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Integration of Refugees Into the UK Labour Market:

A Case Study of Ethiopians in the UK

Tesfaye Mammo Gojjie

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Department of Economics

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To my late father

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ABSTRACT

Ethiopians have felt their presence in the UK mainly since 1990 when a large number of refugees from Ethiopia and Eastern Europe were admitted by the UK government at the time of dismantling of the communist bloc, to which Ethiopia and Eastern Europe belonged.

This thesis examines the opportunities, barriers, exclusionary practices and disadvantages Ethiopians face in the UK labour market, and how they are integrated into it. In order to achieve this, the study categorised the group into the 'unemployed', the '(hired) employed' and the 'self-employed' and investigates the needs, problems, aspirations and issues for each of these groups. The study approaches the issues using face-to-face interviews based on structured questionnaires; participant observation; focus group and key informants and investigates the relevant themes and variables from the refugees' perspectives.

According to the findings of this study, in addition to the challenges faced by non-political migrants, owing to a variety of pre-asylum, host country and policy factors, refugees also encounter unique challenges in their interaction with and endeavours to integrate into the host country labour market.

Ethiopian refugees are typical refugee groups. Like most refugees of other countries of origin they originate from the less developed part of the world facing, on arrival, a different host country system which is far from easy to integrate into. Whilst data used is those of Ethiopians, therefore, the findings of the study are intended to help give insights into the wider refugees and make inferences about their interaction with the UK labour market. In order to do so, the variables selected and explored are the most generic common attributes, needs, challenges and ambitions of refugees.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Personal insights and highlights of findings

I open with an account of my experience in Ethiopia and here in the UK. This account highlights how the interaction of different factors affect the life (with particular focus on employment) of a refugee from Ethiopia in the UK, and how this is applicable to refugees in general. This is followed by highlighting the overall themes and findings of the thesis.

I was born and grew up in Ethiopia, in a culture where people of various ethnic and religious backgrounds live together and mix with each other. My family background demonstrates this; my father is Oromo (the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia); my mother is Amhara, which is the second largest group; my wife is a Guraghe, the fourth largest ethnic group after the Tigreans. I have lived, studied and worked in London for several years and my children were born in Shepherds Bush, London. In addition, my Christian values influence how I conduct myself and how I interact with others. The combination of these and other factors have contributed to the creation of what I feel to be my identity.

Before arriving in the UK, I gained a degree in Economics from Addis Ababa University and had worked for approximately six years on EU and World Bank projects. In addition, I had taught at Addis Ababa University and had been employed as a part-time economic adviser for a company producing traffic safety equipment. Although Ethiopia is not an Anglophone country, English was the language of communication in my workplaces. From my employment I gained status, language ability and experience in interacting with various public and private sector institutions. In Ethiopia I had a good understanding of the labour market and reasonably good connections with employers.

....

Apart from a fortnight's stay in Japan, I had had no experience of living abroad before my arrival in the UK in 1994 as an asylum seeker. A few days after arriving in North London, I found myself in the midst of people from every ethnicity and background, but to me they were all foreigners. I always felt very lonely until I found myself with other Ethiopians.

When in Ethiopia I thought my English was excellent but living in London proved me wrong. I could not understand the cockney accents of young Londoners, or the speed at which they spoke. The only accent I could fully understand was formal 'Queen's English', as spoken on the television and written in the newspapers. In terms of communication, it was, and still is, a real learning process. What are polite expressions in Ethiopia are sometimes taken to be 'rude' here and vice versa. I grew up in a culture where, as a gesture of respect, I would not look a more senior person directly in the eyes. In the UK, if I do not do this I can be perceived as lacking confidence. I believe issues like these have influenced outcomes of job interviews during my stay in this country.

At the time, my overriding priority was to save some money and then to continue my education to Master's level. I needed to send some money to Ethiopia for my parents and young sisters, for whose survival I was solely responsible. Finding work was essential.

I met some Ethiopians and Eritreans working in a minicab firm near where I was living, and felt less lonely in their company. Almost all were young and single like me and we had many common interests and topics for discussion; employment and asylum issues being the main subjects.

The basis of our friendship were our shared origins and recent experience, in particular coming from Addis Ababa. Linguistic ties, a shared culture and values and the experience of becoming a refugee created strong bonds among us. Living as a refugee in an alien western country played a particular role in drawing us together. We discussed issues such as Ethiopian politics; the direction taken by the UK government's asylum policies; which

were the best firms of immigration solicitors; or how to find good jobs, accommodation, education, etc. Sharing the same Ethiopian ethnic background was also a good basis for friendship, as those from the same ethnic group tend to have a similar outlook on home country politics and a similar attitude towards systems in their host country. This impacted on efforts to find a job as information about (informal) work circulated within the specific ethnic groups. Being Ethiopian and speaking Amharic were, however, the most crucial foundations for building friendship, and through this for gaining knowledge about the UK labour market.

I learned how to find a job and what behaviours impress interviewers in London through contact with the cab firm and its Ethiopian/Eritrean employees. During this time I managed to fund my studies. I finished my Masters degree and I was a happy person in terms of achievement, especially when I compared myself with many refugees I knew. The next question was how to find professional employment, which I knew would not be easy.

There were various obstacles to finding a formal job. Through seeing the types of jobs other Ethiopians had, I convinced myself that well-paid professional jobs are not available to a refugee like myself. I lacked formal refugee status, British work experience, and networks with people in the world of work. In Ethiopia, as I was a university graduate, I had been allocated to professional roles by central government authorities, rather than gaining employment via interview. I did not know how to impress at a job interview in the UK context.

I decided to continue my studies to Ph.D. level and work part-time rather than finding full-time work. This decision, I realise, was influenced by my cultural background as an Ethiopian. I grew up in a family and cultural background where education is greatly valued and where the educated are more highly respected than the rich. Moreover before I came to the UK I was into professional career than business, so I had no experience in the latter. By the time I started my Ph.D. study I had been living in the UK for a few years and had learned how important it is to have British work experience when looking

for work here. For this reason I started volunteering for an Ethiopian refugee community organisation.

This work enabled me to develop networks with other UK voluntary organisations. It worked as a stepping-stone to a research project in another refugee support organisation. This was my first professional post, some years after arrival in the UK, as a researcher in refugee employment issues. From this I progressed to other part-time work and teaching roles at universities.

Although I was not working many hours, and was only earning enough for basic survival, what was hugely important to me was that I had started to regain my self-esteem career-wise, which I had lost for a few years. I accumulated British work experience, which led to a full-time post in the refugee sector. This gave me sufficient income to support my young family. During this time the Home Office granted me refugee status (Indefinite Leave to Remain) and later, British citizenship. The granting of refugee status and British citizenship has had a huge impact on my employment life, not only because it enabled me to feel psychologically settled and able to plan my career, but also because it entitles to social and economic rights, as well as, I feel, trust from my host society in general and from employers in particular.

