Refugees in higher education : debate, discourse and practice

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REFUGEES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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REFUGEES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: DEBATE, DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Acknowledgments

We dedicate this book to the many refugee students who we have worked with over the years, and who have invariably influenced our practice, research and advocacy. We have seen what meaningful access to higher education (with support and care) can do to elevate a person's sense of what is possible, and how they can rebuild some of the resources and opportunities lost through forced displacement. We have often heard our students express enormous gratitude for the opportunity to study, despite the impediments that universities inadvertently impose through inflexible, unresponsive, and punitive structures, systems and practices. We recognise that these students seldom get to speak about their educational experiences into powerful spaces like this book, and when rare opportunities to share the higher education experiences of refugee students are opened, these often trumpet the resilient *individual*, thus ignoring the *many* refugee students engaged in higher education. This book is a testament to all those students.

We would also like to thank Aaliyah, Andy and Sadiya whose stories appear in this book. In addition, we express our immense gratitude to our very patient families, and offer heart-warming thanks to Evonne Irwin, Jackie Tuck and Asher Hirsch for their intellectual support with the writing of this book, as well as those other scholars and practitioners working to open up higher education spaces to refugees in the UK, Australia and elsewhere.

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Professor **Jacqueline Stevenson** is Professor of Education Research and Head of Research in the Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University. She is a sociologist of education with a particular interest in policy and practice relating to equity and diversity in higher education (HE), widening participation (WP), access and student success, pedagogic diversity and the stratification and marketisation of HE. Key areas of interest are the social and academic experiences of religious students, Black and Minority ethnic students' degree attainment and success, and policy and practice relating to the access of refugees and asylum seekers to HE. She draws on the theoretical lenses of resilience, belonging, mattering, time, temporality and future selves. Her research is primarily qualitative, using biography, narrative inquiry and life history. Jacqueline co-convenes the Society for Research into Higher Education's Access and Widening Participation Network and is a member of the Steering committee of the Higher Education Race Action Group. Her recent edited books include *Evaluating Equity and Widening Participation in Higher Education, Religion and Higher Education*, and *Possible Selves and Higher Education: New Interdisciplinary Insights.* Jacqueline was previously Professor of Higher Education at Leeds Beckett University.

Dr **Sally Baker** is a Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences and the education 'focal point' for the Forced Migration Research Network at The University of New South Wales. Sally's teaching and research interests centre on language, literacies, transition and equity in higher education, particularly with regard to culturally and linguistically diverse students, and refugee students in particular. As a sociologist of higher education, Sally works with the Academic Literacies conceptual and methodological framework, seeking to develop rich, contextualised pictures of students' experiences, and to expose the discourses, logics and power of institutions to open and constrain opportunities to particular groups of students. As a practitioner–teacher with 15 years' experience of working with refugees, Sally's experiences in this field have led her to be a passionate advocate for social justice and language/literacies praxis, and she is the co-chair of the national Refugee Education Special Interest Group (supported by the Refugee Council of Australia). This SIG is designed to encompass all the stakeholders involved in settlement and support of refugees to help close the information and practice gaps between these groups and work to share good practice, research, and to advocate for better imaginaries for these students (http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/our-work/educationsigmedia/).

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In this introductory chapter, we discuss the realities, histories and geographies of forced migration, as well as the importance of higher education (HE) to refugees, in order to contextualise the subsequent chapters. The first part of the chapter positions the book against the contemporary global migration context and foregrounds the importance of, and right to, education for people from refugee backgrounds. It also scopes how recent global missions, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (2015–2030), have opened up possibilities for transforming HE opportunities for refugees. We also clarify the differences in the humanitarian programmes and practices of the UK and Australia, including discussion of how these variations impact on the capacity to access and participate in HE in each country. The second part of the chapter offers our rationale for writing this book, and how our research interests, teaching and advocacy practices and methodologies have influenced our work and our engagement in this field. In the third part of this chapter, we outline how participation in HE (or non-participation) can have a significant impact on the employment prospects of refugees and asylum seekers (when the latter are permitted to work). The chapter ends with brief synopses of the succeeding chapters.

1.1. Global Migration and Higher Education in Times of Super-precarity

This book is written at a time of unprecedented forced displacement. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that in 2016 over 65 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to the effects of protracted conflict, persecutions, political instability, and human rights violations. Of these people, 22.5 million have been given refugee status, with millions awaiting assessment, and 10 million are currently stateless. More than half of the world's displaced people in 2017 come from three 'refugee-producing' countries: South Sudan, Afghanistan and Syria, and over 4 million have lived in exile or in situations of protracted displacement for over 20 years (UNHCR, 2018a). In 2016, however, less than 200,000 people, globally, were resettled by those 37 countries who are signatories to the Refugee Convention, which compares unfavourably with the two million new asylum claims that were processed in the same year (UNHCR, 2017a, 2017b). The situation for many asylum seekers is desperate; to date, nearly 20,000 people have drowned trying to make 'risky irregular journeys' to reach Europe by sea (UNHCR, 2017c), and despite the work of humanitarian agencies, many are living in situations of

extreme poverty (UNHCR, 2017d) in overcrowded camps, largely on the borders of, or in, countries least able to deal with their needs.

The impacts of the unprecedented number of people on the move have been felt across the world, most keenly by the countries who share borders with countries suffering extreme conflict, such as Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Uganda and Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2018a). That these neighbouring countries are mostly 'low- or middle-income' countries (UNHCR, 2017e) is not insignificant, and contributes to the endemic barriers to accessing education, as well as other forms of support and access to services. The UNHCR estimates that the educational engagement of refugees living in protracted displacement is significantly lower than global averages. For instance, although significant improvements in global education figures show that 91% of children of primary school age are engaged in schooling (UN, 2017a), only 61% of refugee children are in school. As children get older, the situation worsens: only 23% of secondary school age refugee youth are engaged in schooling, compared with 84% globally, and this number is even lower – at 9% – in low-income countries (UNHCR, 2016, 2017b). Without access to education, refugees are denied opportunities to develop the capacities, literacies, practices and knowledges needed to develop self-sufficiency and work toward self-actualisation.

The UNHCR, Filippo Grandi, powerfully articulates the many benefits that providing broader and more regular access to education can bring:

> The case for education is clear. Education gives refugee children, adolescents and youth a place of safety amid the tumult of displacement. It amounts to an investment in the future, creating and nurturing the scientists, philosophers, architects, poets, teachers, health care workers and public servants who will rebuild and revitalize their countries once peace is established and they are able to return. The education of these young refugees is crucial to the peaceful and sustainable development of the places that have welcomed them, and to the future prosperity of their own countries.
>
> UNHCR (2017b, p. 4)

When it comes to higher education (HE), however, the situation is far bleaker. The rights to tertiary education, regardless of migration status, was recognised by the Geneva Convention and enshrined in Article 22 (United Nations General Assembly, 1951, p. 24)

> The Contracting States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships.

