to my proposed approach, I contend that including religion also highlights the strengths inherent in my previous three domains by demonstrating the importance of them and how a common thread between them serves to strengthen and solidify their impact on well-being in everyday life. In this chapter I will outline the current research on religion and happiness and the current issues in this field, before delving into the relationship between these concepts in my informants' narratives.

Religion and Happiness: What We Know

The aforementioned religiosity of my informants is not unusual. Diener, Tay and Myers (2011:1282) estimate that 68% of the world's population (roughly 4.6 billion people) label themselves as religious and regard it as an important part of their daily lives. They further note that the most religious nations tend to be those suffering from poverty and other social problems which are typically found in parts of Asia and Africa (Diener et al 2011:1278). Religion, though linked with hardships, is often seen as a cause of happiness. (cf. Lewis, Maltby and Burkinshaw 2000). For instance, The World Happiness Report 2017 found that the importance of religion in people's lives was, in general, higher in Africa than elsewhere. The report even goes so far as to say, "The relationship between religiosity and happiness among these countries lends support to the idea that faith might assuage Africa's unhappiness," (Møller et al 2017:110). This bold assertion was echoed by happiness researchers working on the African continent. Recall, for instance, the work of

Agbo et al (2012) who report on the contradictory finding that despite the poor developmental indexes of the country (such as poverty, lack of electricity and running water, corruption), many Nigerians report that they are 'very happy'. Agbo et al attribute this to the religiosity of the country, in which 90% of the population claims to belong to some form of Christianity or Islam (CIA Factbook 2016). Specifically, they remark that religion is a crucial resource which allows Nigerians not only to adapt to otherwise difficult life situations, but gives them the resources to live well (Agbo et al 2012:304). Religion as a resource, they argue, takes many forms: offering an alternative way of interpreting and explaining life circumstances, providing psychological resources that facilitate successful coping and facilitating access to social support (Agbo et al 2012:305). Religion is particularly relevant to my informants because, as Pargament (2002:173) posits, "We might expect religion to be especially helpful to socially marginalized groups because religion offers them relatively accessible resources and compelling solutions to problems in living." When we consider the claim that "the positive effect of religion on well-being would seem to have been underestimated if anything by the existing literature" (Clark and Lelkes 2009:16), it seems relevant to include a deeper discussion on the role that religion played in the well-being of my informants.

It should be noted, however, that the above studies did not distinguish correlation and causation. In fact, in the World Happiness Report, linking the generally low happiness scores on the African continent with the high levels of religiosity seems to contradict their assertion that religion will increase the happiness of Africans. Similarly, Agbo et al (2012) accept the position that religion has positive effects on happiness without exploring that idea further. They then draw upon other studies that correlate the two, before postulating that the religiosity of the country may explain the happiness professed by so many Nigerians, despite the widespread poverty and other hardships. Accepting a link between religion and happiness is not universally acknowledged in the literature. Lewis and Cruise (2006) compiled a review which found that though the majority of studies find a positive association between religion and happiness, this is not true of all studies. For example, in the sample that explored the links between religiosity and the Oxford Happiness Inventory, eight out of nine studies found significant positive correlations (Lewis and Cruise 2006: 215). When religiosity measures were used in conjunction with the Depression-Happiness Scale, four out of five studies found no significant association (Lewis and Cruise 2006:218). None of the studies found a negative association, though other authors recognise the possibility of religion facilitating feelings of guilt and shame which may in

turn fuel depression (Koenig 2018:6). Many researchers, however, find that the positive effect of religion stems from its social norm effect (Stavrova et al 2013) or through resources that can be obtained through religious affiliation such as social support, meaning in life, etc. (Diener et al 2011) rather than happy people seeking out religion.

The associations between these two concepts remains diverse and are dependent on the level of analysis. While my informants did link religion and happiness in their narratives, it is difficult to know the true nature of this relationship (casual or correlation), or indeed if it did impact them in the ways they said. Nevertheless, in the narratives of my informants religion and happiness was linked, and it was described as stemming from their religion and religious involvement rather than their happiness influencing them to seek out religion, as will be discussed below.

While I have situated religion among well-being studies, it should be noted that anthropologists have long engaged with and debated about religion. Coleman (2015:307) credits religion as a "central building block of anthropology as the discipline emerged," though it is important to note that specific branches within this field exist. Eller, for his part, notes that discussions surrounding religion frequently centre on what is widely seen as the sociocultural function of religion. These are filling individual needs; explanation, especially of origins or causes; source of rules and norms; solution of immediate problems; and fill "needs of society" (Eller 2007:10-11). Several popular areas of exploration into social theories of religion exist. Of note is Durkheim's functionalism, with his discussion on the dichotomy between the "sacred" and the "profane", as well as his focus on the social group as more being more powerful than the individual (Eller 2007:21). Echoing this stance is Radcliffe-Brown's structural functionalism which again focuses on the group over the individual by stressing the importance of forming and maintaining social order (1965:154). Religion, along these lines, "plays its most important role in the creation and maintenance of the group and society, not the comfort of the individual," (Eller 2007:23). This focus on group unity "makes one out of many," an idea that Bloch (2008) later takes up. He compares the "transactional level", in which each individual differs from one another, and the "transcendental social mode," in which differences are erased and all members are seen as identical and thus said to be of "one body", (Bloch 2008:2057). Bloch rejects the use of the term 'religion' as he feels it is too exclusive, preferring to use the term 'transcendental' (Bloch 2010:6). Different ways of conceptualizing religion, contends Bowie (2006:4), is akin to "describing different parts of the same elephant" because religion contains both a psychological and social aspect. This complicates issue when it

comes to demarcating what 'counts' as religion. Koenig (2018:4), for instance, notes the preference for many mental health professionals and those in the social and behavioural sciences to use 'spirituality' as it is seen as more inclusive and may capture a wider breadth of experience (such as those who claim to be spiritual but not religion, or those who identify as religious but are completely secular). All of my informants identified as religious, and none used 'spiritual' to describe themselves. Therefore, I will use religion throughout the chapter, except when a specific study uses the term spiritual.

The main purpose of studying religion from an anthropological perspective, and which will become apparent in my own analysis, is to better understand how religion, as a crucial part of everyday existence for so many, is used by people in their daily lives. As will be shown, religion features prominently in my informants' narratives, and it is often understood as being closely related to an individual's happiness, particularly among the three well-being domains I have already addressed in this chapter. The positive nature of this relationship, however, is largely based on the resources that God and, by extension religion, provides. Religion comprises, as Eller (2007:28) remarks, "influential personal and social forces" which arise from and address "intellectual, emotional, and social sources" in which the nonhuman and supernatural become part of the human, and thus social, world. My intention in this chapter is to link these personal forces – in the form of existential meaning-making and temporal projections – and social forces – in the form of relationships and communities – to God, a specific social force, in the context of forced migration.

Religion and Existential Well-Being

The role of religion on existential forms of well-being (such as growth, sense of purpose and meaning-making) is well-researched in the literature. Recall from Chapter 2 that Tedeschi and Calhoun's (2004) category of 'spirituality' in posttraumatic growth was the most commonly cited one in the literature on this subject. It should be noted here that they employ the method I mentioned above – using spirituality to remain more 'inclusive'. They define spirituality as "a greater sense of somehow being connected to something transcendent, in ways that were not possible before the struggle with trauma," (Tedeschi et al 2009 [1998]:13). In their writings, however, they use the two interchangeably, and in general refer to 'spirituality and religion', considering them to overlap significantly. This well-established connection between religion and posttraumatic growth in particular still

has much work to do in certain areas, with Chan et al (2016:295) noting that "the research on the relationship between religiosity and PTG among refugees is in its infancy." The findings they report are mixed, with some studies showing a positive connection, others a negative and a few with no connection at all. They posit that perhaps using religion as an umbrella term does not do justice to the variety of religions and religious interpretations which may "lead to different pathways in terms of making sense of war trauma," (295). Furthermore, the picture becomes more complicated when one considers that many of the conflicts producing refugee flows are religiously or tribally based; this too can impact the role that religion plays in fostering PTG. In fact, Barrington and Shakespeare-Finch (2013) remark that among their informants, those who had become *less* religious were more likely to demonstrate growth. The researchers linked this rather surprising finding with the likelihood that their trauma stemmed from their membership of a particular religion. Despite these conflicting findings, however, religious coping remains a strong predictor of growth in the wider PTG research (Acquaye 2017). Chapter 2 delves into far more detail on the relationship between PTG and religiosity. Rather than reiterate this link, I will turn to religion its relationship with other forms of well-being.