As an employed person, job satisfaction, security and promotion are issues that I am concerned about. While income is a serious consideration now I have a family to support, I value job satisfaction more highly. I feel protected working in a sector that understands a refugee's circumstances and where staff diversity and the prevention of discrimination are actively promoted. In my university employment I have adjusted myself to the codes of conduct and unwritten laws in the workplace.

1.1.1. Highlights of themes and findings

The above is my story in brief. There are many refugees whose employment experiences are similar to mine and others whose experience has been either worse or better, as will be illustrated in this thesis. A few common issues emerge from the above. Relevant themes include a shared history; asylum status; ethnic and cultural identity and connections (networks); adapting a new environment; education; volunteering, earning, remittances, workplace issues to mention just a few. My employment progress has been affected by such factors. But the themes and issues are much more detailed and complicated than this.

Refugees are diversified social groups and several factors affect their integration into the new host country system, in general and the labour market in particular. Employment, which may begin in the informal sector, plays a key role in the settlement and integration of an average refugee into their newly adopted system. A refugee such as myself arrives in the UK from a different social, cultural, and psychological background. For a refugee to be able to participate in the labour market there are common factors that affect him/her as well as the average UK-born individual, as a member of established ethnic minorities, or even a non-political migrant, who struggle to be integrated or re-integrated into the labour market. In addition to this, however, there are also labour market issues that affect refugees in a unique way.

Broadly speaking these factors are linked to the reasons for claiming asylum (pre-asylum factors), the characteristics of the host country's labour market (host-country factors) and the policies in that country (policy factors). These three broad sets of factors form the framework of this study. We shall see how these broad categories break down further in the chapters to come. It should be noted that there is no definitive line between these categories and some employment-related variables are found in some or even all the categories. An example of this is that the education level of a refugee can be related to home country background (pre-asylum factor), training attained in the UK (host country factor) and the legislation restricting or allowing training in the UK (policy-factor). Despite this limitation, however, it is important to deal with the issues in a systematic way by arranging the variables under some categories.

In this study, therefore, it has been established that the level of refugee integration into the labour market is conditional on the interaction of three broad categories. Factors that are related to the circumstances of refugees prior to arrival to the UK, added to those they encounter in their host country determine where they are in the labour market both individually and as a group. These factors in turn are complicated and embrace many issues within them. They are also dynamic in nature and in a process of constant change, impacting on the positions of refugees in the labour market. This work, using Ethiopians as a case study, attempts to analyse these factors to show how their interaction contributes to integrating or ostracising refugees in the UK labour market.

So why is employment such an area of interest? As part of the introduction below an attempt is made to relate the significance of employment in an individual's life, in tackling the problem of feeling of being ostracised, what this means for migrants in general and refugees in particular, as well as recent trends in the UK.

1.2. Refugees and Significance of Employment

It is perhaps the most commonly held belief amongst writers interested in labour markets that employment is at the heart of issues surrounding life chances and equality. The types and levels of employment held by men and women in the labour market (pay levels, skills, status, working conditions, levels of autonomy and in general the whole pattern of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards from work) are a fundamental part of their whole life experience, as well as those of their dependants. Other issues, such as access to the educational system and other areas of social concern are also likely to be related to employment in one way or another (e.g. Braham, Rhodes and Pearn, 1981:11; see also Modood, 1997).

Jens Lind and Hornemann Moller argue that the goal of social citizenship includes, apart from civil, political and social rights, a real opportunity for participation in the

development of society. Economic participation, they continue, might be considered as the most important activity for members of any European society (Lind & Moller, 1999). This importance of work is also emphasised by Dahrendorf, who states that work is a 'central social institution and an essential part of peoples lives' (Dahrendorf, 1988). Pixley takes the stand that 'employment is very much a part of being a citizen and that the issue of employment must be cast in terms of rights and obligations that make it possible to participate in the life of the society' (Pixley, 1993).

As we shall see in later chapters, many studies indicate that the integration of immigrants into the host society is a solution to a number of problems facing both these groups and the host society. In fact, there are indications that both the host governments and refugees themselves are 'showing interest' in integration (e.g., E. Marx, 1990; Miles, 1993). However, this has been hindered by either a lack of interest in addressing real issues embodied in the demands of integration, or because the notion of integration is misconceived (Miles, 1993). There are also indications that the opportunity for migrants and refugees 'to merge' within the population through a variety of mechanisms is 'less open' (Braham, Rhodes and Pearn, 1981:12; see also Miles, 1993).

Employment is believed to play a decisive role in tackling the problem of ostracism, usually termed as social exclusion by sociologists and politicians. Social exclusion is a serious 'problem' and a centre of current political and academic debate. One reason for this is that if not properly addressed, social exclusion can result in grave consequences for its victims and the society in general. In any efforts to tackle issues of social exclusion, decision-makers both in the European Union and in the UK government (as well as academic writers) highlight the importance of employment. In fact, both the then President and Commissioner for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs of the European Union, Jacques Delors and P. Flynn (1993) respectively, as well as a recently published report of the UK's Social Exclusion Unit, have insisted that the solution lies in *"reintegrating"* the 'sufferers' into the labour market.

1.3. Economic Migrants and Refugees in the Labour Market

Refugees are migrants - "political migrants", broadly and crudely defined. Refugees and economic migrants share more similarities than differences. Writers have always struggled to draw a fine line between the two categories, even when defining them. While attempting to give their own definitions, these writers have consistently commented on the "problematic, ill-defined or unresolved" nature of making a distinction between them (e.g. Hear, 1993: 276-277; Zolberg, 1988:219; 1989:3; Rudge, 1992; Turton, 1996; Loescher, 1992; Thorburn, 1996:119; Joly, 1992). Escalona and Black's (1995) comments may sum up this 'problem':

> In practice, it is frequently the case that distinctions and definitions of refugees and migrants are put forward by authors, *but that discussion then proceeds to blur these distinctions* (369).

Probably because of the difficulty in distinguishing between these two social groups, it seems that many writers find themselves at ease with using the terms 'forced' and 'voluntary' migrants to identify refugees and economic migrants respectively. However even this distinction can be contestable when one observes the move from areas of very low economic development and poverty, such as the New Commonwealth. Individuals feel obliged to migrate to economically affluent regions and countries "to exercise their rights and freedoms provided for by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights", as well as taking advantage of Western Europeans' encouragement of such immigration at the time. Whereas this is just an example, there is strain of economic migration which in essence is not altogether voluntary (see also, for instance, Lapenna, 1986).

Refugees and economic migrants share another important common feature. This lies in the fact that, in the new environment, these groups are *outsiders within*, or to use Joshi's (1987) phrase they are not 'the sons [and daughters] of the soil'. Generally, these groups do not have well-established local roots and constitute *'the Others'*. By definition, although this depends on their length of stay, as a group they are "strangers" (Alund, 1996) and are unaware of how the labour market works in the new socio-economic establishment. These common ties put them in a very similar position to refugees within

the structure of the new environment's labour market. This is principally because they are settling in a new system that treats them as the 'others'.