Moreover, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, states that 'higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit' and that:

> Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace

Despite such assertion, however, the UNHCR estimates that only 1% of refugees now have access to tertiary education, compared with a global picture of 34% of people in 2016 and 36% in 2017 (UNHCR, 2016, 2017b).

To ameliorate this unprecedented disadvantage, the UNHCR has called for three modes of action: first, for host countries of refugee camps to plan for and include refugees in their national education systems; second, for an increase in funding from donor governments to support stronger linking of humanitarian and development planning; and third, for private businesses and individuals to get involved. This comprehensive three-part approach to supporting the growth of refugee education acknowledges its importance, recognises the complexity of enabling access, and positions the issue as everyone's business.

The case for facilitating access to HE is clear, seen in the international development agenda – the Sustainable Development Goals for 2015–2030 – set by the United Nations, with the fourth goal a stated global commitment to continue working on providing quality education for all (UNHCR, 2017f). A meeting of global education leaders at the World Education Forum (WEF) in South Korea in May 2015 explicitly acknowledged the need to attend to the educational needs of refugees. In the transcript from the WEF (known as the Incheon declaration), the following statement outlines UNESCO's commitment to including refugees and internally displaced persons in its definition of 'for all', and foregrounding refugee education in its work:

> Furthermore, we note with serious concern that, today, a large proportion of the world's out-of-school population lives in conflict-affected areas, and that crises, violence and attacks on education institutions, natural disasters and pandemics continue to disrupt education and development globally. We commit to developing more inclusive, responsive and resilient education systems to meet the needs of children, youth and adults in these contexts, including internally displaced persons and refugees.
>
> Paragraph 11 of the 'Incheon Declaration' (UNESCO, 2015)

A key supportive framework is currently being developed which can facilitate the provision of quality education to people from refugee backgrounds in

situations of second country asylum. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which resulted from a meeting of 193 countries in 2015, has prompted the development of a Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). The four key objectives of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework are to *ease pressures on host countries*; *enhance refugee self-reliance*; *expand third-country solutions*; and *support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity*. These four objectives clearly intersect and support/are supported by the need for greater access to HE. First, it is important to briefly note the pressures that host countries face, such as the financial, resource and human costs of hosting large numbers of people on a quasi-temporary basis. The GCR is intended to facilitate the sharing of responsibility for, and payment of, these costs. HE is one element that third countries can contribute – either through providing financial support, through programmes that cross national borders and through providing expertise to help establish new programmes and collaborations (see Chapter 9). Second, participation in HE studies offers many benefits to individual students, such as the development of new knowledge, practices, skills and understandings, and can support the development of increased present and future self-reliance. In addition to the benefits for the student, there are shared advantages for family and the wider community in terms of sharing knowledge, role modelling and offering hope to others. Finally, increased participation in HE can offer refugees the opportunity to develop knowledges, skills and practices that can be used to help rebuild their home countries: 'When refugees gain access to education and labour markets, they can build their skills and become self-reliant, contributing to local economies and fueling the development of the communities hosting them' (UNHCR, 2017e).

For refugees offered permanent protection visas to settlement countries like the UK, Australia, Canada and America, provision is offered with regard to access to public education (for children) and some form of (ever-decreasing) English language tuition (for adults).[1] However, the opportunities to participate in HE are largely dependent on the receptiveness of the HE system of each country. Access to HE in the UK and Australia is possible for people with permanent protection visas, as they have access to the same civil rights as citizens, including access to HE as 'home's students (therefore, not full-fee-paying places reserved for international students) and HE loan schemes. However, as with many other national contexts, there are limitations to this access and what it actually means in terms of participation in HE.

This book, therefore, offers a critical discussion of the discourses that shape debates about students from refugee backgrounds accessing university studies in settlement contexts, and the practices that both open and constrain opportunities for their meaningful engagement in HE. Through our research and practice in the broad field of refugee education, we have observed many systemic and

[1]See Loo, Sreitweiser and Jeong (2018) for an overview of higher education responses in Canada, the USA, Sweden and France.

structural barriers to students' participation in HE. For instance, due to the arguably archaic systems and siloes that exist between educational levels and between institutions, it is difficult to track any student's educational journeys; however, this is especially the case for students who are new to Western education systems, and who may already have studied in their home countries. Moreover, given the reliance on self-disclosure of visa status, and the categorisation of refugees as domestic students (as opposed to full-fee paying international students), it is impossible to offer accurate numbers of students from refugee backgrounds currently studying or who have studied in HE in England or Australia – the contexts of this book. In addition, even when the numbers are recorded, this information rarely passes to front-line educators (tutors, lecturers or support staff) unless the student discloses his/her status – which many chose not to do. This lack of clarity is one of the many challenges that hinder access, participation and success for students from refugee backgrounds, as well as the people who work with them in HE.

At the same time as we have observed an increase in scholarly interest in the educational experiences of students from refugee backgrounds within settlement countries and contexts, we have also seen a surge in anti-migration and anti-Islam rhetoric in political and media spheres in these countries. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, the discoursal representations of both refugees and asylum seekers has been increasingly politicised in campaigns fought on immigration and national identity. The increasingly hostile reception of people seeking asylum in both the UK and Australia, for example, aligns with the continuing creep of neoliberal, competitive logics throughout both public services and HE. This creates market conditions and competition, which in turn justifies the erosion of spending on public services. The tightness in these systems plays out in harmful ways, such as increased casualisation of the workforce (leading to job insecurity and financial concerns); competitive environments; and diminished and precarious funding streams for jobs and projects. This tightness, in turn, creates the perfect conditions for the rise of self-protectionist perceptions and practices ('we are full', 'we don't have enough to share'). Against this toxic turn, it is perhaps unsurprising that debates around migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, have become more polarised and divisive.

1.2. Definitions of Forced Migration

Forced migration is a general term that refers to the movement of people '*who have been displaced by environmental disasters, conflict, famine, or large-scale development projects'* (UNHCR, 2016, n.p). It is distinguished from voluntary or economic migration by an initial absence of desire to leave the country of origin or place of residence. As the UNHCR (2016) notes, however, using the generic term 'forced migrant' to cover all those who have moved for such reasons '*shifts attention away from the specific needs of refugees and from the legal obligations the international community has agreed upon to address them'* (2016, n.p.). As the legal status accorded to each of these groups directly affects the forms of support

they are entitled to, keeping such distinctions is important. For this reason, throughout this book, we have distinguished between refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants.

Refugee: the definition of a refugee comes from the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Under the Convention (United Nations General Assembly, 1951, p. 153), a refugee is a person who, 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country'. Refugees are defined and protected in international law.

In addition, there are other regional agreements such as the 1968 Organization of African Unity (OUA), wherein which refugees are defined as any person compelled to leave their country 'owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country or origin or nationality' (OUA, 1969/1974, para. 1), and non-binding agreements including the 1984 Cartagena Declaration (para. III.3) in which the term refugee also includes those who flee their countries 'because their lives, security or freedom have been threatened by generalised violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order'.