The appeal of religion is that it can be accessed by all at any time, and many people do turn to religion to provide a meaningful framework through which to structure their lives. Henrickson et al (2013:918) highlight how this is finding is consistent with other studies on what they term as 'black Africans in Africa' as well as 'black refugees' in which religion, specifically a belief in God, plays a role in providing meaning, context and purpose. Indeed, religion seems to be one of the most common resources at one's disposal when it comes to meaning-making. Religion is cited as a source of strength and coping in refugee groups as diverse as Burmese refugees in Australia (Borwick et al 2013) and Somali and Zimbabwean refugees in the UK (Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani 2012). Jackson and Piette (2015:12) even claim that submitting to a higher power is actually a way of recovering one's agency by creating a relationship with something beyond oneself.

Not all, however, link religious coping with recovering agency, and the agency of the person varies significantly. Pargament et al (1988) described three forms of religious coping which relate to agency and appeared in several of my informant's narratives. The first gives the individual full agency for solving their own problems. This type of coping is called Self-Directing. In this coping style, God is seen as giving people the ability and resources needed to resolve their problems (Pargament et al 1988:91). While this active

coping style was not mentioned specifically by my informants, the other two styles featured prominently. The second form of religious coping is the opposite to Self-Directing. This one, which was applicable to some of my informants, is called Deferring. This is a rather passive form of coping in which individuals wait for God to offer solutions to their problems (Pargament et al 1988:92). Recall Esther, the Nigerian woman who lived in Newcastle with her pastor husband and four children, from Chapter 2. While certainly she employed different coping methods at different points in her life, she admitted that after they were refused visas her family adopted the strategy of "handing it over to God." Any problem that they were struggling with (food, housing, morale) was seen as being God's problem rather than their own. This, claimed Esther, allowed the family to offload some of their stresses and eased their burdens. By placing the responsibility for solving the problems with God, it meant that they did not have to spend their time worrying about solutions.

This coping style was not limited to the UK. Another informant commented in a strikingly similar way to Esther. Grace, the Ivorian woman living in the Gambia with her husband and two sons, remarked, "Even some time, my sister, for us to get breakfast, we cannot get. I say [to my sons], 'Eh, God will provide, before you come [home from school], God will provide something I will cook for you." Similar to Esther, she found affording enough food a challenge and saw God as the sole solution. "Life is not easy but we should pray God so that God will help us. Change something," she added. This passive style fits perfectly with Pargament et al's Deferring style, in which they note "God is the source of solutions, rather than the person," (Pargament et al 1988:92). Both Esther and Grace, by 'handing' their problems to God and awaiting the resources they needed, demonstrated this style of coping.

The final style of religious coping, Collaborative, was the most cited style in Pargament et al's work and was the most common style mentioned by my informants. The Collaborative style of coping places "the responsibility for the problem-solving process […] jointly [with] the individual and God," (Pargament et al 1988:92). In this way, they both work together to find solutions. The agency is therefore shared between an individual and God. This style of coping appeared in several of my informants' narratives. For instance, Eleanor, the former Liberian nun living in the Gambia, described how she used to make and sell cakes at the roadside in order to make enough money to support herself. "It is written in the Bible. God say, 'If you don't work you don't eat.' So I say, 'God, I want

to eat.'." In this way, God will provide her with the means necessary if she puts in the required effort. Both of them, together, will ensure that she has what she needs to continue. Similarly, Lorena in the UK saw herself as being in a partnership with God. The action required on her half, however, was to be a good Christian. She said that she chose God and by actively practicing her newfound faith (including become 'born again'), God ensured that she had the resources at her disposal to ensure her well-being.

These forms of religious coping, irrespective of the particular method, allowed an individual to continue their daily lives while fostering, where possible, a positive sense of well-being (though note that there appears to be some doubts over the benefits of a Deferring coping method; see Pargament et al. 1988; Pargament 2002). Coping successfully can allow people to lead a happy life, and, given the high rates of religiosity around the world, religion has a clear role to play in fostering this happiness. In fact, data on this subject strongly suggests that religious people are happier than non-religious ones (e.g. Graham 2009; Clark and Lelkes 2009; Dolan et al 2008). French and Joseph (1999) reported on this widespread finding, but drew upon more nuanced research to investigate these claims. Their findings led them to conclude that another factor was responsible for this positive relationship. They stated, "the association between religiosity and happiness might be accounted for by purpose in life," (French and Joseph 1999:120). Once purpose in life was taken into account, the association linking happiness with religiosity disappeared.

Religion can aid someone after a trauma in different ways and remains an important aspect in the lives of many people. Eyber (2016:202) contends that "to ignore the religious facets of people's personal, social, cultural and political lives excludes a significant element in how people construct their own wellbeing." Regardless of the specific relationship between religion and happiness, the literature consistently places the two together. Focusing on happiness in Nigeria, Agbo et al (2012:306), for instance, credit religion's influence on happiness as being greater that other indices such as the economy, freedom and development. Differences, of course, exist between regions of the world and according to different social factors. Nevertheless, for many people religion acts as a way to increase well-being and happiness and to make sense of oneself and the world. It cannot be divorced from a sense of coherence for many diverse groups of refugees and my informants, whether in the Gambia, the UK or Cameroon appeared to be no different. Religion provided

meaning in a way that covered a series of events, both past and present, and would, presumably, carry on into the future.

Religion and Meaning-Making in the Gambia

The Gambia is a predominately Muslim country with estimates placing it at 90% Muslim. Then-president Yahya Jammeh, even went so far as to declare it an Islamic Republic in December 2015. Senegal itself is 94% Muslim, and since the conflict in that country is based on ethnicity and geographical location rather than religion, Senegalese refugees were predominantly Muslim. Both states, however, allow for the free and safe practice of other religions. Therefore, many of the 'other' refugees (other than Senegalese) adhered to some form of Christianity. Tensions between the two were rare, and many commentators on the Gambia highlight the peaceful relationship between different ethnic groups and different religions (Conway 2004; Saine 2012; Zanker 2018). This was certainly my experience, as people went out of their way to explain to me (invariably marked as a Christian) that Christians and Muslims were brothers and sisters, nearly the same religion. I only had one informant discuss problems he had encountered due to religion. In this instance, his son had his hand broken and was nearly suffocated to death because he did not prostrate to pray like the other kids. These two incidents occurred in the Upper River Region which is the farthest from the capital and is generally seen as the most remote and, for lack of a better word, 'backwards' of the regions in the Gambia. When the family moved back to the greater Serrekunda area, another child attempted to bully his son for being Christian. The police were notified and the child was threatened with prosecution if he continued with his threats. The threats promptly ceased and they have not experienced any further issues.

Religion, as that example highlights, was not always unanimously a good thing. Eyber (20166:212) notes that "feelings of guilt, depression, abandonment, anxiety and worthlessness" can also accompany religion. Amongst my informants, religion could be fraught with identity crises and attacks of self-doubt that could lead to a radical change in religious practices that served to benefit the individual in a changed circumstance. For instance, Ruth, a refugee woman in the Gambia who was originally from DR Congo, admitted that she and her children came into the country as Christians. After realising that there was a Muslim majority around her, she made the decision to convert herself and her children to Islam. "It will be easier for them in school and with their classmates," she explained. This is a relatively common way to convert, as it is noted that individuals often

convert to a religion because a family member does, particularly so if it is a parent or husband (Eller 2007:211). Ruth revealed this quietly, while she was taking measurements for the female staff members in the GAFNA office. She was a seamstress and came highly recommended by one of the local UNHCR staff. GAFNA had previously provided a small loan to her, issued through NACCUG (National Association of Cooperative Credit Unions), which allowed her to purchase a sewing machine and some basic supplies with which to start her business.

The original topic of discussion was about religion in general. The other women in the room were Ivorian or Liberian and devout Christians. This admission that she converted to make her life and the lives of her children easier was meant with gasps and severe clucking of admonition. It was clear that those gathered did not approve or understand her decision. "But how can you do that, forsake Jesus?" one woman asked incredulously. Ruth gave a small smile and shrugged her shoulders, turning away. She clearly did not want to discuss her position any further. It is interesting to note that she did not adhere to the Islamic dress code followed by most Gambians. I never once witnessed her hair covered, and she frequently wore short-sleeved dresses which showed off her arms. Even in the Gambian heat, it was rather unusual to see women over a certain age who were not covered. Though I was unsure of how seriously she engaged with her newfound religion, that she declared herself a Muslim was shocking to those Christians assembled. "No Christian in their right mind would do that…how could she do that?" Grace asked me as sat in the reception area some time later. "No," she answered herself. "That woman was never a true Christian." This woman's renunciation of her Christian faith in favour of Islam created a rift in the minds of the other Christian women present, representing an 'outsider' to them.

Grace, for her part, was one of the most devout Christians I met. Christianity was very much a part of who she is and she relished the opportunity to teach me about her ways or show me this side of her life. Religion – more specifically, her close relationship with God – was one of the few constants she could trace consistently throughout her life, giving it a sense of comprehensibility, to use Antonvosky's concept. Bialecki et al remark that this is not unusual in the literature. In fact, they claim that one of the first major collections in the anthropology of Christianity focused on the ways that "Christians find themselves compelled to find the world religiously meaningful at all times and in all particulars," (Bialecki et al 2008:1146). Grace certainly saw the hand of God in all aspects of her life.