In the British context, for instance, the political and ideological reactions towards recent decades' economic migrants and refugees have been very similar (Miles, 1982). Political and ideological frameworks, in turn, play a decisive role in placing these groups in a particular position in the labour market, not least because of the legislation in effect.

Yet another common characteristic between economic migrants and refugees is, as many writers (referred to in the following chapters) indicate, both are in a weaker position than the 'indigenous' population in relation to the labour market. Given that economic forces have a strong tendency to exploit weakness (Muller, 1984), refugees and economic migrants are 'vulnerable' (Black, 1994) in the labour market and, in many cases, are exploited by economic interests and kept in a weak position with little or no bargaining power. As will be investigated further on, the weak position and bargaining power of economic migrants and refugees in the labour market of the reception country is manifested through the exclusion, disadvantage and discrimination they face in employment, recruitment, promotion, redundancy procedures, bad working conditions, low earnings and so on.

As will be shown in the following chapters, migrants and refugees tend, in general, to be disproportionately disadvantaged within the receiving country's labour market. They are also a stigmatised group prone to be victims of discrimination. Both disadvantage and discrimination persist well beyond the immediate entry points of immigration. Apart from disadvantages regarding employment and pay levels and bad employment practices, there is also evidence of discrimination in preventing or limiting the entry and movements of individuals within the labour market *because* they are migrants and refugees.

While many researchers believe that there has been some upward shift or improvement in this pattern (e.g. Ballard and Karla, 1994; Modood, 1997), at the same time they insist that the underlying pattern of disadvantage persists. The immigrant (refugees included)

workforce in Britain remains highly unemployed or heavily concentrated in less desirable, non-skilled manual jobs and is 'markedly different' by type of job from the total workforce (e.g. Home Office/Carey-wood et al, 1995; HMSO, 1996; Modood, 1997).

As refugees are (political) immigrants and are often members of ethnic minorities, they can find themselves in the same position of disadvantage and ostracism in the host country's labour market. But there are also a number of additional factors that uniquely worsen refugees situation owing to unique pre-asylum, host country and policy factors.

1.4. Deficiency of the Refugee Literature and Relevance of Economic Migration Literature

The main focus of this study is the integration of refugees into the British labour market, taking Ethiopian refugees as a case study. However, for a start it would be helpful to consider relevant themes and debates in economic migration theories, rather than purely refugee theories. Whilst the common features of economic migrants and refugees, some of which was outlined above, are the primary reasons for this choice, there are two other key reasons for focusing initially on economic migrants rather than refugees.

First of all, a closer investigation of the existing literature in refugee studies across the globe reveals that there is a serious lack of adequate 'fundamental theories' in the field. Tom Kuhlman who undertook research into the economic integration of Ethiopians and Eritreans in the Sudan (1994) writes that scientific studies on refugees were limited until the late 1970's and documents a wide range of references on the lack of a 'real theory that underpins analysis of the (refugee) subject. Kuhlman sums the situation in the following words:

> The consensus, at least by the beginning of the 1990's, appeared to be that there is no such theory and that it is needed: in order to provide a framework within which existing data can be compared and to guide the agenda for future research (1994:3).

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This lack of adequate fundamental theories and data on refugees is mainly because of the unprecedented speed of change and growth around the refugee issue over the last few decades and the difficulties this presents for scientific analysis. This rapid change requires timely analysis, based on scraps of raw statistical information, press releases, and immediate impressions of journalists and political commentators (e.g. Thurmelle, 1992: 290; Escalona and Black, 1995:367). In the words of Vaughan Robinson (1993),

> The recurrence of refugee episodes and frenetic pace of research needed to keep up with them has distracted the attention of academics from developing theory or assembling existing theory in new ways and thus that pro-active, planned programmes of basic research have been rare in the field of refugeeism (6).

Indeed the situation worsens when attempting to deal with the more specific question of refugees' settlement - and even more - interaction with the labour market. In the UK this problem was also underlined by policy makers as recently as the end of 2003. In its policy document entitled '*Working to Rebuild Lives*' the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP, 2003), a government department in charge of developing policies and strategies on employment, including refugees, notes that:

> A major issue for DWP in developing employment policy for refugees has been lack of appropriate employment data about them. Though it is clear that refugees need help with language, equivalence of qualifications, UK work experience and specific skills/IT knowledge, DWP has not known much about the extent of need, the skills that refugees arrive with, the type of work they seek, whether certain refugees find it more difficult than others to get work, or the ability of government provision to provide them with appropriate support" (2003:7)

Even more recently than that Alice Bloch, one of the leading refugee studies experts in the UK, underlines that:

> There is little quantitative work available on the labour market experiences of refugees[1] (Bloch, 2004:11)

In addition to my own years of research, it has been confirmed that even veteran researchers in the field "do not know" if studies were undertaken on refugees' employment in the UK (e.g., face-to-face interview and e-mail communication with Professor Stephen Castles, Director, refugee studies programme, Oxford, summer 2004).

This problem of rarity of relevant theories as well as settlement and employment focused literature on refugees, especially once resettled, has also been noted earlier by prominent refugee studies scholars, including Daniele Joly of Warwick University and Vaughan Robinson of the University of Swansea, and is believed to be the case even in Western Europe. Indeed their concern went beyond employment to the wider issue of settlement. According to these writers, no significant 'comprehensive' studies are undertaken about refugees once they are resettled, let alone the formulation of any fundamental theory. Such 'comprehensive studies' following resettlement are scarce (Joly, 1992) and those on employment status are "all too often taken as surrogates for measuring the totality of the quality of life"(Robinson, 1993:7). Indeed a recent European conference on *successful Integration on the Labour Market*, held in Copenhagen 4-5 July 2002 has noted the problem and recommended that comparative studies should be made within the EU of the causes of the lack of economic integration of ethnic minorities (eu2002.dk: 19).

One reason for this could be the fact that social scientists of the west might have been distracted by other priorities. Tim Allen and John Eade, in a slightly different context, for instance, point out that anthropologists of the West studied 'other cultures', usually in Latin America, Africa and Asia (1999:15). This is also the case with UNHCR, as I found out in my many years of research in the field. The shift in the attention of anthropologists, who are interested in studying 'people' including forced migrants in relation to employment, and UNHCR to the southern hemisphere might have been caused by the existence of more serious problems of forced migration in that part of the world. In any

[1] Alice Bloch doesn't say if studies on refugees experiences with qualitative or empirical methods of investigation exist either.

case, this must have contributed to the rarity of studies in the field in Europe in general and the UK in particular.

Sociologists, as Allen and Eade (ibid, see also Miles, 1993) agree, are the ones who have paid more attention to related studies of ethnic minorities in the west (USA and Europe). However, western sociologists are more concerned with ethnic minorities than refugees and social relationships affected by issues of race and race relations. Race issues are relevant to studies of refugees, but the issues of refugees goes beyond the frontiers of the issues of ethnic minorities as my study attempts to argue.

Another social science field, arguably most interested in employment and labour market issues than the above two disciplines is Economics. Here again, a close observation of the literature clearly reveals that economists have not yet theorised or problematised the issues of refugees in general and their interaction with the labour market in particular.