Asylum seeker: the term 'asylum seeker' is used to describe someone who has lodged an application for protection but whose claim has not yet been finally decided. When all appeals have been exhausted, they may be referred to as 'refused' or 'failed' asylum seeker (Refugee Council, 2017; UNHCR, 2006).

Migrant/immigrant: the term 'migrant' is largely used to describe those who move countries purely for economic reasons (UNHCR, 2006). However, and more specifically, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2018, np.) defines a migrant as 'any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is. IOM concerns itself with migrants and migration-related issues and, in agreement with relevant States, with migrants who are in need of international migration services'. The term 'immigrant' is used to describe a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country, and the term 'illegal migrant/immigrant' as someone who has no legal rights to take up such permanent residence but is attempting to do so.

1.3. Language and Terminology

Across both our research and our practice, we have sought to remain alert to the ways in which, through our use of language, we might make assumptions about people or categorises them in particular ways. In addition, in Chapter 2, for example, we are critical of the ways in which language is pejoratively used to

describe refugees, and asylum seekers in particular. A consideration for us then has been how to describe those individual students from refugee backgrounds who become or seek to become students. One concern is that former refugees (particularly those who have now gained citizenship) may eschew the term refugee. Another is that (of course) many refugees think of themselves simply as students. Our initial use of the terms 'student from a refugee background' or 'refugee background students' proved both unwieldy and, as an acronym (SfRB or RBS), confusing. We have resorted to the term 'refugee student' throughout the book but recognise this is not wholly satisfactory. We also recognise that culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students and black and minority ethnic (BAME) students, who we refer to throughout this book, are highly disparate groups. Again, we recognise the problematic nature of using a reductionist term to describe a population that is highly diverse not just in terms of ethnic or racial background but also by dint of socioeconomic status, language, religion or gender, and where possible, we have disaggregated these groups to focus on specific aspects of disadvantage.

We have also referred to the notion of 'success' in HE within this book. In relation to national HE policy, 'being successful' in HE invariably means remaining on course and not leaving early, attaining a 'good' degree and gaining employment in a post-graduate role. However, whilst recognising these can be useful measures to establish equity and equitable outcomes for refugee students, we also have sought to refer to success in less reductionist terms throughout. This is in part because refugees may also regard HE as a place wherein they may regain all that they have lost through the trauma of forced migration, as well as the process of claiming asylum (Stevenson & Willott, 2007; Willott & Stevenson, 2013). Success for refugee students, therefore, might be conceptualised more broadly than the ways in which it is determined by policy-makers.

Finally, we have referred to 'discourse' throughout this book. Although we have not adopted the capitalisation, we in effect adopt Discourse with a capital 'D' – drawing on John Paul Gee's distinction between discourse (connected stretches of language) and Discourse, which is defined by Gee (1990, p. 143) as:

> a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'.

Gee goes on to note that Discourses are inherently ideological and define the standpoints from which people speak. We have thus used discourse to define our own ideological commitments as well as to critique discoursal standpoints, which we believe are pejorative (in relation to much of the media) or unhelpful (in relation to much HE policy and practice). In addition, where referring to the 'West' – or to discourse from the West – we are commenting on those attitudes, beliefs and perspectives (including those built on imperialism and colonialism)

which emanate from the UK and elsewhere in Europe, Australia and North America and which have shaped contemporary political systems, social structures and academic scholarship, amongst other areas.

Although, therefore, we write this book from perspectives informed by our practice, research and advocacy (see below), we recognise that we must also reflexively unpack the privilege we hold and the prescribed legitimacy of our voices, as enshrined in this book. We are two white, English-speaking, educated British women working as academics at global North universities (one in the UK, one in Australia). And we are writing this book to be part of the privileged space that the academic publishing world opens only to the few. We, therefore, recognise that we are both constituted by and constitutive of the entrenched politics of knowledge that circulates academic work, and which creates a dual punishment for our students: not only are we telling their stories, we are also writing into a space that many of our students are unlikely to access. This is common in the scholarly interest in refugee students; this literature is predominantly contributed by Western scholars, holding privileged academic positions and working from powerful institutions in the Global North, and it is written in English. The relative absence of scholars writing about access and equity in their own national contexts or in their own languages speaks to the powerful politics of knowledge that permeate academic publication practices and which privilege Western methodologies, knowledges, practices and voices. We acknowledge that this is also something that we are at risk of being complicit in and with our own work, and it is something that we are actively seeking to resist.

The driver, for us, in writing this book, however, comes from our frustration with those national policies and practice which continual position refugees and asylum seekers as the 'other', reinforced by media discourses, and perpetuated by the policies and practices of HE. In the next section, we outline the overlaps and distinctions in the responses of the settlement contexts of the UK and Australia with respect to forced migration, and the differential treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. We outline how policies enacted in each country have set up a two-tier system with regard to participation in civic life, and focus on how the bifurcated treatment of these people impacts on their access to and participation in HE.

1.4. Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the UK and Australia

In this section, we offer an overview of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK and Australia in relation to numbers claiming asylum, applications granted, entitlements and how national policy shapes experiences of seeking and finding refuge.

1.5. The UK

The UK has a history of migrants entering the country (and also being expelled from it), although episodes of migration were episodic and numbers remained small until post-World War II. The passing of the British Nationality Act of

1948, however, gave all Commonwealth citizens free entry into the country and numbers of migrants, largely from the West Indies as well as from India and Pakistan, came into the UK in the 1950s and 1960s. These new arrivals were not, however, subject to immigration control, so it is difficult to ascertain actual numbers. However, estimates suggest around 470,000 entered between January 1955 and June 1962 (Migration Watch, n.d., para 13.1). Between the 1951 and 1961 census, the numbers of people born overseas only increased by about 225,000; however, between the 1961 and 1971 censuses it increased by almost a million; between 1971 and 1981 it grew by about 100,000 and about 400,000 in the subsequent decade, but from 1991 to 2001, it increased again by over a million and from 2001 to 2011 by almost 3 million (Migration Watch, n.d.). Many of the more recent migrants are from the European Union, with an estimated 1.5 million workers having come to the UK from new EU ('Eastern European') member states alone in 2004–2010 (Sumption & Somerville, 2010). As a result of its migration history, the United Kingdom has the fifth largest number of migrants (in proportion to its overall population) at nearly 9 million (after the United States of America, Saudi Arabia, Germany and the Russian Federation) (UN, 2017b).