She originally came from Côte d'Ivoire. Her husband was working in the city of Abidjan when the war broke out. He called her as he was fleeing, saying that the situation was dangerous and he needed to leave. She followed after him, first going to Mali like he instructed, and then, she told me, "I saw him on the Facebook. I say, 'Me and my mother, my kids, we in Bamako!' He say, 'Ah, I'm in Gambia, come to Gambia!" Her husband had heard that "Gambia is good, everybody is going to Gambia!" which prompted his onward voyage, unbeknownst to his wife and children. Grace's mother declined to make the trip, saying she was poorly and preferred to stay in Mali, leaving Grace to travel to the Gambia with the couple's two sons, who were six and eight at the time. They made it without incident, "By the grace of God," Grace emphasised. "God favour us, we came here, I meet my husband." It was God's work that saw them safely reunited.

Grace believed in the healing powers of God, and relied heavily on her Nigerian pastor to bring her own ailments under control. Since coming to the Gambia she and her youngest son had the occasional bout of asthma. Her son would often miss days at a time from school because he could not breathe well enough to make the journey to school. If he did, the teachers would send him home because of the disruptions caused by his incessant coughing and wheezing. While Grace felt her son needed medical help to stop his symptoms, she frequently turned to her pastor to alleviate hers.

Grace had absolute faith in the healing powers of her pastor, making him (by the powers God bestowed upon him) a valuable resource (GRR). This curative component is common in the Pentecostal faith. Eller (2007:211) remarks that this religion often comprises "practical" elements like healing. "Indeed," he notes, "healing is a centrepiece in many groups and service". This certainly held true with Grace's congregation. She confided in me the miracles that the pastor had performed. We were sat in her living room, a rather small room that was full of furniture. One couch was placed along the back wall, while two oversized armchairs were placed along the wall facing it. A wooden TV stand with a TV sat against the adjacent wall with a final armchair opposite it. A low table was placed between all of this, and whoever was trying to move through the room would often have to shift it to one side or the other, taking care not to knock against anyone's knees, in order to do so. Sat in this room she leaned close to me, her voice rising higher and higher, as she told me how he had cured a woman with HIV whose fiancé had just died of the disease. At my raised eyebrows, which she took to be astonishment at his curative abilities, she reached the highest pitch yet. "Yes!" she shrieked. "You see? God is good! God is

good," she repeated. I was used to hearing stories about religion 'curing' HIV/AIDS in this part of the world. The president at the time, Yahya Jammeh, was rather infamous for claiming that he could cure people of this disease (Saine 2012:34-35).[24] Some Gambians I spoke with were proud to have such a powerful president, and one informant in the UK even put on a documentary that followed his extraordinary claim and showed the president 'healing' these people through a mixture of recitations from the Qur'an and a special diet. The informant, an educated nurse, told me that he had the tests sent off to Senegal in sealed tubes to verify that his treatment was beneficial. "He cured them! The disease was gone!" this informant had proudly exclaimed. Here, it seems, that in addition to the president claiming this power, other religious leaders were as well.

This pastor did not stop at curing HIV/AIDS. Grace excitedly told me of his most astonishing feat to date. She confided that he cured a woman who was suffering from a uterine fibroid. She was having a terrible time after the birth of her child and in a lot of pain. The woman had tried other treatments but none had worked thus far. Just before she was to go to Senegal to have surgery to correct her ailment, she asked the pastor to pray for her. The pastor prayed over the woman, asking God to banish the Devil from her body. The woman then proceeded to give birth to a black demon. Grace claimed that the woman, overcome with terror, gathered her wits to snap a picture of the demon she had birthed in the toilet before flushing it away. When the woman turned up for her surgery, doctors were astonished that all traces of her fibroid were gone. They sent her home. Grace told me that the pastor regularly travelled to Senegal to try and cure those who were suffering there and had heard of his powers. I asked her if she had seen this picture of the black demon. Grace squealed and pretended to hide her face behind her hands. "Me, I was too afraid! I couldn't bring myself to look at the picture!"

Because of the pastor's reputation, Grace sought him for easement of her own symptoms. She told me that whenever she has an asthma attack, even if it is in the middle of the night, she calls the pastor who will pray for her over the phone. "The demon goes into hiding for a few weeks after that," she told me. To keep on top of her asthma, she made sure she prayed every night before bed, even if she was tired. "I left Ivory Coast healthy, I want to return healthy," she explained.

[24] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/feb/22/aids.international

She dabbled in her own curative powers through God. Her eyes widened in earnest conviction as she told me how she woke up in the middle of the night to see her husband writhing in pain. When she woke him up, he told her that he was having terrible chest pains. She could not reach the pastor and, for lack of anything else to do, she took matters into her own hands and prayed over a bottle of water. During her retelling of this night, Grace grabbed a bottle of water off the table in front of us and leaned over it, mimicking the prayers that she did for approximately half an hour. "The water turned into Jesus' blood," she explained, "and I had my husband drink it. When he drank it – his chest pains were cured," she whispered in amazement. It is not uncommon in the literature to see health, illness and suffering as related not only traditional and cultural practices, but to spiritual and religious practices as well (Eyber 2016:203). The conflation of these experiences in everyday life is certainly evident in the stories that Grace told me.

After these incredible stories about the curative power of God, I decided to leave as night had fallen. Grace often liked to make sure I made it back to my house safely. When it was time to go home, I would catch a taxi from the end of her road in Kotu Quarry to the top of my road in Kololi. She would ride in the taxi to the end of the paved road with me and we would make our way through the dark and dusty back streets, my trusty torch picking out the potholes to avoid. It was during these walks that she would talk about her childhood and about her relationship with God. She had always felt that she had an extremely close relationship with God. Though her mother was a Christian and raised her as such, her father was a Muslim. He had married a second woman who was also Muslim. The children of the other woman and her father teased her relentlessly for her beliefs but she felt, in her heart, that they were true.

Grace admitted that she was the most religious in her family. She always prayed for her brother and sister, as well as her mother. In fact, she told me that earlier that day her mother had called her from Mali to ask her to pray for her brother. When fighting broke out in her country, she and her mother had fled to Mali, but her brother had gone to Ghana. He usually called the mother every week to tell her where he was and what he was doing. His money was running out and, because they hadn't heard from him recently, they were worried that he was turning to increasingly dangerous jobs in order to survive. "My mother said that I have a special gift when it comes to God. When I pray to God, He makes it happen for me. Whatever I pray for I know He will answer." Grace's voice had gone quieter in the still blackness, but the conviction of her words rang strong.

God provided Grace with a constant and unwavering sense that life contained some kind of meaning, even if it was unknown to her at the time, and a sense of purpose that she was carrying out His will. In this way, her life made sense: she was doing as God asked of her. Even her illness was construed in a religious context. Talk of demons and witches were common in the Gambia. I attended church with Grace and witnessed a three-hour sermon focused on how to spot witches, with the 'cure' being prayers and exorcisms. Grace and I witnessed one man who came to visit her pastor as we were sat there. The man was very unwell and had been found wandering around outside their home in the middle of the night. His wife claimed that he was largely unresponsive to her, and to me he seemed dazed and confused. I became somewhat alarmed when he stood in front of me where I was seated in a plastic chair at the back of the church and, staring at some undefined spot on my forehead, began to slowly strip his clothes off in front of me. Fortunately, his wife grabbed his arm and rebuttoned his top, imploring him to come and sit next to her as Grace gently pushed him away. When we saw the woman the following week at church, we could scarcely believe our eyes when she pointed to the same man. He was speaking animatedly to a group of friends, the dull, dazed look in his eyes gone. The pastor had banished the demon which had gripped him. This experience only reaffirmed Grace's belief in God who acted in a predictable way as He had always done – helping those who asked for it. None of her life experiences had shaken this core component of who she saw herself to be: a devoted follower of God. The fact that her family escaped the war safely, and she was reunited with her husband, only added to the belief that if one puts one's fate in God's hand and trusts Him completely, then He will ensure that one gets all that one needs.

Religion and Relationships

In addition to the existential component of well-being in my informants' narratives, many spoke about the relational aspect of religion and its impact on well-being. Recall the positions Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown. They maintained that the function of religion was to create and perpetuate the group through "the establishment of a moral community" through "the effectiveness of ritual" (Eller 2007:21). Within Christianity in particular, Faull (2012) remarks on the importance of social support within the congregation, and the effects of this on well-being. She notes that religious groups "provide the necessary support, nurturing and integration to help people," while pointing out that this benefit is particularly true for those who are single, old, retired or in poor health (Faull 2012:514).