It could be said that the limitations of the above social science disciplines, namely anthropology, sociology and economics have contributed to the absence of adequately workable theories and literature on refugees and their employment circumstances.

Nevertheless, there are important works within these fields which are relevant for refugee studies such as, among others, ethnicity from anthropology, race and race relations issues from sociology and income from economics. This makes refugee studies a multi-disciplinary subject.

The absence of 'fundamental theories' in refugee studies, due to the above and related reasons, obliges writers concerned with refugee issues to look at these social science disciplines for related analytical research on economic migrants as they cannot simply rely on the 'snapshot' writings on refugees. As Emanuel Marx stresses thinking on refugees could benefit from the 'very impressive' body of work on migration undertaken across several disciplines. Of particular relevance are studies on the conditions and effects of economic migration and the "ethnicity" of migrants (Marx, 1990:189). Tom

Kuhlman joins such writers in recognising the deficiency of 'workable' theories in the refugee literature. He summarises that theories of migration can be used to this purpose. According to Kuhlman (1994),

> *Refugees are migrants*, and we should look to migration theory as a first source. Because there has not been much attention for *involuntary migration*, theories developed there cannot immediately be applied to refugees; and such theory as has been developed specifically on refugees has not focused on the problems of integration..."[2](19).

For this practical reason, this study focused on selected literature in the area of non-refugee migration and/or ethnic minorities. These are mainly to be found in more than one social science fields mainly, but not exclusively, in sociology, anthropology and economics.

1.5. Studies on Ethiopians

Many studies have been conducted on Ethiopians in-country, however there is a dearth of literature on the Ethiopian diaspora. Indeed a shortage of literature is also an issue for the wider African diaspora[3]. A search for information on Ethiopian refugees in the western world produces little other than a 6-page 'exploratory' study in Toronto, Canada in 1989, entitled 'The Settlement of Ethiopian Refugees in Toronto'. It is an abstract of an unpublished immigration research report prepared for Employment and Immigration Canada. It focuses on general settlement issues for Ethiopian refugees and is too general for this thesis.

The EMBRACE-UK (2002) report is the principal research conducted on Ethiopians in the UK. The study was jointly undertaken by the Ethiopian Community Centre in the UK and the Research Centre for Transculural Studies in Health, Middlesex University, and

[2] Emphasis is my own

[3] Personal interview with Dr. David Styan, Birkbeck College, who undertook a study on Francophone Africans in London, widely referred to in this thesis. He has also been actively involved in AFFORD, Africans for Development, a diaspora group. In addition Styan has also conducted research in Eritrea and Ethiopia in the early 1990s.

explores health issues. However, it makes contributions on various other aspects, including employment (EMBRACE – UK is an abbreviation for Ethiopian Migrants, their Beliefs, Refugeedom, Adaptation, Calamities, and Experiences in the United Kingdom). Its broader aim is to look at the impact of these issues on their lives, mainly on their health. The research considers employment issues as one aspect of life and relates how the difficulties in finding work cause enormous stress and other health problems. Employment is discussed briefly (in terms of size it is 10 pages out of its 250 pages, approximately 4 percent of the report) and misses crucial variables. Those variables that are mentioned are not fully explained and investigated. It focuses on the problem of unemployment and avoids the issues of the employed. However as it provides useful information, the EMBRACE-UK study has been referred to in this thesis reasonably widely.

1.6. Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to explore the extent of ostracism and disadvantage encountered by refugees in the process of integration into the UK labour market, using Ethiopians as a case study[4].

In the literature it is established that studies can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory (e.g., Mouton and Maraise, 1990; Selltiz, 1976). This work combines the characteristics of exploratory and explanatory studies as defined by these writers. As an *exploratory* research a review of the related social science and other 'pertinent' literature has been conducted; a survey of people who have had practical experience of the problem in question has been undertaken; and an analysis of 'insight-stimulating' examples has been

[4] The terms ostracism *(exclusion), disadvantage,* and *integration* have been defined in this study in later chapters.

used. As an *explanatory* research it aims at "indicating causality between variables and events".[5]

1.7. Thesis Argument and Framework

With the above core aim this study contends that whilst refugees share the challenges encountered by non-political immigrants, they also have their own unique needs and problems, owing to pre-asylum, host country and policy factors, as a challenge to integrate into the labour market. This study mainly investigates the refugees' perspectives although the employers' and government perspectives are also assessed, but to a lesser degree[6].

The study seeks to approach this investigation from three dimensions. First, the study looks into the circumstances of the unemployed, in particular in relation to why they are unemployed; what jobs they aspire to and believe they deserve; what are the main barriers to employment; efforts expended in the search for jobs; effects of unemployment; feeling of being excluded by the system; support needed from government and non-governmental community and refugee-support voluntary organisations; future aspirations and feared challenges. Throughout the study the issue of gender has been highlighted.

Second, we examine the circumstances of those in employment. For those who are employed it seeks to investigate their positions in the workplace, in terms of various work-related issues such as types and levels of employment; sectoral distribution; characteristic features of work in terms of full-time/part-time, working conditions; employment rights and job security; harassment and discrimination at work; internal promotion; earnings; fitting into a code of conduct; job satisfaction in terms of various measures; equal opportunities; the importance of a job in feelings of integration. What

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[5] For details on these three characteristics of research studies, see also Mouton and Maraise, 1990: pp.42-46 and Selltiz, 1976:90-111.

[6] The governments' and host country perspectives are widely covered by politicians and the media. Our study aims to enrich the debate by looking mainly at the 'other dimension', the refugees' side.

goes on between periods of unemployment and employment as a 'transition' is also looked at in between.

Thirdly, this work focuses on the self-employed, in particular on issues including running culture-specific and non-culture specific businesses and why self-employment is chosen in the first place (for more income or to avoid the problem of unemployment in the labour market?). It also investigates the form of the business (i.e., whether run independently or in partnership); issues linked to job creation; problems and issues linked to capital and premises; clientele groups; comprehension of rules and regulations governing UK self-employment; earnings and comparisons with past hired jobs.

This approach has been framed in a model as defined and explained in chapter 3. The research framework (model) captures the themes and issues of the literature referred to in this work in conjunction with the gap this study seeks to fill. Accordingly, the model categorises the case study data into three groups, namely *the employed, the unemployed* and *the self-employed* and identifies the various ways of interaction of refugees with the labour market. Then under each of these three categories, the model features variables that help to explore the forms and processes of exclusion and disadvantage, and how integration is promoted or obstructed.

In terms of structure the thesis has nine chapters. Chapter 1 contains introductory issues both of the thesis and background literature. Chapter 2 presents review of the relevant literature linked with pre-asylum, host country and policy related issues. Chapter 3 continues with the review of the literature, especially on the notion of integration and ends up with the research model. Chapter 4 details the structure and characteristics of the sample and explains it. In Chapter 5, we focus on the unemployed especially with a detailed exploration of multi-dimensional (pre-asylum, host country and policy related) barriers to employability. Before we look into the circumstances of the employed, we examine what goes on in the transition process from unemployment to employment in Chapter 6. The circumstances of the employed on the issues that affect their integration

into the workplace are the concern of Chapter 7. Finally Chapter 8 examines the circumstances of those who are in self-employment, before the conclusions in Chapter 9.