Immigration into the UK was one of the most important issues driving the debate over whether the UK should remain a member of the European Union or not. Much of the discourse around migration collated all types of migrants including asylum seekers who were positioned in much of the 'Brexit' debate as entering the UK in 'swarms' (see Chapter 2). The reality (UN, 2017b) is that the UK's rate of immigration is in line with the global average and net migration to the UK has been falling over the last decade due to the tightening up of immigration controls, with the most recent figures showing the largest fall since figures began

In addition, respite inaccurate and inflammatory reporting, the UK also takes in very few asylum seekers, receiving only 30,603 new applications in 2016 (House of Commons, 2017), which equates to just over 5% of all migrants arriving in the UK annually. In 2017, the number of applications for asylum in the UK, excluding dependants (26,350), was 14% lower than in 2016, (30,747) (Refugee Council, 2018a). Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children made 3,680 asylum applications in the year ending March 2017, a 9% increase compared to the previous year (3,389), representing 13% of all main applications for asylum (Home Office, 2017). In 2017, compared with 2016, there were significant increases in applications from those fleeing from Sudan and Vietnam and significant decreases in those from Iran and Afghanistan; Eritrea, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh have been in the top 10 asylum applicant producing countries in each of the last six years (Refugee Council, 2018a). Overall, the UK is home to less than 1% of the world's refugees (UNHCR, 2015).

In 2016, only 28% of people who applied for protection were granted it at initial decision (Refugee Council, 2018b). However, this initial decision-making remains poor: in 2016, the courts overturned Home Office decisions in 41% of asylum appeals (Home Office, 2017).

The UK also contributes to the UNHCR global resettlement programme through its Gateway Protection Programme (GPP). The programme offers a further route for up to 750 refugees to settle in the UK each year, separate as it is

from the standard procedure for claiming asylum. Applications for resettlement under GPP are made to the UNHCR, which refers them to the GPP. Of note, the number of refugees resettled in most years has been fewer than the permitted quota.

Since 2005, most people recognised as refugees are only given permission to stay in the UK for five years. Moreover, new guidance issued by the UK Home Office in early 2018 means that people who are granted refugee status will now have to undergo a 'safe return review' after five years. The review will assess whether refugees can be returned 'safely' to their home countries. This makes it difficult for refugees with indefinite to make concrete decisions about their future, including finding and sustaining work.

The situation for asylum seekers, however, is even worse. They are not allowed to claim benefits or work and must live in National Asylum Support Service (NASS) mandated housing. The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (which came into effect in April 2000) extended the powers of search and arrest, the detention of asylum seekers, and, amongst other areas, compulsory dispersal (Sales, 2002). Until the early 1990s, most asylum seekers and refugees settled in London and the South East of England, leading to significant and sustained pressure on local authorities in the South (Allsopp, Sigona, & Phillimore, 2014). From 2000, refugees and asylum seekers were therefore sent to parts of the country where social housing was available. For example, around 20% of asylum applicants in the UK were dispersed to the Yorkshire and Humber region between 2002 and 2008 (Lewis, Craig, Adamson, & Wilkinson, 2008). NASS or dispersal housing is invariably in areas of high deprivation, low employment and low educational attainment (Allsopp et al., 2014). Those waiting for their asylum claims to be decided receive £ 37.75 per week in cash (following the scrapping of a high unpopular voucher-only system). This is around 70% of what other individuals (e.g. UK citizens) are entitled to as part of their income support.

Those who have had their claim for asylum refused are given £ 35.39 per person. This is not given as cash. Instead, in 2009, the then Government introduced the Azure payment card to replace vouchers for people who have been refused asylum and are in receipt of Section 4 support. This is withdrawn if the individual does not take up the housing offered to them. Reynolds (2010) in their review of the Azure card system found that users were unable to travel to access essential services, including legal advice and medical care, and face increased social isolation. Moreover, 26% of Reynold's respondents stated that they were not able to purchase enough food to feed themselves and their dependents, with 40% unable to purchase food that meets their dietary, religious or cultural requirements. In addition, respondents believed that the payment card caused anxiety and distress and contributed to the stigmatisation of asylum seekers.

In addition, incidents of racism or other forms of discrimination, as well as violence, are (relatively) high amongst forced migrants (Asher Hirsch, 2017). Moreover, experiences of detention, insecurity in relation to their status and the threat of removal following an unsuccessful claim for asylum (Filges, Montgomery, & Kastrup, 2016) can all have profound effects on mental and physical health (The Forum, 2014). This can be worse for refugee women who,

globally, are more affected by violence than any other group (Freedman, 2016; Nobel Women's Initiative, 2016). In addition, the Refugee Council (2012) found that half the women involved in their Powerful Women's Project had mental health needs and over 20% had acute mental health problems. In addition, 70% had experienced violence in their country of origin or in the UK; 57% had experienced gender-based violence in their country of origin with 44% having been raped; and just under 30% had been tortured. The experiences of asylum-seeking women are compounded by the fact that women are more likely to have their claims for asylum rejected as there has been found to be a direct link between poverty/destitution and sexual violence (Myhill & Allan, 2002; Refugee Council, 2009).

Around half of all asylum seekers are also detained during the asylum process. Moreover, despite the Government's 2010 pledge to end child detention, more than 70 children were detained during 2016 (Refugee Council, 2018b). The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 has therefore according to Sales (2002, p. 463):

> created a new social category of 'asylum seeker', separating them both in policy and in popular discourse from recognized refugees. NASS operates on the presumption that the majority of asylum seekers are 'bogus' and 'undeserving', while the minority granted Convention status are the 'deserving'.

The granting of refugee status, therefore, has huge significance in relation to entitlements to benefits, housing and employment. Refugees are, for example, entitled to claim the same benefits as UK citizens, to work and to access HE. Whilst those who have Discretionary or Limited Leave to Remain (DLR) in the UK have always been entitled to do so, however, in 2012, a tightening of government regulations has meant that young people with DLR are no longer eligible to access student finance to fund their studies. In effect, this has barred most young refugees, including those who have grown up in England, from accessing university leaving them with a 10-year wait until they can obtain 'settled' status (such as indefinite leave to remain) and access student finance. In 2015, the children's charity Just For Kids Law[2] challenged this ruling in the UK Supreme Court.[3]

Even with settled status, refugees invariably remain impoverished and are amongst the poorest of all social groups (Allsopp et al., 2014), with women, in particular, more likely to be living in poverty (Bloch, 2004). They are also frequently isolated, in part because they will have had to leave their NASS accommodation once their claim for asylum has been granted, and may also be suffering from poor mental and physical health exacerbated by the isolation of

[2]https://www.justforkidslaw.org/about-us/
[3]See http://letuslearn.study/ and http://letuslearn.study/category/student-finance/

unemployment, and from the ongoing trauma of the asylum process (Robjant, Hassan, & Katona, 2009; Papadopoulos, Lees, Lay, & Gebrehiwot, 2004) including the trauma of loss, bereavement, forced migration, displacement, the migration process itself and struggles to integrate in to a new social milieu (The Forum, 2014; Jayaweera, 2010; Robjant et al., 2009; Papadopoulos et al., 2004; Sundquist, Bayard-Burfield, Johansson, L.M., & Johansson, 2000; Warfa et al., 2006). In addition, incidents of violence, racism and other forms of prejudice or discrimination are (relatively) high amongst forced migrants (Shirin Hirsch, 2017).