While this does not describe the majority of my informants, the social disruption that they experienced, coupled with the isolation that asylum seekers in the UK felt, generally renders them a more 'vulnerable' group and are likely to benefit from the added social support of organized religion.

Relationships with God

One type of relationship that religion could foster was a direct relationship with God. God, as Christakis and Fowler (2010:242) note, "can actually be seen as part of the social network." Eller (2007) argues that the inclusion of God in a personal relationship is a near-ubiquitous occurrence among religions. "Humans see themselves in a religion context, as occupying a certain kind of relationship with being(s) and/or force(s) which we can rightly and only call a *social relationship,*" (Eller:2007:9; emphasis in original). Further to this, he situates them by noting, "*They are social, because they are part of society.*" Similar to the existential theme mentioned above, this personal relationship with God acted as typically guided one's behaviour and following it provided some sense of structure and meaning to life. Since all of my informants classified themselves as religious, many narratives spoke of direct communication between and individual and God. While prayer was most commonly used by my informants, and is generally seen as an effective tool to increase mood and reduce stress (Faull 2012:515), some did engage in more material exchanges. Sandra, for instance, took to writing letters to God. "I don't like praying that much," she admitted. Instead, "I usually write things in a diary – even on a piece of paper – and I'm like, 'Dear God'." She explained why she preferred this written method of communication, saying, "Sometimes I go back and see, 'Oh God, you did this for me, You did this.' Then I start being so excited again and I'm like, 'Okay, it's gonna be okay, it's gonna be alright, He's done this for you before so he's gonna do it again so don't worry'." This direct relationship with God was strengthened during the asylum process in the UK through the writing of these letters. She felt like she could speak to God directly and He would answer by getting her through difficult times.

Religion also strengthened relationships between family members. Recall Esther, the Nigerian woman with the pastor husband who spoke about how the asylum process and their unwavering faith brought them closer as a family. Grace, in the Gambia, similarly mentioned God as bringing the family physically together (by stating that God was the reason her husband could contact her when she fled with the children from Côte d'Ivoire to Mali, only to find out that he had gone on to the Gambia) and emotionally closer to one

another. One of the more interesting relationships that God was credited with strengthening was between Lorena, an Angolan woman living in the UK, and her deceased father.

Lorena's story included many stops on her journey from Angola to the UK. She had left her home country when she was 15 years old. She claimed that she was one of the brightest at her school so the principal chose her, along with two others, to be trained as nurses in Cuba. She trained over there for many years before returning home and eventually seeking asylum in the UK. She claimed that even though she went to church throughout this time, she did not take it seriously. Her years in the UK were largely spent living in "sin". "I been going sleeping around, chasing men, this and that, you know? I been fighting – all those kind of things. Jealousy." She freely admitted that this kind of life did not make her happy. The catalyst for change, however, came when her long deceased father appeared to her in a dream. "One night, my father appear in my dream. I say, 'This is real.' Because when he died…I wasn't there," she admitted in a low voice. "He used to love me so so much, so so much," she emphasised. "And you know, God say 'Honour your father, your mother, and you will live long life. When I saw that dream, Brianne, I say, 'I need to follow God.' I knew straight away," she said. The next morning, she sought out a nearby church and, after speaking with the pastor at the end of the service, she decided that she needed to be born again. She switched between saying her father urged her to return to God, and that God worked through her father to bring her back to her faith. This different version was not born out of confusion. Instead, it seemed that she fully believed both were correct. Given that God is recognised as the Heavenly Father, it does not seem out of place that the specific form He took was her earthly father. This dream, shrouded in symbolism, nevertheless made her feel closer to her deceased father and cemented her desire to be a born-again Christian.

Creating Bonds with Others

Though religion can, and often did, bring families together, the most commonly cited impact among my informants was the relationship between others that religion facilitated. More specifically, those from the same church were often described as friends and occasionally as family members. The benefit of having God as a node on a network, as suggested by Christakis and Fowler (2010), means that large groups of people, otherwise far apart in the network, now have a short path between one another. In this way, then, this specific social tie leaves each person only one degree removed from others. "People who felt a connection to God would have a way of feeling connected to others, because through God everyone is a 'friend of a friend.'" For my informants, these relationships were not

necessarily born out of religious ideology, but rather attendance at a religious institution allowed one to meet others while still sharing this same common "friend". The impact of these others could be significant. For instance, Mariam joined a local church in the UK and through it she was able to make friends with another young woman from the same country. These two became close friends, prompting the girl to offer Mariam the spare bedroom in her flat. When Mariam's asylum case was refused, the negative effects were buffered. Whereas previous refusals had left her homeless, now she had a warm, comfortable place to stay. Her friend turned housemate worked long hours, so I would often find Mariam with the other woman's debit card. Mariam was instructed to bring back ingredients for meals and urged to treat herself to a coffee or lunch. Clearly, this relationship had direct effects on Mariam's well-being, coping abilities and happiness as it allowed her to meet her basic needs and gave her enough flexibility and freedom to have what she felt was a "normal" life for a young woman living in Newcastle. Though it was not a particular characteristic of religion that fostered this relationship, it was through practicing religion in a specific place that allowed her to meet this other woman who would become such a close friend.

Others relied heavily on the relationships facilitated through church attendance. This seemed particularly true for the UK, where many of my informants had been refused at some point during their asylum journey and thus been faced with homelessness. Sandra, too, relied on a fellow church member for accommodation. Though she admitted that she didn't mean to end up in that specific church (she attended a few at random and among different denominations before deciding upon that one), she admitted that it played a huge part in her life now. Through it she had not only met a British woman with whom she lived (since she was a refused asylum seeker at the time of interview), but had also been urged by other members to join the choir, something she never saw herself as being capable of doing. The choir she sang with was mostly young men, and she recalled how she felt like a big sister to them. She remarked that she often gave them advice on love matters and laughed at how they would occasionally give her fashion advice, saying things like, "Sister Sandra, what are you thinking?" "That's family though! When they can tell you the truth it's good, although sometimes it's painful," she admitted with a chuckle. Diener et al (2011:1279) comment on the ability of religion to enhance well-being through relationships variables, remarking that "religion may be particularly beneficial for providing bonds based on common beliefs and shared activities." While they were all Christians and this undoubtedly fostered a sense of sameness and facilitated these relationships, the shared

activity of belonging to the choir solidified this and allowed them to see each other as a big sister and little brothers, recreating a sense of family.

The role of religious institutions

Religion can bring people together and act as an extended family, as the above examples highlight. This is particularly true for refugees and asylum seekers who have been separated from their biological families. In addition to easing the burdens of accommodation and related areas such as purchasing food, other informants commented on the more material benefits of religion. Diener et al (2011:1279) have remarked on this aspect of religion, noting that "If one belongs to a religion, other members may be likely to provide help in time of need, and regular religious meetings offer opportunities for social contact." In this way, then, religion can impact well-being and happiness by way of social support. Diener et al (2011:1288) further state, "It is plausible that religion provides supportive and integrative social structures that can, to some degree, dampen the harmful effects of difficult life circumstances." In this section, therefore, I will turn my attention away from how individuals interacted with other individuals in a religious place, the role of these religious institutions and their impact on my informants.

Out of the three fieldsites, Cameroon struck me as being somewhat different from the others. The UK and the Gambia had smaller numbers of refugees and the organisations I was with were working directly to benefit asylum seekers and refugees with much input from this target group. Cameroon seemed less structured. There were not, to my knowledge, organisations that worked this closely with refugees and asylum seekers to increase their livelihoods or access to opportunities. UNHCR was present, but it acted in an emergency capacity, meaning it focused its resources on the immediate issue of survival and, given the massive influx of refugees from neighbouring Central African Republic during the duration of my fieldwork, this was substantial and left little room for much else. Those I spoke with, who had been living in Cameroon for some time, turned to religion for help – though not strictly for the meaning that a belief in God brought to their lives.

In my experience, religious institutions took on the role that GAFNA and WERS provided in their respective context. All of those I spoke with were deeply religious, but their ties with a religion or religious community went beyond a relationship with God which helped to make life manageable or meaningful. Religion was a very valuable GRR in that it acted similarly to a large family. Certainly this is not a uniquely Cameroonian

experience. Other research, such as that conducted among displaced people in Angola, indicated that the role of churches included social, economic and political elements (Eyber 2016:206). In my own research, those in the UK and the Gambia might have received this type of support from their congregations, but nowhere was this as uniformly expressed as it was in Cameroon.