Our study attempts to use Ethiopian refugees as an example of what happens to refugees in general in relation to UK employment, rather than engaging in an ethnographic study of Ethiopians. This attempt to use Ethiopian refugees as an example of what can happen to other refugees in the UK labour market is made not only because of easy access to this community, but also because of the many common issues Ethiopian refugees share with other refugees as 'interest groups'.

1.8. Methodology

Research methods in economics include, among others, surveys, gathering data, use of selected theoretical constructions and other procedures, including combinations of techniques (Ethridge, 1995). As Yin (1994) argues, the case study method is advantageous for generating rich data on topics for which research resources are limited. Yin describes "the distinctive need for case studies" arising out of "the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (1994:3). To achieve the aim and objectives of this work the case study approach, which embraces combinations of the techniques outlined above, is held to be most appropriate[7]. The work has undertaken a wide, critical investigation of the relevant literature. It seeks to contribute by enriching the debate and filling gaps in existing academic literature, especially in relation to the special circumstances, needs and problems of refugees in a host country's labour market.

[7] Similar 'method' has been utilised by Lisa Alfredson, 'Seeking Asylum from Sex persecution: Challenging Refugee Policy and Policy-Making of Canada in the Late Twentieth Century', Ph.D. Thesis, London School of Economics, 2000.

1.8.1. Sample Size and Representativeness

The research investigates the circumstances of sample Ethiopian refugees by focusing on those who arrived after 1990 in the main, as this was basically the time that Ethiopians gained a presence in the UK. The period since 1990 is also important because it covers new legislation on refugees and asylum seekers, which has had direct effects on their experience in the labour market.

A sample population of approximately 115 individuals was chosen to broadly represent the Ethiopian community in terms of gender, age, immigration status, educational background, employment status and, in the case of the employed category, types of jobs and self-employment, length of stay and geographical distribution[8]. Focus group and key informants are also included. The size of the sample was chosen with a view to balancing the size of the community with practical feasibility. Alice Bloch (1999) observes that a number of problems face researchers in trying to estimate the size of any refugee community nationally or locally. One main reason for this, as she notes, is that the Home Office does not release figures on where refugees settle for reasons of confidentiality. If it did so on initial settlement, it would not be a useful indicator of settlement patterns because of the high mobility of refugees and_patterns of secondary migration (see also Robinson and Hale, 1989). Hence in this study the number of the refugee group members had to be taken from estimates made by organisations working closely with the group, namely Ethiopian community offices. The respondents include both asylum seekers and refugees but in the course of discussions sometimes - when the issue being discussed can be applied to both - the word 'refugee' is used for both[9].

1.8.2. Sample Selection and Data Collection

[8] The actual characteristics and structure of the sample are detailed in chapter four.

[9] 'A Refugee' is one whose asylum application has been responded to by the Home Office and granted either a refugee status, or Indefinite Leave to Remain or Exceptional Leave to Remain whereas an asylum-seeker is one without any of these.

Whilst representation was the prime basis to select the sample population, access to these refugees and asylum seekers was also a crucial issue. Bloch (1999) documents a number of strategies researchers in the field of refugees can use to gain access to such groups (see also Lee, 1993; Sudman and Kalton, 1986; Brown and Ritchie, 1981; Smith, 1997).

One method is what is known as 'snowballing'. By snowballing, respondents are obtained through referrals among people who share the same characteristics (Bloch, 1999:371). As Bloch maintains, research with refugees often uses snowballing as a method to locate respondents because refugees are difficult to locate using other means; e.g., Census data (see also Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). In this study snowballing is the main method used to locate the sample population. Personal contacts with the community members and organisations have helped in identifying a high number of the sample population which qualify the criteria, followed by referrals. The referrals were especially important to locate respondents residing outside London. Financial support from CARA facilitated travel to many cities throughout the UK. In this study while quoting respondents from outside London, regional administrations (e.g., Yorkshire, Midlands) rather than cities have been cited as their area of residence in order to protect their identity (only accessible to supervisors).

Data was collected mainly through face-to-face interviews, including recorded interviews, with the use of structured questionnaires (which were first tested with pilot interviews). Depending on the importance and relevance of issues as well as availability and willingness of interviewees, interviews lasted as long as 5 hours. In rare cases and when travel was difficult; e.g., Northern Ireland, a telephone interview was held. The questionnaires were structured to make sure that essential data was gathered on the selected variables, and any related relevant issues raised in the course of interviews was also included. A capable research assistant has also helped data collection.

Whilst the initial Literature Review was drafted before data collection, it has been updated since to take account of new developments in the field.

1.8.3. Accuracy of Recording Interviews and Reliability

The responses to questions were written in front of interviewees. In addition, responses were read back to ensure accuracy of recording. In cases where they felt some words should be changed this has been done. It was also common for many to go back to their previous answers to add more relevant material.

To what extent can the accounts of interviewees be relied on? Or to what extent can their responses be regarded as true stories? We can probably get a measure of reliability from the work of Selltiz, Wrightsman and Cook. In their book *Research Methods in Social Relations*, these writers state that:

> A reliable measure is one that has a small error component and, therefore, does not fluctuate randomly from one moment to the next. To understand reliability in measurement, consider what it means in a person. If you call someone reliable, you probably mean the person is consistent...a reliable person is also one who, if she begins to tell you a story of something that happened, maintains a consistent account and does not give different versions from one hour to the next (Selltiz, Wrightsman and Cook 1981: 126).

Ethridge (1995) also discusses *tests of reliability*, or the "truth of contingent statements", in the words of Johnson, 1986 when empiricism is involved (see especially, pp. 47-49 and also Johnson, 1986: 45–47 for a more detailed explanation). These include *test of correspondence* – which involves comparing an outcome or statement to what is already 'known' to see if it is consistent with prior knowledge, without disregarding the fact that new findings contradicting what was previously 'known' are a primary avenue to new knowledge; *the test of logical coherence* (free of logical contradiction and; the *test of clarity* (for lack of ambiguity or vagueness).

The issue of reliability was given the utmost consideration throughout the different stages of this research. These stages are in questionnaire design and structure; selecting appropriate respondents; approaching respondents; and conducting the actual interview. Main steps taken under these stages to ensure reliability are outlined below[10].

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[10] Similar stage-divided methods in individual interviews has also been outlined in a slightly different context by Alexiadou, "Researching policy implementation: interview data analysis in institutional contexts", *International Journal of Social research methodology: Theory and Practice*, Vol.4., No1, 2001.

i. Questionnaire Design and Structure

Previous research on refugees indicates that refugees and, especially, asylum seekers might be anxious if questioned on their asylum application (e.g. Home Office, 1995). Mouton and Maraise also stress the importance of the "level of threat posed by questions" affecting response and reliability (1990: 88). Reasons for such anxieties or threat could be the reasons for seeking asylum; fear for families in their countries of origin or uncertainty regarding the final destination of the recorded interview. In particular respondents may be concerned that the content would reach the Home Office and, rightly or wrongly, contradict their accounts in their official asylum application. As this study is principally concerned with what happened with their interaction in the UK labour market, questions linked to any country of origin politics have been avoided. This clears the atmosphere from the beginning of the interview and establishes credibility.