Refugees who arrive through one of the UK's resettlement process are (relatively) more fortunate as they are provided with accommodation and receive support to access services and find employment. These refugees arrive through a planned managed process involving the UN Refugee Agency, International Organisation for Migration and UK organisations including the Home Office. This is not available to those who have gone through the asylum process. Nonetheless, they are likely to be working in unskilled or low-status employment as outlined in the following text. Indeed, overall, the circumstances for the majority of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK are dire. As the review of evidence by Allsopp et al. (2014, p. 34) highlights:

> Enforced poverty and destitution is a central feature of UK asylum policy, as comprising poor housing and a reduced level of welfare benefits. Many asylum seekers and refugees have endured severe persecution, including rape, torture, multiple loss and denial of basic human rights: their poverty does nothing to alleviate the ongoing physical and mental after-effects.

For many refugees, therefore, gaining a HE qualification may offer the best chance to make a new life in a new country including moving out of poverty and destitution. Although a number of universities are increasingly looking to support or fund initiatives designed to facilitate refugees' access to HE, these are severely limited and available to only a small number of refugees (see Chapter 9). As a result:

> […] there remains a 'refugee gap' where refugees perform poorer than both citizens and other immigrant groups' in relation to gaining work commensurate with their skills and experience. (UNHCR, 2013, p. 11)

1.6. Australia

With its colonial heritage, Australia is a land of migrants, and it continues to be so with the 2016 Census data showing that 26% of Australian residents were born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2018). Relatedly, the majority of the population born in Australia report having Northern European

ancestry (62.5%), which contrasts markedly with the relatively tiny proportion of the population (2.8%) who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (ABS, 2018). However, despite its multicultural make-up, Australia is haunted by a sense of monocultural (Anglo-Celtic, White, English-speaking) supremacy, still visible in the persistent underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in civic and political life, and the imposition of monolingual, middle-class norms throughout Australian society (White, de Quadros, & Kelman, 2017). Although Australian (migrant) residents share the land with its Indigenous custodians – land where Aboriginal sovereignty was never ceded[4] – this has always been an uneasy imposition, enacted through cruelty and systemic marginalisation.

Reflecting geopolitical trends towards more conservative, protectionist politics, immigration in Australia has become a deeply politicised issue. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given its enduringly unequal relationship with its Indigenous communities, Australia has a complicated relationship with migration (O'Malley & Wade, 2017; van Kooy & Bowman, 2018). Lauded as 'the lucky country'[5], Australia's national anthem proudly proclaims that, 'For those who've come across the seas, we've boundless plains to share'. Although it has long been a destination for migrants and has been resettling refugees for nearly 200 years (Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA, 2012)), modern-day Australia has implemented a suite of migration policies that reflect its conflicted desire to open its doors, while also protecting its borders. Australia is the land of the fair go, as long as you are seen as an viable economic contributor, or wait your turn to be offered refuge ('a good refugee') and don't attempt to skip the queue ('a bad refugee'; see McAdams, 2013). As Due and Riggs (2009) succinctly argue, Australia's focus on 'procedural' rather than 'relational' views of forced migration 'allows Australia to be positioned largely outside the complex colonial histories of which it is an active part, and through which it may be suggested the process of forced migration is produced' (p. 56).

A recent report by the Australia Productivity Commission (2016) outlined the evolution of Australia's approach to immigration as:

> Australian governments have a long history of active immigration policies that have evolved substantially over time. From an emphasis on ethnicity, population growth, nation building and citizenship, the system has shifted to one geared primarily to

[4]The message about Aboriginal sovereignty never being ceded was reiterated in the recent Uluru Statement, created from the 2017 First Nations Constitutional Convention (Referendum Council, 2017).

[5]The phrase 'the lucky country' is taken from a same-titled book by Donald Horne (1964). However, Horne did not write about Australia in favourable terms, rather he wrote, 'Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second rate people who share its luck', which was a savage reference to the provincialism and limited horizons of its politicians of the time.

> meeting the needs of employers, through both the temporary and permanent immigration streams.
>
> Australia Productivity Commission (2016, p. 3)

The shift towards policies designed to meet the economic needs of the country is clearly reflected in the stratified migration pathways offered in the (uncapped) temporary and (capped) permanent immigration streams. As van Kooy and Bowman (2018) write:

> While managed intakes are driven by a neoliberal economic imperative for labour force and population renewal, there remains a persistent aversion to humanitarian immigration in general, and asylum seeker boats in particular.
>
> van Kooy & Bowman (2018, p. 12)

Despite its current hostile political position towards particular groups of migrants, Australia has a long history of generosity in its humanitarian programme. Since the end of World War II, Australia has welcomed over 870,000 refugees and humanitarian entrants as part of its commitment to the *1951 Refugee Convention.* At the time of writing, Australia has the third largest humanitarian programme, after the United States and Canada (UNHCR, 2017a). In 2017–2018, Australia's humanitarian scheme offered 16,250 places to people through both its offshore programme – where it issues humanitarian protection visas prior to entry in Australia – and its onshore programme, where people's asylum claims are processed after they have arrived in Australia (RCOA, 2017a). In addition, Australia has committed to increase the humanitarian intake to 18,750 in 2018–19 (with specific places allocated for Central American refugees), including 1000 places to be offered through the Community Support Program, whereby communities and businesses will be able to sponsor applications/support new arrivals (RCOA, 2017b).

However, despite its relatively strong record in offering safe haven and a pathway to resettlement for thousands of refugees, critics have lamented Australia's loss of compassion and humanity (van Kooy and Bowman, 2018; White, 2017), and the seemingly ubiquitous and 'relatively permanent' moral panic about migration and multiculturalism (Martin, 2015). The onshore programme, and its punitive policies and practices designed to be a deterrent for people seeking asylum, has been the subject of international condemnation (e.g. United Nations Human Rights Committee, 2017). Under the auspices of the imperative to 'turn back the boats'[6], bipartisan support between the two major political parties led to the establishment of two offshore detention centres in 2014 for people seeking asylum who attempted to reach Australia by sea. These centres are located on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea, and the island

[6]'Turn back the boats' refers to the policy of forced returns at sea for asylum seekers attempting to enter Australia by boat.

nation of Nauru, both of which are impoverished and underdeveloped countries, with critical infrastructure issues and high levels of poverty (The Borgen Project, 2016; The Economist, 2017). The Australian government has spent billions of dollars of public money[7] on these 'prison islands' since they were opened, and this investment has been underpinned by cruel and inhumane policies and practices (Amnesty International, 2016; Grewcock, 2017).

The people who arrived in Australian waters by boat after August 2012 but before the 'turn back' policy was reinstated in July 2013 were given temporary or bridging visas, and have been living in the Australian community or in community detention centres with varying levels of limited access to welfare and public services. Many of these people, referred to as the legacy caseload, are still waiting for their cases to be heard while being unable to participate in meaningful, future-oriented activity (such as education), causing significant and long-term damage to these people's mental health (Hartley & Fleay, 2014). When their cases are assessed, these people are offered the choice of two temporary visas (a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) that lasts three years or a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV), which lasts five years). Neither of these visas offer a pathway to permanency, meaning that these people will be locked out of civic life and denied the chance to belong fully to Australian society (until the policy changes). van Kooy and Bowman (2018) refer to this as 'manufactured precarity', a deliberate ploy by the Australian government 'to deter and prevent settlement of people seeking asylum [through] actively manufactur[ing] pervasive forms of precarity as a deliberate exclusionary tactic' (p. 12).