In the Gambia and the UK, religious communities tended to offer emotional support and engage in activities such as signposting, echoing the findings in Schweitzer et al's (2007) study that mentioned its centrality in providing social and informational support. This seemed especially true in the UK where services that one could access were many and varied. The type of support in Cameroon, however, tended to be more material in nature, echoing Borwick et al (2013:101) who note that religious membership was "also found to be sources of emotional and material support." This is not to say that this type of support never occurred in other settings. Grace, for instance, remarked how her congregation pitched in for supplies and helped cook her wedding day feast. But this assistance was for one single event. Refugees in Cameroon often received ongoing support from their religious communities.

Two individuals I spoke with relied on their congregations for housing. Marie was one of those who relied on her religious community for basic necessities. She came from the Congo with her husband and four children. Her husband was a doctor, and she was the only refugee I spoke with in Cameroon who had arrived by plane. Most had crossed into Cameroon on foot or been transported by car from a safe house in their home country by UNHCR. Once the family arrived in Cameroon, the husband left Marie and the children and began living with a Cameroonian wife with whom he now had a young child. He provided his previous family with only education costs for the children as he thought this was most important.

Marie was left to provide the rest. She had some healthcare training, but was unable to find a job due to what she saw as discriminatory hiring practices against foreigners. Therefore, she had little choice but to rely on the kindness of her congregation to gather the funds to pay the rent for her small, three room house and to purchase food for herself and her children. Without her connection to the religious community, she and her children would be both homeless and unable to eat.

Marie's case seemed typical of those in Cameroon with many relying on their religious community to assist with things like rent and food. One family even lived in a house owned by their local church in exchange for services such as cleaning and looking after the church. Perhaps the most interesting function of a religious community that I heard about involved a Chadian family. The husband, Hassan, had left his home thinking it was a day like any other; unfortunately, while away, fighting broke out and he had little choice but to flee in fear of his life. He entered into Cameroon at the north, traveling through cities such as Maroua and Garoua before running out of money in Ngaoundéré. Here, the Chadian community assisted him with finding a job. He worked for two years as a tailor in order to save enough money to make the journey to Yaoundé. Yaoundé was his destination because, though he had fled first, he had instructed his wife to take the children and meet him in Cameroon's capital. She had done as he instructed, but he was unable to make the journey in one go. They were thus left in an unenviable situation, with the wife and two daughters in one city and the husband in another.

What makes this situation all the more remarkable is that Hassan had informed his congregation that his wife and children were coming from Chad to Yaoundé. The Chadian community, which also acted as a Muslim congregation, used its network to bring the wife and daughters safely to the city and provide them with shelter, food and education costs for the girls until the husband could save enough money to reach them. Without the help of their socio-religious community, the wife would have struggled to survive in the new country and the couple would have had real difficulties in locating one another in such a large city. This religious affiliation could not have proven more useful in providing practical resources to cope with such a drastic upheaval in the family's life.

Social relationships, as I showed in Chapters 4 and 5, are not without their own set of potential problems. Anthropological studies have also, however, shown how religion can complicate existing social networks and obligations. For instance, many write about the prosperity gospel. This particular form of Pentecostal Christianity posits that small gifts given to God, often in the term of money, will then cause Him to reward the giver with vast blessings of health and wealth (Bialecki, Haynes and Robbins 2008:1149; Bowie 2006:22). By engaging in this exchange, then, it may offer a way for an individual to sever existing economic obligations to kin, rupturing the fabric of social life. Another way in which religion can potentially harm existing social relationships is through changing

widely accepted gender roles. In this case, youth need not await their turn to have influence while being subservient to their elders; instead, they can invoke the power bestowed upon them by God. Similarly, since the primary relationship is between a woman and God, she has a platform for critiquing her husband's actions by invoking proper pious behavior, rather than being submissive (Bialecki et al 2008:1148). These examples are not exhaustive of the ways in which religion can strain existing relationships and hierarchies, but it does show that religion does not unanimously strengthen all relationships. Though my informants did not narrate the issues that membership of a religion/religious congregation could bring to me explicitly (beyond a recognition that one must be careful to avoid becoming the subject of gossip), the possibility exists and I would caution against seeing religion as unproblematically good for well-being.

Religion and Temporality

A belief in God explained the current situation and oriented many towards the future. They felt that God had seen them safely through the situation from which they fled; He could not abandon them now while they were still suffering. As Koffi, an Ivorian man living in the Gambia told me, "When you're far from home, far from your families, other things, the closest person you could ever think of is God. So He keeps you moving, and the faith keeps you moving, and hope for future that makes you teacher. Like [Nelson] Mandela was saying, you can't take the hope of Africa from him. Africans always hope for future." While religion certainly played a role in my informants' hope and optimism for the future – and certainly the belief in an afterlife relates to a form of spiritual mobility – this theme was not specifically addressed by my informants. Practices such as regular attendance at church or mosque, coupled with prayers, could be seen as setting one on the path to achieving this spiritual mobility, but specific discussions of this nature did not occur. Rather, the focus was on the past mobility and the future, earth-bound mobility that was envisaged.

God's Will and Journeys in the UK

Many of my informants saw their flight and post-flight lives as being sanctioned by the divine. In this way, it was a journey that God had sent them on and, though the hardships were challenging, it was all part of God's plan. There was a reason that they had been forced to flee and had ended up where they did. Narratives around this theme mainly appeared in the stories of those living in the UK. Undoubtedly, this was a consequence of the specific hardships of living in the UK, particularly the asylum system and the fact that

many were refused asylum seekers. To make sense of this seemingly senseless situation, many simply stated that it was all part of God's plan. The present predicament was divinely sanctioned and, though one didn't understand the reason for it, one had to be patient and accept that this was God's will.

This idea has been mentioned previously in the thesis. Recall Esther and her family. Her husband had come from Nigeria to Newcastle to study at university, and their subsequent visa applications had centred around remaining in the UK after his studies. When these applications were refused, they took the advice of an immigration official and applied for asylum instead. Both Esther and her husband insisted that they knew they were meant to live in the UK because God had appeared in a dream and told her husband so. As Esther relayed to me, "I know definitely we will get our stay, definitely. I know, I feel it. In fact, God told my husband in a dream. He said, 'I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it for you.'" Her husband admitted that he would have gone back to Nigeria after the initial refusals, but he claimed that it was not what God wanted of him, so he remained and tried other avenues to remain. The patience they demonstrated while waiting for God to fulfil His promise shaped their actions in the present.

This notion that God brought them to their present situation to fulfil some future goal was most prominent in the UK. Several of my informants mentioned similar stories to that of Esther and her family. Recall Sandra's full statement which inspired the title of the thesis: "This journey is one of the most weirdest things I've ever – I don't know when it's gonna end, how it's gonna end, but – it's like most of the days is really, really good." She perceived her life, particularly her time as a migrant and asylum seeker, as a journey. This calls to mind the migrants in Bachelet's (2016) work who saw themselves as "adventurers," suggesting active involvement in their own lives and reacting against the idea of a passive migrant. Sandra similarly rejected this embedded idea of victimhood and sought to demonstrate that she was on a journey of self-discovery and improvement. She admitted, "I always think of my journey as a Christian," indicating that God was never far from her mind. She credited Him with not only the ability to cope, but trusted in His plans for her future.

Those who struggled to cope – or were 'coping ugly' as I described in Chapter 2 – similarly invoked God's will to make sense of their present situations. As mentioned in that chapter, Ella and Haroun both employed coping strategies that, in less extreme

circumstances, would be considered maladaptive. Both had described loss in the form of losing a part of themselves. Ella described her inability to feel excitement anymore and said that the effect of this loss was to prevent further disappointment in her current situation. She described this by stating, "Something's gone inside me." This 'coping ugly' response was still shaped by her faith. She was a devout Jehovah's Witness, and stated that "Reading the Bible really helps. So it's like praying and mediation mostly." As relayed in Chapter 2, Ella felt that she was in the UK for a reason, but for a reason that was unknown to her. "God maybe want me…. something is here for me," she said. "I don't know what God has in store for me, I just take it day by day." She trusted that God had a plan for her and that her current situation, though incomprehensible to her at the time, served a larger purpose.

Haroun had experienced similar disappointments and frustrations as a refused asylum seeker. In his case, he claimed that he lost the ability to care. This inability to care about anything protected him from the disappointment that was echoed in Ella's narrative. Though he did not invoke God's will so overtly, he sighed and said "So, I think, maybe this is my destiny?" His use of the word 'destiny', though not using God's will or plan, is linked to an idea that one's life is controlled by someone or something else, and given that he belongs to a religious institution, it is not a stretch to imagine that he also envisaged this destiny as being one put forth by God. He, too, remained uncertain about the future, but felt that his arrival in the country was inevitable, shaped by higher powers. He remained less optimistic than Ella, however, that something positive would materialise out of it.