The questionnaires were primarily designed and structured for face-to-face interview rather than tape-recording. Apart from a few interviewees who are firmly established in the UK in terms of immigration status or work, the majority of respondents were not recorded. When they are tape-recorded it was mainly at their request.

Before the questionnaire was finalised, pilot interviews were conducted on a sample group of refugees and asylum seekers to ensure that questions of sensitive nature were detected and noted. In general, 'sensitive' questions were avoided to ensure respondent's honesty and hold their interest, except where they were of relevance to the study. These areas included those relating to gender, postcode, age, earnings, date of asylum claim and traumatic experiences. Action taken to dilute sensitivity included putting figures in ranges (e.g., age, earnings or periods of time). In cases such as gender or age, questions directly linked to employment were the only ones asked.

ii. Selecting appropriate respondents

As noted above the 'snowballing' referral method was used to locate respondents qualifying within the pre-set criteria for sample representation. One advantage of such a referral system is that respondents referred interviewers to other potential interviewees after having been interviewed themselves, with an understanding of the research topic. For instance, if during the interview an interviewee realised that exploring the impact of immigration status on employment prospects would be helpful, they might refer individuals who he/she knows are experiencing problems with immigration status. Pointers from the referee may also be used as a reference point to detect any inconsistency in accounts (recalling the *test of correspondence*, Johnson, 1986 and Ethridge, quoted above).

Selecting appropriate respondents is also helpful in relation to motivation or willingness to be interviewed. The importance of motivation has been well discussed by Mouton and, Marais (1990). These writers link its importance directly to reliability in data collection. During this research it was noted that many respondents saw the interview as an outlet for their problems and felt that they were listened to. A respondent, for instance, expressed her happiness to be able to talk to someone. She said she always wanted to talk to someone, for example in the media, about the enormous problems she was going through in getting accommodation for her family so that she could settle and search for a job.

iii. Approaching Respondents

All efforts were made to make respondents feel comfortable with the questionnaire, to encourage them to provide genuine and relevant data. The initial approach was a key factor in this. Respondents were sent an official letter of support from the university, highlighting the aim of the interview, that it was to be used solely for the purposes of an academic study, and that their identities would not be disclosed. Holding the interview in quiet public meeting places or the interviewer's home rather than at respondents' home addresses also played a role in encouraging participation. In cases where interviews were conducted in the interviewees' homes postcodes have not been asked. Interviewees were

not obliged to give their family names. Depending on specific circumstances other assurances were given while initially approaching, to ensure that interviewees felt comfortable and able to relate their genuine experience.

iv. While conducting the interview

All efforts were made to ensure consistency of responses. If, for example, accounts relating to education or work appeared to be inconsistent, usually through errors in calculating time, interviewees were asked 'cross-examination' type questions to illustrate their stories with examples. An example of this is experience of employment interviews for specific companies in specific years[12].

Furthermore, the issue of emotional sensitivity (e.g., Hubbard, Backett-Milburn and Kemmer, 2001) has been given due consideration. In interviews with respondents the personal characteristics of the researchers (such as race) are believed to play an important role (e.g., Barn, 1994; Labov, 1977). Being a member of the community myself I am aware of the respondents' cultural values and avoid culturally insensitive questions as they arise, such as speaking to women or the elderly in the appropriate manner. Handling such issues sensitively is believed to contribute to truthful accounts. In some cases interviewees are more interested in stressing a specific problem rather than the issues in question. In such circumstances the issue is explored, although probably not recorded unless it relates specifically to the research topic.

Last, if not least, while conducting the interview it was important to ensure that interviewee's interest was engaged, so that they did not attempt to rush through the questions, potentially not answering fully. The choice of an appropriate time; having breaks and in some cases offering pocket money all helped. In the event, many

[12] Cautious has been taken especially to avoid errors in relation to years, particularly when they involve translating Ethiopian calendar to Gregorian calendar, which are different.

respondents felt that the questions were very interesting and indeed many stated that the questions had made them consider the wider context of employment.

1.9. Scope and Limitations of the Study

Firstly probably like most studies, this study also has its own scope and perspective of interest. It examines the issues of refugees' employment mainly from the refugees' perspective for reasons mentioned under the aim of the study. Given this, certain aspects should be treated with caution. One example of this is the complaints cited against employers regarding discrimination, one area of the research, where complaints should be considered on a case by case basis[13]. As indicated above, every effort was made to ensure that respondents reported an accurate account of issues. As mentioned earlier an assessment of the employers' and government perspective has also been made but to a less degree than the 'voices of refugees'.

Secondly, this work for a start bases its analysis on a specific refugee group. The broader intention, as previously mentioned, was to draw conclusions about the circumstances of the wider refugee community in general. The variables chosen and featured in the research model, derived from the relevant literature, are commonly shared by the wider refugee community. Some issues are, however, more applicable to the case study group, one example being the language barrier and its impact on employability. As Ethiopia is not an Anglophone country, the problems Ethiopians face may be greater compared to refugee communities whose first language is English. Another example relates to racism. White (Eastern European) refugees may not be as affected, or do not feel affected, by discrimination on the basis of their skin colour. A final example is that of religious

[13] Such limitations in methodology are also highlighted, for instance, by Barn, R., "Race and ethnicity in social work: some issues for anti-discriminatory research", in Humphries, B. and Truman, C. (eds.), *Re-thinking Social research: Anti-discriminatory approaches in research methodology*, 1994, (see especially pp.51-54). See also Dyke and Gunaratnam, "Ethnic Monitoring in higher education: some reflections on methodology", in *International Journal of Social Research methodology: Theory and Practice*, vol. 3, No. 4, 2000

discrimination. The case study sample community were about 95% Christian (the reasons for this are stated in chapter 4). Muslim refugee communities may feel they are discriminated against in the labour market of what is still seen as a predominantly Christian country. In short, some of the characteristic features of this sample may be more typical of this particular community and therefore limit the potential to draw wider conclusions.

Thirdly the selected sample focuses mainly on legal employment i.e. those working with permission to work and those paying National Insurance contributions and tax. Those working outside this definition have not been recorded. Depending on the significance of this figure, the sample group's employment ratio might have been undermined in this work. However, using a slightly different approach the issue of informal jobs has also been addressed.

Finally, perhaps as it could be the case with all sample survey based research, on some specific issues findings may be applicable to the sampled population, not even to the entire Ethiopian refugee community. For instance, if racial discrimination affects 20% of the sample population to get jobs, the actual figure to the wider Ethiopian community could be lower or higher than this figure. Accuracy can come closer as the sample size increases. What is important, however, is the issues for refugees are highlighted and explored in as much detail as possible.