Australia's stratified immigration system, therefore, reflects its priorities and ideologies, privileging cosmopolitanism through its selection of temporary workers and foreign investors (economic migrants), while maintaining its humanitarian commitment through its offshore programme (for patient refugees who waited their turn), while enacting demonising and inhumane 'system-level deliberate exclusion' (White, 2017, p. 5) and the 'perpetual suspension of citizen rights' (Gerrard, 2016, 10) through its 'deterrence policies' for 'illegal' maritime arrivals (depicted as 'fake refugees' or impatient, queue jumpers; van Kooy & Bowman, 2018; Martin, 2015).

This stratification within the immigration systems impacts on the social services that a migrant to Australia can access, and this has particularly significant impacts on a person's capacity to access HE. Focusing on humanitarian entrants (as opposed to other migrant groups), the differential treatment of people arriving via the offshore and onshore programmes sets up a stark binary: people with permanent humanitarian visas (who entered Australia via the offshore programme) are offered immediate access to the full suite of welfare and social services, including immediate access to:

[7]The Australian government spent almost AUS $ 1.1 billion on 'regional processing' in 2016–2017 see https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick_Guides/Offshore#_Total_number_of

- public schooling;
- the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), which offers 510 hours of free English language tuition to support new arrivals' development up to 'functional English' with an additional 490 hours available to refugees through the AMEP Extend programme if needed; and
- Commonwealth Supported Places (government-subsidised HE fees – the same available to other 'domestic' students) and the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) so as to defer the fees of HE.

However, for the legacy caseload (hitherto, onshore asylum seekers) living in limbo in Australia, the situation is substantially different. As they are not permanent residents of Australia, people seeking asylum are locked out of many educational opportunities. While those who were under 18 when they arrived in Australia were given access to public schooling, they are denied access to some of the enabling structures available to permanent humanitarian visas holders. For example, people seeking asylum are excluded from the Federal Government programmes designed to assist students with financing tertiary study, such as HECS for university, or Vocational Educational and Training (VET) FEE-HELP. Moreover, they are ineligible for the Commonwealth Supported Places in HE courses, or concessional rates for VET courses. This means that people seeking asylum need to pay international student fees in order to access tertiary education opportunities. In addition, people seeking asylum were eligible for only 20 hours (or less) of AMEP tuition, as opposed to the 510 + hours offered to refugees. In a recent harsh policy development, people seeking asylum have had their access to their basic living allowance under the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) cut if they undertake a full-time course of education that lasts more than one year (RCOA, 2018b).

Just as in the UK, this treatment of people seeking asylum in Australia – the denial of rights, opportunities and access to meaningful opportunities while living in protracted insecure and unstable conditions – is known to cause significant harm to their mental and emotional health (Doolan, Bryant, Liddell, & Nickerson, 2017; Momartin et al., 2006; Nickerson, Steel, Bryant, Brooks, & Silove, 2011; Li, Liddell & Nickerson, 2016). To counter the punitive policy landscape that prevents people seeking asylum from accessing HE, several universities across Australia have implement fee-waiving 'scholarships' (Hartley, Baker, Hirsch, & Dunwoodie, 2018; Hirsch & Maylea, 2016; RCOA, 2018a; see Chapter 2 for further discussion). However, these opportunities are too few to support all the people seeking asylum in Australia interested in pursuing tertiary/further education (FE), and the cutting of payments through the SRSS mean that it is increasingly difficult for people seeking asylum to participate fully in their education while also working and worrying about their finances (among many other stressors). White (2017) examines the intentionally precarious conditions created by the Australian government for these people, drawing on Hannah Arendt's thesis that evil is banal; White argues that:

> Excluding all but the fortunate few, who receive charitable scholarships from higher education institutions, means that the

> trajectory for the majority of these students is predetermined. Destined to a precarious existence and limited economic security is a high price for individual young people to pay. And as the vast majority of them will eventually be processed and become Australian citizens, over a period of about 10 years, what will this mean for Australia in the longer term? This motivated group of capable students continues to be denied hope and the chance to envisage futures for themselves, for no discernible reason.
>
> White (2017, p. 10)

For many refugees, accessing HE is not just an end in its own right. Rather, for many, employment difficulties can act as a specific driver for participation in those forms of education which can be a route to better employment including regaining professional lives lost when they fled their countries of origin and compounded by the policies and practices of resettlement.

1.7. Refugees and (Un)employment

Finding employment in their new countries of settlement is widely recognised to be a primary concern for newly arrived refugees and people seeking asylum, and is known to be a significant contributor to 'successful' settlement[8] (Allsopp et al., 2014; RCOA, 2010; Smart, De Maio, Rioseco, & Edwards, 2017; Centre for Policy Development, 2017). However, refugee unemployment in Australia and the UK is well above the national average (Bloch, 2002a; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Evans & Murray, 2009; Hebbani & Preece, 2015; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2011). When refugees do find work, it is mostly low status, low-skilled and insecure (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Hugo, 2011), and this situation is more precarious for people seeking asylum if they have no work rights (see Fleay, Hartley, & Kenny, 2013). In their evaluation of the UK's GPP[9], for example, Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2011) found that only 3 of the 71 refugees they interviewed had secured employment 18 months post-arrival. All were men. Evans and Murray (2009), evaluating the GPP in Sheffield, Bolton, Hull and Rochdale found that after 18 months, despite sustained attempts to find work, less than half of the 53 men and 76 women in their study had been able to find any form of work with only a small number having found sustained employment.

To counter the boredom of unemployment, many refugees turn to unpaid voluntary work. In their research, Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2011) found that 10% of the refugees they interviewed had been involved in volunteering 6 months after arrival, rising to 13% at 12 months and 28% at 18 months. Of

[8]We note that the notion of 'successful settlement' is contentious.

[9]The GPP has been running since 2004 and is the UK quota refugee scheme providing assistance to refugees designated as especially vulnerable by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

those who are working, refugees are more likely than other groups to be on temporary contracts and/or being paid at minimum wage level (Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2011; Evans & Murray, 2009; Bloch, 2008; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006). This is not a UK-specific phenomenon; rather across all areas where research has been collated, including the UK, North America, Scandinavia and Australia there remains a 'refugee gap' where refugees are working at levels not commensurate with their skills or qualifications (UNHCR, 2013).