All of these examples highlight how people spoke about and conceived their current situation through a religious lens. This religious focus allowed them to make sense of the incomprehensibility of their current situation and offered solace that someone (God) had a clear vision for this situation and that they were on the path to fulfilling a higher purpose. As Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995:5) note, "it is inconceivable to consider religion apart from suffering," as it provides a strong moral framework for their current hardships. Further to this, Miles (1965:25) remarks that "every tribulation is a medicine or blessing in disguise" which serves to inspire, prevent sins or test patience and faith. Many of those living in Newcastle, especially as refused asylum seekers, saw this as a tribulation with a higher purpose that they must endure to fulfil God's will for their future.

Gambian Futures

Those in the Gambia, by contrast, were less inclined to invoke God's will for their present situation, and instead used it to place their future hopes upon. Though some said

that they fled their countries alive and with family members 'by the grace of God', they did not speak of it as a journey or as part of God's will. In this way, then, it appeared to be more by God's favour rather than God's plan as a linear trajectory with a clear purpose. None of them described fleeing as part of God's plan, nor did they state it was His will that they ended up living in the Gambia. These factors were more happenstance and revolved around pragmatic decisions based on a safe, stable country for them and their families. Perhaps because none mentioned ending up in the Gambia as God's will, there was no pressing reason to stay. As mentioned in the last chapter, most of those in the Gambia could not envisage a future there and instead placed all of their hopes on one day leaving for Europe or North America.

When speaking about imagined futures, most of my informants in the Gambia looked outside of the nation's borders, and frequently outside of the continent. To imagine this future, given the limited opportunities for resettlement and the lack of income to achieve it by other means, many of my informants instead phrased it as being part of God's will or plan. This idea is not without precedent in the Gambia. In fact, Paolo Gaibazzi (2012) writes about the intersection of migration and religion in the country. He notes that the concentration "on religious imagination" is an "under-researched, and yet central, aspect of discourses of (im)mobility among Gambian youth," (Gaibazzi, 2012:122). He highlights the general attitude in the Gambia surrounding migration as being exemplified by the phrase "God's time is the best," and that by conceiving of migration as occurring in the time set by God, it "generates new hope and prompts young men to regain agency" (Gaibazzi 2012:122). This reference to God's time encourages those wishing to migrate (in this case, typically young men) to work hard, have patience and wait for the right time. Because migration is so uncertain and factors surrounding it are largely uncontrollable, the reaction to feeling overwhelmed by the process or by an unsuccessful migration attempt is a consolation that it was not God's time for them.

Many of my informants similarly invoked God's time as a way to imagine their futures. As with Gaibazzi's informants, the deferral to God's time did not mean that they were passively waiting for what they perceived to be a better future. Instead, by demonstrating faith and patience, they conferred a sense of morality and maturity on themselves which in turn prepared them for God's time. For Gaibazzi's informants, piety and working to support one's family demonstrated a "proper way to wait for migration, choosing pace over haste," demonstrating maturity and forbearance, which allowed them

to gain a sense of control in a largely uncontrollable process (Gaibazzi 2012:131). Furthermore, the young men told Gaibaizzi if one waits for God's time, this divinely sanctioned temporality, then one will be successful in emigrating and find prosperity and security where one settles. This notion that all will be well if one merely waits for God's time was echoed by my own informants. The idea of hardships after migration did not feature in any of the narratives.

One of the clearest examples of waiting for God's time comes from a young Congolese woman with whom I spoke. This woman, Tida, was devoutly Christian. When she was not taking classes, she could be found at her local church where she was very active. "You feel loved and precious in the church," she enthused to me. "It's the best place you can be, sometime you have a stress, you have a problem, you can go there, you can celebrate and God can answer your problem. I just feel liberated – feel free – in the hands of God," she told me. Her faith was unwavering, though it was not necessarily shared to the same degree by her mother. Her mother was less involved in the church and, from a previous discussion with her, felt less inclined to turn to religion to help her overcome her difficult situation. Tida did have a younger sister, however, who attended church as frequently. Her sister suffered from a terrible stutter that the mother attributed to an injury inflicted by a soldier just prior to flight. Her father was killed in DRC. The responsibility for her aging mother and her younger sister fell to Tida, and she saw education – with the help of God – as a way for the family to finally experience a sense of financial security. "I want to be a magistrate," she told me proudly. When I asked if she wanted to practice in the Gambia, she shrugged and said, "Just wherever I will feel free. Wherever God wants me to go. Be it in the UK, Congo… anywhere," she ended. She admitted that she would prefer the UK, but she was trusting that God would send her somewhere that would be the best for her and her family. In the meantime, she would work hard and ensure her grades were good so that when the time came, she could find work. In Tida's narrative, not only was God's time the best, but God's place was the best. She had absolute faith that if she was patient, worked hard and continued to practice her faith as a Christian, God would deliver a better life for her outside of the Gambia.

A mixture of God's time and God's place appeared in other's narratives as well. Gaibaizzi did not speak about a geographical component in his informant's narratives, though most revolved around going the 'Back Way' to Europe. My informants did not mention the 'Back Way' as an option when they imagined their futures in a different

country. They have already migrated once to safety, but now their focus was on a life in which they could support their families as well. Because resettlement was an option, they seemed more inclined to wait for God's time to make this into a reality. This waiting time did, however, involve activity in the present to prepare oneself. Lamin, a Senegalese sous chef at a popular resort restaurant, had been honing his skills for years. He had worked himself through the ranks at increasingly more upscale restaurants in the area under the tutelage of some of the best chefs in the Gambia. He boasted, "I work with many chefs: Canadian chefs, I work with Russian chef, I work with English chef, you know? Every chef give me something." The knowledge gained from these chefs and their styles of cooking gave him the confidence and skill set to look outside of the Gambia for opportunities. "Now my intention, if I have chance, going to try my chance," he explained. When I asked where, his response echoed that of Tida's. "France – anywhere," he admitted. "Wherever God decide. Maybe one day, maybe I go to my country when the war finish. Or I can travel. My intention is to travel. If you travel, you get more money," he added pragmatically. His ultimate goal was to one day to go France, but a more promising potential came from a co-worker, an executive chef restoring a hotel in Guinea-Bissau. This man had promised to take Lamin as his head chef as soon as it was built. In the meantime, he was learning from other chefs, studying recipes online and searching for career opportunities in a range of countries. "My life right now? It's positive. I start to see something in my life," he told me. This positivity came from his hard work and his desire to learn more. The future, however, lay in the hands of God who would decide where he ended up.

Conclusion

Religion, rather than being a separate domain of well-being for my informants, is instead intertwined with each one. This pervasiveness of religion and religious practices initially made it more difficult to include in a discussion of well-being. Through this chapter, I have demonstrated its interaction with each of the three main well-being themes mentioned thus far, and shown how it acts as a unifying force across domains to strengthen them. The religiosity of my informants across sites did not differ, though as the last section on temporality highlighted, it did change focus depending on which country one lived. The difference between the present focus in the UK and the future focus in the Gambia is undoubtedly complicated, with many factors playing a part. From the discussions with my informants, however, it appears that the incomprehensibility of the present situation (as

refused asylum seeker in the UK), and the unbearableness of the present situation continuing into the future (as a refugee in the Gambia), shaped these narrative differences. Nevertheless, religion remained a crucial aspect of my informants' lives that shaped and coloured their past experiences, everyday lives and future imaginings. It allowed them to find a sense of meaning and purpose, to interact with others and create new social bonds and to believe in a future where their dreams would come true. Well-being and happiness exist within and through religion in all domains of life.

Conclusion

I opened the thesis with a story about Sandra, a refused asylum seeker living in Newcastle. During our discussion, she told me that "most of the days is really really good." This phrase stayed in my mind and I devoted this thesis to demonstrating this good: a striving for well-being and the circumstances which fostered a sense of happiness among refugees and asylum seekers. While one of the dominant discourses surrounding refugees and asylum seekers contends that they must somehow be 'damaged' or 'traumatised' from their experiences (Tribe 2000:245), I join the growing chorus of voices who insist that a focus on trauma and hardship trivialises people's capacity to remain well or find moments of happiness in their lives. Jackson sums up this position nicely in his discussion of well-being among the Kuranko of Sierra Leone. He reflects on his field site and those he met, adding reflexively, "Though it is rare to meet people who are completely and permanently satisfied with their lot, it is rarer to meet people who expect nothing of life, abjectly accepting the status quo, never imagining that their situations could or should be socially, spiritually, or materially improved," (Jackson 2011:ix). Struggles and hardships did form a part of many individuals' stories, and I endeavoured to show that while this did form a portion of an individual's life, it did not do justice to the resilience and breadth of experience observed and narrated. As much of the research on refugees and well-being shows, "the majority of refugees successfully adapt to stress and trauma," (Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani 2012:88).