1.10. Importance and Intended Contribution of the Study to Existing Knowledge

Earlier on this chapter, the justifications for selecting Ethiopian refugees as a case study have been outlined. I believe this study is very important in contributing to new knowledge in a number of ways :-

Firstly, a study of this kind has not been conducted on Ethiopians before and therefore contributes new information.

Secondly, there is a lack of a 'comprehensive study' of refugees in employment once they are resettled, not just in the UK but also across Western Europe (Bloch, 2004; Joly, 1992, Kuhlman, 1994). This is despite the fact that employment is fundamentally linked to the economic and social status of both individuals and communities, and plays a crucial role in their interaction with host societies once they are resettled. I believe this study goes some way towards closing the existing knowledge gap in this area.

Thirdly, whilst many studies and theories have dealt with labour migration to the UK, there are no systematic and longitudinal studies focusing on refugees (Robinson, 1993:6-7; see also Robinson, 1998). This study, which focuses on the labour market, is based on data stretching back over 15 years and helps to identify important common themes, relationships and conclusions based on the experiences of the Ethiopian community.

Fourthly, the literature review of this work draws on relevant theories and associated debates within labour migration theory. This has been used to construct the research model, and takes into account the common and unique characteristics of refugees compared with other immigrants. Given the deficiency of theories in the literature on refugees, this study may help future researchers on refugees to develop means of analysis.

Last, if not least, UK and West European governments are interested in integrating migrants (and refugees) into host societies as a solution to the social exclusion they experience. Efforts so far in this direction have improved the positions of these groups in the labour market, (e.g. Modood, *et al* 1997; see also National Labour Surveys in the 1980's; OECD, 2001:81-83). However, the basic barriers behind their persistently disadvantaged situation (thus barring them from effective integration) still exist. Within its scope, this study attempts to pinpoint these root causes and hopes contribute towards the formulation of better policies.

CHAPTER TWO

PRE-ASYLUM, HOST COUNTRY CIRCUMSTANCES AND POLICIES AFFECTING REFUGEES/IMMIGRANTS

2.1. Brief Historical Background of Immigration and Refugee Flows

The concept of migration cannot be fully understood without reference to historical phases. Each of these phases has its own pattern of migration and each its dominant socio-economic system. If migration occurs as a response to the requirement of the prevailing system (e.g. Joshi, 1987:11; Castles and Miller, 1993:260), the resultant pattern of migration is qualitatively different.

Writers in Migration Literature hold that there are always 'pull' and 'push' factors within migration. Castles and Miller (1993:19) explain that such approaches are often known as 'push-pull' theories because they perceive the causes of migration in a combination of 'push factors', impelling people to leave the areas of origin, and 'pull factors' (which includes demand for labour), attracting them to certain receiving countries (see also Sorensen, 1996:82-83; Djajic, 2001:*xv-xvi;* Goodwin-Gill, 1997:10).

While the UNHCR estimates that 'the tradition of asylum' is over 3,500 years old (UNHCR:1993), Graham Hallet (1970) and Vidyut Joshi (1987) write that migration (both 'voluntary' and 'involuntary') took place at the very beginnings of human civilisation when man was a hunter-gatherer. Migration of various kinds continued over the centuries taking a new form with the rise of nations and nationalism.

In the British example, writers like Stephen Haseler (1996) recall that Britain's nation-building history, both before and after the formation of the Union in 1707, is one of large

influxes of immigrants at different periods of times from varying regions in the world, but particularly from Europe.

England's "ethnic mix", comprising Saxons, Danes, Celts, Romans, Vikings and the Normans settled down somewhat after 1066, "when the country, England, could just about to be called *a country*"(Haseler, 1996:10). Some centuries later this was followed by the arrival of large groups of immigrants and refugees of differing origin, such as the Flemish, Huguenots, Jews, Welsh and Scots (Haseler, 1996; Booth, 1986:109; Wilson, 1970:3-9; RC, 1997:7).

Since the creation of a nation state, the United Kingdom, by the Act of Union of 1707 by Scotland, England and Wales, has been a recipient of large waves of immigration, notably the Irish and Jewish in the nineteenth century and that of the New Commonwealth in post-1945 era, both for economic and political reasons (Rees, 1993; Jones, 1977; Prashar, 1986; Panayi, 1993; Gartner, 1960; Patterson, 1971; Cheetham, 1972; Porter, 1979; Foot, 1965; Bevan, 1986; Holmes, 1988; Macdonald, 1993; Miles and Cleary, 1993).

Following the Second World War, large groups of economic migrants and refugees have been arriving to the UK both in groups; e.g., Europeans escaping persecution and wars, Ugandan Asians, Chileans, Vietnamese as well as individually from the Third World.

2.2. Overview of UK's Immigration Policies

During almost the whole of its pre-1905 history (i.e. before the *Aliens Act* of 1905), Britain in general willingly allowed immigrants and refugees to enter and settle. Rees, for one, writes that British immigration policy, both in respect to control and in respect to social policies, "has traditionally been *laissez faire*" (1993:87; see also Jones, 1977; RC, 1997; Prashar, 1986:103; Plant, 1970; Lewis, quoted in Plant, 1968; Holmes, 1988).

However, this does not mean that Britain had always been a haven for all groups of refugees and immigrants during these periods. In fact, other writers point out that there were times when some groups were victims of hostile government and popular perception for economic, social and cultural reasons. Professor Charles Wilson is one such writer to record "popular attacks" and violent outbreaks with a "possibility of wholesale massacres", witnessed against Jewish refugees in cities across England in 1189. He further writes that:

> The Jewish (refugees) that arrived from Rouen at the invitation of William the Conqueror and to whom the impoverished kings and barons looked for large loans in the 11th and 12th centuries were all expelled from England in 1290 by Edward I prompted by the Pope for religious reasons (1970:3-4).

Another writer, Booth, also reveals that as early as 1596 Elizabeth I ordered, "albeit unsuccessfully", that all black people in Britain should be sent 'abroad', and five years later issued a proclamation expressing her discontent at the 'great number of Negroes and Blackmoors' which, as she was informed, 'are crept into this realm'. She commanded that these people should be 'avoided and discharged out of her majesty's dominion' with all speed (Booth, 1986:109, cited).

There were also harsh policies against Jewish, Italian and Irish immigrants and refugees in the 17th to 19th centuries (e.g. Wilson,1970:3-5; Jones, 1977).

Overall English (and later UK) governments in pre-1905 had mixed responses to refugees, which apparently depended on the specific groups' cultures, religion or identities. Having said this, the literature consulted indicates a generally positive reception.

Prompted by "the ageing of imperial Britain" (Jones, 1977:73), or "the vanishing of the Victorian prosperity" (Panayi, 1993:95) or/and the appearance and strengthening of right-wing ideologies (Rees, 1993:91; Prashar, 1986:104-105), the 1905 *Aliens Act* imposed new legal barriers on the admission of refugees.