There are, of course, different patterns of employment between male and female refugees, between different ethnic groups and across different age groups. Platts-Fowler and Robinson's (2011) research with refugees from Iraq and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as Rohingya refugees from Burma, found that Iraqi men were more likely to be in paid employment than other groups in part because of their higher levels of English. In her research, Bloch (2002a) found that men are also more likely than women to be in paid employment, again because of English language proficiency, as well as previous educational attainment. In comparison, those aged in their 40s or older find it harder to find paid work, in part because they may be more established in their existing careers and do not wish to retrain (Bloch 2002b). Moreover, the priority for some refugees on arrival is to settle into their new social milieu and learn English rather than seek immediate employment (Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2011).

However, as Koyama (2015) argues, government-funded language programmes are often deliberately positioned as a panacea to three assumed risks (the risk that refugees will remain dependent on the state, the risk that refugees will take jobs from locals, the risk that refugees pose to national security). The kinds of language programmes offered thus have a relatively narrow focus on settlement activities (such as talking to a doctor or conversing with a public servant) and, instead, offer a firm push towards employment to help counter these risks by developing language proficiency that will lead to independence (and social cohesion and a sense of belonging), and by keeping refugees productive and busy. Koyama contends that in the American context, for example,

> Rapid job placement is valued over adequate training in English, and formal education, such as ESL courses, can limit refugees' availability for initial employment. Thus, refugees are often placed in entry-level and low-wage positions. Once secured in such positions, refugees delay their learning of English, which keeps them marginalized in American society.
>
> Koyama (2015, p. 618)

There are strong connections to be made here to both the UK and Australian contexts. Broadly speaking, those English language classes available to refugees are limited to focusing on settlement and employment, and do not necessarily offer language to people aspiring to HE (Koyama, 2015; Lenette, Baker and Hirsch, forthcoming). This is particularly challenging for refugees who arrive with HE qualifications and professional experience, and who desire to return to similar

positions that they had previously held (Correa-Velez, Barnett, & Gifford, 2015; Morrice, 2009, 2012, 2013; Willott & Stevenson, 2013). Indeed, once settled:

> Finding paid employment was an overriding and enduring concern for all the groups. Refugees wanted to give back to the society that had rescued them, and to provide for their families independently of state benefits. Refugees' expectations of the employment opportunities open to them, and their speed in finding work, far exceeded the reality. Those with qualifications and professional experience from outside the UK found that there were numerous barriers to taking up their former occupations.
>
> Evans & Murray (2009, p. 8)

Being unemployed, or working in low-paid, low-skilled jobs when they have previously engaged in professional or skilled careers can have significant consequences for refugees' mental health as has been evidenced in the UK (Willott & Stevenson, 2013) and globally (see, e.g., Beiser & Hou, 2001; Priebe, Giacco, & El-Nagib, 2016). In contrast, employment not only brings economic security but also a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Indeed for many refugees, as one refugee we interviewed in previous work stated:

> What is important isn't the choice of job and what you choose. It's the principle of working, of being able to contribute to the country, to support yourself. It's so humiliating. People thing you're just happy to have money from the government and not work. But its not so. You need to contribute something […] I felt reduced to nothing
>
> Female Iraqi refugee (reproduced from Stevenson & Willott, 2010, p. 194)

As a result, employment difficulties can act as a specific driver for participation in those forms of education, which can be a route to better employment (Stevenson & Willott, 2007; Willott & Stevenson, 2013). For many refugees, accessing HE in particular is a key goal as, and contrary to how refugees (and in particular asylum seekers) are frequently painted by the media as being 'unskilled' or 'unemployable' (ECRI, 2010; The Migration Observatory, 2013), around half of all refugees already hold a qualification on arrival in the UK (Bloch, 2002a; Daniel, Devine, Gillespie, Pendry, & Zurawan, 2010), with up to a quarter having an under- or post-graduate degree (Crawley & Crimes, 2009; Ipsos MORI, 2010). For these refugees, therefore, gaining or regaining educational qualifications offers a route to (re)establishing professional occupations, (re)securing employment commensurate with their qualification levels (Willott & Stevenson, 2013) or (re)establishing themselves in their new social environment (Stevenson, 2018; Morrice, 2009, 2013) at a level commensurate with their skills, their qualifications and their previous professional standing. As we have noted earlier, gaining or regaining educational qualifications also offers a means out of poverty.

For many refugees, 'cultural adaptation becomes one of the essential survival skills' (Campbell, 2000, p. 36). This is particularly true for professional refugees where the loss of professional status undermines self-worth, identity and sense of self (Stevenson & Willott, 2007). In our research with highly qualified refugees we found, however, that the immediate need to find work meant that dreams of HE often had to be shelved:

> I'm dreaming of continuing to have a university education. I would like to improve mu qualifications here. My husband is a teacher. We respect education very much. We like our child to study well and to prepare for classes. It is important for us. But for now we must work
>
> Female Sudanese refugee
> (reproduced from Stevenson & Willott, 2010, p. 195)

It is not only adult refugees who value the importance of education of course. For young asylum seekers:

> Education provides a normalising routine which can help displaced young people to deal with the hardships endured both in their country of origin and en route to the UK. Educational aspirations also allow young people to make sense of their new lives and help to justify the risk and sacrifice of leaving home. Many unaccompanied minors suffer from guilt at the fact that they now live in safety, whilst their families at home may still be at risk. Inability to contact families often exacerbates this anxiety. In this context, education acts as an investment and a reassurance that they are making good use of their safety and the better situation they now find themselves in
>
> Refugees Support Network (2012, pp. 6–7)

The importance of HE to refugees cannot, therefore, be underestimated and finding ways in which access can be better facilitated is an international, and national, imperative. The impetus for this book, therefore, came from our common interests – shared despite the significant distance that separates the UK and Australia – in issues relating to refugee students' experiences of seeking access to, and participating in, HE.

1.8. Why This Book and Why Now?

We have worked in spaces of refugee education for many years, and engaged in collective forms of advocacy, pushing for better institutional understandings of the needs of students who do not share the dominant language and cultural background of the academy. During this time, we have seen a growth in scholars writing in the academic literature about refugee education. However, we have not yet seen universities introduce the kinds of practices and supports argued for

in this same literature to respond to the bespoke needs of refugee students. Where there have been institutional initiatives these have invariably focused on access to HE of single refugees, rather than making multiple offers, or enabling sustained changes to be made to institutional policy and practice. There is also an absence of support available to those refugees who have been able to make the successful transition into HE as they are classed as 'home' students, despite sharing many of the needs of their international student peers. Instead, there are blockages at every level (international, national, regional and institutional) with regard to making the kinds of cultural and structural changes that are needed to make HE a viable and attractive option for the many, rather than a struggle for the few.

This book is, therefore, timely. It scopes out what is known, and what has been previously discussed about students from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds and HE. It also offers empirical accounts of the kinds of challenges that students can face – drawing on data collected from our research projects (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7) – illustrating our claims about how pervasive discourses, debates and practices can work to both support and deny refugee students' engagement in HE. Finally, it asks questions of how universities contribute to and resist dominant discourses relating to asylum, refuge, refugees and forced migration, and offers our thinking around the role HE *can* and *should* play in increasing the visibility of refugee students in the system, opening access to people from asylum-seeking backgrounds, and developing spaces for voice and ownership in both pedagogic and research interactions for, and with, refugees.