Perhaps the key to understanding this seeming contradiction of a helpless, victimised refugee and one who actively adapts to a situation in order to realise happiness and a sense of well-being is to look at it as "not just living '*the* good life' but about 'living *a* good life'," (White 2010:160; my emphasis). The good life is not a concrete category that one either has or lacks. This rephrasing to living a good life indicates a continual process which reflects experience more accurately. For many, particularly those who have gone through a difficult experience, this focus on living a good life merely reflects the desire to live a rather ordinary life. From the Palestinians embroiled in the deep-seated conflict with the Israeli government in Kelly's (2008) work, to the refused asylum seekers in immigration detention in Griffith's (2014) work to my own informants, a desire to live an ordinary life, one with both ups and downs, surrounded by family and friends and with

the means to support oneself, remains the ultimate goal. Jackson (2011:93), again in his discussion of the Kuranko of Sierra Leone, notes that

> What ultimately defines a person, and gives him or her presence, is a capacity to generate life and create enjoyment – bringing children into the world, making a farm, feeding one's family, making light of hard work with music and song, recounting stories, resolving disputes, sharing knowledge, having networks of kin and contacts on which one can rely for assistance, or simply being able to make things happen.

This sentence can be said to represent humanity as a whole and blurs the distinction between asylum seeker, citizen, poor or rich. Though this thesis focused specifically on asylum seekers and refugees, the themes contained in it are not exclusive to them. While it is true that they have been subjected to many hardships and possibly traumatic experiences, their strivings for an ordinary life, for a sense of purpose, for meaningful relationships and worthwhile, attainable goals can be said to represent humanity as a whole.

Chapter Contributions

One of the drivers of this thesis was its focus on multi-sited fieldwork. Multiple field sites provided me with the opportunity to understand more about the process of seeking asylum and the impacts of the 'where' in relation to well-being. I had posed some questions in the first chapter that it might be pertinent to return to now. Firstly, I had wondered if refugees and asylum seekers were happier or more optimistic because they had reached a Western country. While the situation was invariably complex, I was surprised at the overall levels of happiness among all groups. I do not feel that one group was happier than the other, though those in the Gambia did appear most optimistic. The reasons for this are undoubtedly many, but from the stories people told me, the possibility of resettlement existed while the hardships of life in the UK – particularly for those refused asylum – dampened many people's utopic dream of life in Western Europe. This conclusion feeds into the second question: Did the asylum process inhibit a sense of well-being in the UK? This is a resounding yes. The political climates of the UK, the Gambia and Cameroon were vastly different. As demonstrated in the thesis, the UK was becoming stricter while the Gambia was specifically welcoming. During my time there, Cameroon was accepting of refugees but simply overwhelmed. Stories of discrimination were similar, however, despite the different official discourses. The third question I posed was if it was easier to make friends in Africa. What I had not anticipated in this question was the motivation and desire to make friends. The motivation was most pronounced among those in the UK. They wanted British friends and cultivated these relationships as they largely saw the UK as their

home now rather than a transit country. Therefore, while I cannot say if it was easier or harder to make friends, the levels of motivation were different. Finally, I asked if the right to legal employment in the Gambia positively impacted how those living there felt about themselves and their future. The answer is that it did not. In fact, many felt more frustrated at having to take jobs they were untrained for and that did not match their previous qualifications or experience. The lack of opportunities in the Gambia furthered their resolve to move to another country, while the possibility of an education or future employment in any area of interest fuelled the optimism of those in the UK. These questions informed the following chapters and cut across them. I will now address each chapter in turn.

Chapter 1 of this thesis provided the context for the research in terms of laying out my field sites in more detail and explained my methods. This chapter also provided a strong rationale for the use of narratives in a study on happiness and well-being. These narratives formed the core of my research and provided the well-being themes contained throughout the rest of the thesis. Through observations and narratives, this thesis highlighted three distinct areas of well-being that translated to this process of 'living' as good a life as possible.

The first theme is existential well-being. The focus of the two chapters devoted to this theme revolved around how people strengthened their sense of well-being by narrating or speaking about the trauma(s) that characterised their search for asylum. Existential well-being refers to making life valuable, meaningful and worth living (Borwick et al 2013:96). The literature addressing these themes, however, covers a broad array of trauma survivors and is not necessarily unique to asylum seekers and refugees. Little research has been done on this area with these two general groups, addressing a gap in the literature.

Chapter 2 addressed the trauma in asylum seeker and refugee narratives by revolving around a concept that primarily permeates psychology: posttraumatic growth. This idea of growth is closely related to resilience but takes this notion a step further. Rather than exploring how people return to the base level of functioning they were at before a traumatic event, posttraumatic growth research looks at how, and in what areas, people surpass this baseline. While researchers in PTG are quick to point out that trauma and growth are not mutually exclusive, it is still important to focus on these areas of growth as

they have been historically overlooked. This chapter represented the internal process of making sense of a traumatic experience in order to live a good life.

Chapter 3 was also heavily internally focused. This chapter, however, focused on salutogenesis, a concept related to posttraumatic growth. Salutogenesis has, at its core, a sense of coherence – how a life is made meaningful, comprehensible and manageable. This chapter detailed how individuals engaged in this meaning-making process and found a new sense of purpose as a way to cope and engage actively in living a good life. To more fully understand this process, I detailed the three most common areas in which people find meaning: employment, education and religion. These three areas not only figured prominently in the literature on meaning-making and recovering from trauma, but featured in most of my informants' narratives. After coming to terms with traumatic experiences by finding meaning in them, and further creating a sense of meaning in life by finding a sense of purpose, the thesis turned to interpersonal themes relevant to living a good life.

The second well-being theme to emerge from my interviews was relational well-being. Relational well-being refers to the social relationships that individuals engage in and which have an impact on people's perceived happiness. White (2016:38) notes that "relational wellbeing presents an important emerging approach" in the study on well-being." Yet so important are interpersonal relationships that some even claim they should feature in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Biswas-Diener and Diener 2006). Discussions of these relationships featured prominently in my informants' narratives and, for the purposes of this thesis, were divided into two areas: personal communities and social networks.

Chapter 4 detailed the effect of close relationships (termed personal communities) such as family and friends on an individual's well-being. Most of the literature examining these relationships focuses on family relationships and the positivity they bring. This chapter offered a more nuanced look at the role of families on well-being, including how they may frustrate the realisation of a good life. In the second half, the importance of friends for well-being was brought to the fore. Though friendships are often overlooked in anthropology, I challenge this dismissal, and instead explored the various though relatively distinct roles that relationships with these two groups play in people's narratives.

Chapter 5 kept relational well-being as its theme but broadened its scope to include how relationships with wider communities, referred to as social networks, impacted upon well-being. This chapter gradually became wider in focus by first looking at relationships

with one's ethnic or national community before drawing on stories and literature looking at relationships with the broadly-defined 'refugee community', refugee organisations and, finally, with host communities. Much like Chapter 4, Chapter 5 demonstrated that engagements with these social networks was not unambiguously positive, and in fact a sense of positive well-being could come from severing these ties, particularly in the case of ethnic or national communities.

The third well-being theme was intimately linked with time. More specifically, these chapters focused on how a sense of time, and a progression of time, affected my informants' narratives of well-being. Little research to date by anthropologists has explored the way time is experienced among people, particularly when the groups involved are refugees or asylum seekers. The time discussed among my informants was split into two final chapters.

Chapter 6 focused on everyday happiness. This everydayness linked to ideas of the 'ordinary' and centred mainly around daily routines and the careful structuring of leisure time. Unlike the previous chapters, Chapter 6 described how my informants used their agency to exert control over their immediate surroundings and find pleasure and happiness in their lives. Given how little some had, controlling how one passed the time was one of the few constants available. Unfortunately, time could be seen as a challenge to living well and managing this challenge was crucial. This chapter remained largely action-orientated with informants describing what they *do* in their day-to-day lives.

Chapter 7 expanded on my informants' relationship with time. More specifically, this chapter was future-orientated. Given that refugees and asylum seekers as a category can be subsumed under the term migrant, this chapter brought movement to the fore. Mobility, in its various forms, was the reason for migration and remained the future goal for my informants. The chapter contrasted the initial mobility with the current sense of immobility felt among my informants, while the future held promises of a return to a mobile state of being. I ended with this chapter since it could, in a way, be seen as a springboard for beginning the cycle anew. Indeed, since my fieldwork, a few of my informants have already begun this cycle in the geographical sense, whether born of fear (fleeing for safety) or fortune (resettlement).

Chapter 8, the final chapter, focused on the role of religion in my informants' lives. Religion formed a component of each of the previous three discussions and the purpose of

this chapter was to show in what ways religion impacted on well-being. By complicating the neatness of the three domains I had outlined thus far, it served to strengthen them by showing how important each domain was while highlighting how certain sub-themes (in this case religion) linked them to each other. Religion cannot be separated from the larger aspects of daily life and this chapter demonstrated that.

Limitations

The generalisability of my findings, though not their validity, was limited by my specific informants. My focus on those able to communicate in English could have wider implications. For instance, perhaps they represented the most educated, and their level of education coupled with their competency in English may have made it easier to integrate into the English-speaking host countries. While I attempted to engage with as wide a variety of informants as possible, it may be that those I interviewed or spoke with at each of the organisations' office were in fact happier or had adjusted more successfully to their current situation. Furthermore, it could be that those who accessed the services offered by GAFNA and WERS were in a better position physically and emotionally, and this skewed the well-being domains I mentioned in this thesis. I think this scenario is highly unlikely in the Gambia as GAFNA worked closely with the government and served as the main point of contact for refugees. Though they were not responsible for issuing refugee identification cards, they were largely responsible for the other matters affecting refugees such as schooling fees and livelihood grants. It is more likely that those who self-selected to attend WERS, a small charity in the area unaffiliated with any governmental agency, could be a non-representative sample of refugees and asylum seekers in the North East. Perhaps more interviews in the case of the Gambia, or working with other organisations in the area in the case of WERS, would provide a stronger basis for this research.

Methodological concerns that affected my research process largely stem from the sources on which I based my research. In particular, I borrow heavily from psychology and specifically from the positive psychology movement. This practice is not without precedent. In fact, many anthropologists and psychologists espouse the benefits of sharing concepts and findings across disciplines (Fish 2000; Greenfield 2000). The sharing of concepts and methodologies can be seen in the names of subfields in the two disciplines: psychological anthropology, cognitive anthropology, cultural psychology and cross-cultural psychology. These different subfields have been proliferating since the 1950s (Strauss 2015; Fish 2000), though ideas of this nature can be seen in the early twentieth

century, most notably among those in culture and personality studies such as Margaret Mead (Strauss 2015:359). My research can be said to fit most closely within psychological anthropology. Psychological anthropologists "typically employ 'person-centered' methods, that is, ones that attend to individuals' thoughts, feelings and motivation" while drawing from "the anthropological tool kit, including participant observation and qualitative interviews," (Strauss 2015:359). Still, despite these precedents, work between anthropology and psychology is not without its potential issues.

Fish is a clinical psychologist married to an anthropologist. As such, he considers himself aware of potential benefits of the two fields working together as well as the current barriers preventing them doing so. He describes psychology as "inherently ethnocentric," and claims that "psychologists as a group are unaware of how small and unrepresentative of human variability is the range of behavior that constitutes American culture," (Fish 2000:552; 555). Relying on ethnocentric assumptions, largely produced in controlled environments among white, middle-class Americans, casts doubts on the cross-cultural applicability of many psychological concepts. Fish argues that this methodological basis can lead to researchers finding exactly what they predict because of the artificiality of the environment. He calls for a more anthropologically sensitive approach as this will help avoid the previously ethnocentric approach. Criticism of psychological experiments largely being tested undergraduate students primarily in the United States or Western Europe is not new, though more recent work, including the work I have mentioned previously in this thesis that work with refugees and/or in Africa, is starting to change this norm. Still, as Fish and Greenfields' calls show, the two disciplines can do more to work together. It is my hope that my research can contribute meaningfully to both disciplines, though it is firmly grounded in anthropological methodologies.

Thesis Contributions and Future Directions

This thesis shows the contributions of various disciplines in understanding refugee experiences. provides valuable insight into a variety of disciplines. The focus on well-being and happiness remain understudied from an anthropological and refugee studies perspective. As David Schneider once remarked, "One of the fundamental fantasies of anthropology is that somewhere there must be a life really worth living," (Schneider in Robbins 2013:456). Instead of focusing on the happiest of people, I was more concerned with how people make life worth living by creating a slice of their own happiness when the most of the time they are spoken about only in negative terms: dispirited, dejected,

hopeless, broken. Through the stories and interactions with my informants, I showed how this fantasy of living a good life propelled them not only to be resilient in the face of trauma, but to experience happiness and fulfil a sense of well-being both because of, and despite, the trauma.

Sub-themes in the chapters themselves also contribute to gaps in the literature. For instance, anthropologists have thus far remained distanced from more positive psychology concepts such as posttraumatic growth and salutogenesis. I contend that the two disciplines have much to learn and share with one another. Other areas such as the anthropology of friendship, the anthropology of leisure studies and the anthropology of time and futurity have not only contributed to my own knowledge in producing this thesis, but could benefit from its contents. Well-being, happiness and refugee studies remain wonderfully interdisciplinary. Studies cover nearly all aspects of an individual's life, bringing together notions of health, wealth, relationships and agency to paint a more holistic picture of life's experiences and how they are perceived. My contributions have a similar characteristic.

The methodological contributions of this thesis should not be overlooked. Qualitative methods, such as narratives, remain underused in well-being and happiness stories. While quantitative methods remain important for analysations and generalisations about a large group of people, the human dimension is lost. Qualitative methods bring the humanity back into well-being studies and help to answer the subjective 'Why?' that often gets lost in quantitative studies. The two complement each other, and both have an important role to play.

The future directions for this thesis are manifold. Each of the key themes – or even sub-themes – would benefit from further in-depth studies. In particular, few of these themes have been studied outside of a Western context. Well-being and happiness studies rarely focus on the African continent, with West Africa being largely overlooked. My thesis certainly contributes to this area, demonstrating how forced migration impacts on well-being and how happiness is reconstructed and striven for among African refugees and among those in a West African country more specifically. Refugees originating from and/or still living in this area receive negligible attention, with research on the more positive aspects of experience virtually non-existent. More engagement with African well-being and happiness, particularly given the findings in the World Happiness Report (2017) about the high levels of optimism on the continent, is very much needed.

In addition, with the numbers of refugees rising worldwide, it is crucial to engage with refugees and refugee organisations at a local level. It is even more important to engage with those refugees and asylum seekers living in urban areas outside of a camp situation, as they often remain invisible and are therefore less likely to receive any help. Of my three locations for field research, I do believe that the Gambia has initiated a positive relationship with urban refugees which promises to continue, with SMBC Gambia, an online news source, quoting the Homeland Security Minister Mai Ahmad Fatty as saying "In the Gambia, refugees will be cherished, loved and respected. You will find compassion and a government policy that will make it easier for you to settle."[25] The model GAFNA uses, with refugee leaders for each of the ethnic groups acting as point of contact and disseminating information to the urban refugees, with Community Development Assistants assigned to rural villages with refugees, has much potential.

Updates

Since fieldwork, only a few of those I met have experienced any discernible change in their circumstances. In the UK, one man, Hagos, sent me an excited message telling me that he had been granted refugee status. He has since asked me to look over the personal essay he wrote to apply to a local university so he could resume his profession as a nurse. Meanwhile in the UK, Abigail's nightmare was realised when she was forcibly deported, along with her children, back to her home country in West Africa. Many tears were shed at WERS over this injustice, and I have not heard from her since. Among those in the Gambia, Eleanor contacted me after several months to tell me that her dreams had come true: she has been resettled in Ottawa, Canada. She proudly told me that she had her own apartment now and did not have to sleep on the couch or floor of a friend's place. Her body was finally feeling better thanks to proper medication, and she hoped her mind would follow suit when she began her therapy. Another friend, Koffi, informed me that due to the instability in the Gambia following the December 2016 elections, he and his family had fled in fear of their lives once again. One of my closest Gambian friends who I spent much time with has started his own asylum-seeking journey by following the treacherous 'Back Way' to Italy. His asylum claim was refused yet he remains, convinced more opportunities lie there than in his home country because he has heard of a few success stories. To use Michael Jackson's terminology, the sweetest experiences for some are forever tainted by the hardest of others. The best laid plans remained unrealised for most of my informants.

[25] https://gambia.smbcgo.com/2017/06/24/gambia-promises-safe-haven-refugees/

Final Thoughts

People's life stories and overall sense of living well or badly are not a product of a single experience. A person's identity of seeking asylum does not mean that they are only a refugee, comparable to all others who have fled their country and filed for asylum. Yet it is hard to break out of the generalisations and to see those in that situation as anything other than that single experience. I endeavoured to paint a nuanced picture of those defined as 'refugees' or 'asylum seekers', showing the good and bad, happiness and sorrow. Arguably, I focused more on 'the good', to borrow Robbins's (2013) terminology, as I felt that this area was vastly underrepresented in the literature. Though I compared those in the UK with those in the Gambia, I do not see them as opposed to one another, but rather as parts of a whole. I do not believe that the two groups were very different, nor do I think that they are very different from those of the host communities. Differences, where they did occur, were the result of external factors – such as political climate and financial situations – rather than the result of internal ones. In the end, I was struck by the ordinariness of those I spoke with. Most people are trying to create meaning in their lives and find a purpose; form worthwhile relationships with others; and enjoy what they have and dream of what's to come. Most people are striving to make their lives, and the lives of their loved ones, full of hope and happiness. They are making as many days as possible really, really good.

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