Before moving to Chapter 2, we consider it important to outline our individual biographies to explain we are and what we believe we bring to this book.

1.9. Personal Account: Jacqueline

I am a sociologist of education with 30 years' experience of working in the education sector, including in primary schools, in FE and HE, and in community development. Throughout this time, I have worked with both children and adults who have sought asylum in the UK. This has included teaching English to Vietnamese 'boat people', teaching classes of asylum seekers, and running HE access programmes for refugees. Most recently, I set up a refugee mentoring scheme at Sheffield Hallam University designed to link professionally qualified refugees to academics who can help them navigate both the UK HE system and understand how to access employment.

Across all of my work with refugees and asylum seekers, I have been repeatedly struck by the ways in which educationally policy and practice works, intentionally or not, to position refugees in particular as the 'other', even when, by dint of having gained refugee status, they have been declared as 'one of us'. This is even more pronounced for asylum seekers who, over the last decade, have become increasingly more excluded from tertiary education and employment.

For this reason, much of the focus of my research over the last decade has been rooted in a critical analysis of the origins, structures, and consequences of

educational inequalities, and in the sorts of policies and practices which might affect change. This has included research with students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds and, of course, with refugees, designed to illuminate those policies and practices which work to dis-able refugees, both in seeking to access HE and to be successful once there. Over the last 10 years, I have interviewed scores of refugees and have heard the same refrain from almost all of them – that the desire to gain a HE qualification can be rendered near unattainable by those sorts of policies and practice which are, in a neoliberal world, supposed to be ensuring that HE is accessible to all who have the potential to benefit from it.

Drawing on theoretical concepts of resilience, time and temporality, future 'possible selves', social and cultural capital, habitus and ethics, my research, therefore, focuses on the ways in which discourses of 'deficiency' are conceptualised; the recognition of alternative forms of cultural capital; theorisations of belonging and of student resilience; and, in particular, the ways in which refugees think about their futures. It is my aim with this research to try and shape both national and institutional policy and practice and initiate sustained structural change which will enhance opportunities for those who might need it most. This includes refugees who are seeking to regain previously lost lives and are doing so against a backdrop of growing hostility towards migrants, including those seeking asylum.

1.10. Personal Account: Sally

Working as an English language teacher to adults for 15 years has been a significant influence on my work as an academic teacher and researcher. Over these years, I have taught many different sorts of students in community settings, FE colleges and universities. However, most of my teaching has been with migrants who had relocated permanently to the UK or Australia. I have taught in two government-funded migration language programmes: in the UK as an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher under the *Skills for Life* regime[10], and in the Australian Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP) in Australia. Through teaching into the ESOL and AMEP programmes – which both serve the language development needs of newly arrived migrants – I have been engaged with refugee communities in my local areas for as long as I have been teaching.

Teaching English to highly diverse student groups who rarely share a common language requires confidence, flexibility and openness; it also demands empathy for the students' constant risk-taking: being careful to build confidence as the performative nature of public language production erodes motivation and provokes anxiety (as anyone who has attempted to learn a new language will know). With students from refugee backgrounds in particular, I have observed

[10]Skills for Life was launched in 2001 as the UK's national strategy in the UK for improving adult literacy and numeracy, and included English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

that the anxieties of learning a new language are further compounded by the busy tasks of settlement (attending meetings with case workers or employment providers, attending medical appointments, seeking suitable accommodation, trying to find and balance employment alongside studying, learning to swim). Moreover, I have seen how the cognitive and psychosocial impacts of their displacement journeys and their language and literacy knowledge of their other languages can impede their learning. I have watched my students doggedly persist with the challenges of learning new vocabulary, unfamiliar grammatical structures, and the script and strange orthography of English, all while trying to live their newly established lives in a new country.

Over the years, and following my observations and my own experiential learning, I have adapted my teaching practices to better support the individual needs of my students, particularly with people from refugee backgrounds who often require a quite different engagement than their fellow ESOL/AMEP students, who might be on a spouse or family visa. My experience as an English language teacher has significantly shaped my academic interests in arguing for collectively transforming Western educational systems through better recognition and embedding of multicultural and plurilingual approaches into our teaching repertoires. This is particularly necessary in HE.

In particular, I have observed three aspects of these education systems that pose challenges for students from refugee backgrounds, and which have informed my interest in writing this book: the perception of singular temporal orientations, the rigid institutional structures and the neutral, transferrable-conduit model of language and literacies in formal education systems.

These observations, and a growing sense of disquiet at my own complicity in these systems through my teaching practice and adherence to institutional norms, have informed my research interests, which sit at an intersection between language and literacies, equity, transition and cultural and linguistic diversity. Taking a conceptual and methodological approach informed by the Academic Literacies conceptual frame (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 2001), and applying a critical sociological analytic lens, my work explores the linguistic and cultural barriers and enablers that are at play in students' transitions and participation in HE. The longitudinal, ethnographic research I undertake privileges students' own perceptions of their practices in context and over durations that permit real-time tracking of their educational movements over time. Moreover, my work as the co-chair of the Refugee Education Special Interest Group (supported by the Refugee Council of Australia) allows me to channel my energy, experience and research interests into national-level advocacy.

1.11. Refugees in Higher Education: Debate, Discourse and Practice

In the remainder of this book, we offer a critical appraisal of the participation of students from refugee backgrounds in HE, exploring how global discourses about forced migration play out for students in terms of accessing, participating,

and succeeding in HE. We also explore the role of universities in the settlement of refugees as well as issues related to the participation of students from refugee backgrounds at three key levels. In particular, we examine the key debates relating to the rights and responsibilities, policies and practices of the HE sector in responding to forced migration in two countries of settlement: the UK and Australia. The two countries are chosen because they provide a useful contrast between two markedly different histories of migration/colonisation, and yet share similar political orientations and protectionist rhetoric with regard to refugees.

First, we scope the political context of forced migration to countries of settlement, offering an overview and critique of the rhetoric and discourses instantiated in public texts (in the form of political campaigning, policy and media reports). In particular, we explore how political and media rhetoric serve to create particular subjectivities of people seeking refuge (such as the 'worthy' refugee as opposed to the 'bogus' asylum seeker). Second, we explore how these global discourses frame and position the efforts of universities to open access to and support the participation of these students. We present three case studies with each one examining the experiences of a refugee student moving into and through HE. Through the presentation of these experiences, we explore how the themes of intolerance (racial, religious), systemic inflexibility and wider debates about the right to HE play out in the experiences of each student. Third, we draw on our critique of the political–policy–institutional contexts to ask questions of the role universities that universities play in the settlement of refugees, and how much support should be given to students to support their access into, and participation in HE. Our book concludes by drawing from our own research and from the arguments presented earlier in the book to offer a number of recommendations for developing alternative approaches for universities, teachers, advocates and refugee students including ways of thinking ethically, methodologically and theoretically which can help enable and facilitate access to and success in HE.