Since this point successive British governments have tended to reinforce the 1905 Alien's Act, with increasingly 'draconian' immigration rules and regulations. Notable among these are 1914 and 1919 immigration legislation; the *Order of 1920*, the 1948 *Nationality Act*, the *Aliens Order* of 1953, as well as legislation in effect in 1962, 1965, 1968, culminating in the *1971 Immigration Act*. This later immigration legislation has focused in particular on immigration from the Commonwealth. However, it is worth noting that apart from the 1905 *Aliens Act* and the recent 1993 *Asylum and Immigration Act* in none of these regulations has there ever been a separate clause for refugees, even under the 1971 Immigration Act. In the words of Ian Macdonald,

> What is surprising is that there is no exempting provision written into the text of the 1971 Act, despite the international developments through the UN 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol (1993:159).

In summary, the 20th century saw the first and successive implementation of immigration legislation. The apparently unavoidable conclusion regarding the trend of this legislation seems to be that, as Rees (1993) writes "in so far as Britain can be said to have an immigration policy, it is a policy designed to contain the social problems of past immigration by eliminating virtually all future inward flows" (Rees, 1993:106). This conclusion that virtually all future inward flows would be contained has been proven correct on a bipartisan basis (Ibid; see also Bevan, 1986:24-25).

Similarly restrictive policies have been implemented over the last two decades. Miles and Cleary note that the Conservative government elected in 1979 promised the enforcement of 'strict immigration control', following references made by Mrs. Thatcher during the election concerning the 'legitimate fears' of 'our own people' that they might be 'swamped' (1993:70).

During the 1980s and 1990s refugees became a hot political issue both in the UK and across Europe. If anything it has resulted in the appearance of tighter controls under the

1987 *Carriers Liability Act*, the 1993, 1996 and 1999 Asylum Acts, to mention just a few of the steps taken unilaterally by the UK government.

While these arrivals increased the diversity of ethnic groups in British society, it also triggered interests in academic circles. Below is a brief and selective assessment of the nature and issues raised by academics.

2.3. Pre-asylum – Related Notions and Issues

2.3.1. Ethnicity and Ethnic Group Organisation

In this section I will review the literature on the significance of ethnicity as a pre-asylum factor. I will assess the studies undertaken and highlight some of the most relevant points as well as identifying under-explored areas my study attempts to examine.

Although other social science disciplines, typically sociology, are interested in ethnic 'relations', the issue of ethnicity principally falls under anthropology. Scholars in the field claim sovereignty over the topic and stress the importance of ethnicity in Anthropology (e.g., Allen and Eade, 1999; Erikson, 2002), as confirms the vast body of literature on the topic. It seems that one of the most important topics that anthropologists passionately argue about, is the issue of ethnicity. Since the explosion of interest in the notion of ethnicity in the 1980's and 1990's (Eriksen, 2002), anthropologists have devoted a lot of attention to the topic, from the complexity of its definition to the different schools of thought in the area of ethnicity.

Marcus Banks is probably the one who knitted together the different studies of ethnicity in anthropology, in his book entitled *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, 1996. I shall address the different points he discussed throughout this thesis wherever they appear to be most relevant to my study; however, for now I will attempt a brief overview of his book. As Banks himself admits (p.187) his work is to a large extent descriptive but this

does not undermine the contribution the book makes. What Banks does is to deconstruct the different ethnic studies undertaken and synthesise them into different categories, itemising them by authors and schools of thought. He undertakes a thorough exploration of different ethnicity thinkers and schools, from Frederick Barth, through to Soviet 'ethno's' to the so-called Manchester School (under which falls Abner Cohen, whose work will be seen later).

Banks states that his work was motivated by the absence of linkages of studies on ethnicity. Under each category of schools, theories or authors, Marcus Banks addresses core social science concepts like 'race'. He shows how this concept differs from ethnicity and how it is addressed by anthropologists and sociologists in the west, especially making comparisons of those studies undertaken in the US and the UK. He examines the views of various writers against their critiques and identifies how weaknesses of some writers were overcome by other writers. He also identifies the weaknesses of anthropology (e.g., their failure at using statistics to justify arguments) and sociology. I also share Bank's view on this in the sense that most of the anthropology literature I consulted is based on very limited data, which an economist or a sociologist would question on the grounds of statistical significance and representativeness. However, I also agree with Banks that anthropologists compensate for this by their passionate interest and analysis of networks and linkages, a task which I noted they perform better than economists and sociologists.

When evaluated overall, Banks' work is a significant contribution to the fields of ethnicity and pushes the frontiers of knowledge of the concept. He has succeeded in renewing the debate around the notion of ethnicity by systematically de-constructing the notion and synthesising along schools of thought. Arguably he seems to have opened the way to a new era of researchers in the field. Indeed ethnicity scholars such as Tim Allen and John Eade have referred very frequently to his work in a recent work (Allen and Eade, 1999) , where they identify three approaches to ethnicity: essentialist, instrumentalist and relationalist which they thoroughly analysed[14].

[14] for more on this see Allen and Eade, 'Divided Europeans',1999

Bank's work, however, is not free from criticism especially in terms of scope. Even if the book was published as recently as 1996 when the issue of asylum was a hot political issue across Europe, there was almost no mention of refugees, except in passing - as 'political migrants'. He refers to veteran migration and refugee studies writers like Stephen Castles but fails to link the issue of ethnicity to this important social group of refugees. The value of ethnicity in integration or how ethnic links help to access employment is under-explored. My study attempts to take this issue some way forward to contribute in filling the gap. But before we go into that, we will now assess relevant work on the issue, especially the work of Abner Cohen on ethnic Hausas in the Yoruba town of Ibadan, Nigeria, and the seminal work by Moynihan and Glazer on New York City.

2.3.2. De-tribalisation and Re-tribalisation

The issue of de-tribalisation and re-tribalisation refers to the inclination of migrants to either lose their cultural distinctiveness to the cultures of the new host system (de-tribalised) or to maintain their cultural distinctiveness after passing through challenges in a host society. An influential anthropological study, which more than three decades later commands admiration, is Abner Cohen's Book *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns, 1969.* Even if Cohen used the word 'towns' in the title, a closer look at the book shows that his analysis focuses mainly on a Quarter named Sabo, in the Nigerian town of Ibadan (only at the end of the book he touched on a few other areas too). Ibadan is a Yoruba tribe town (a large Christian dominated tribe of Nigeria, located in the west of the country). The Hausas, a Muslim dominated large tribe of Nigeria, are located in the North. Cohen's study focuses on Hausa migrants, whose livelihood depended on the long-distance trade of kola, who settled in part of the city of Ibadan (he calls it a 'Quarter') called Sabo[15]. The tribe lived there during colonialism, maintaining its cultural distinctiveness from the surrounding host Yoruba society Cohen investigates how the Hausa migrants managed to maintain this cultural distinctiveness,

[15] Only for simplicity, one can make some similarity of the Hausas in Sabo with the Chinese in China Town, or the Jews in Stamford Hill or Golden's Green, or the Arabs in Edgeware road in London.

amidst the changes in policies following independence. Cohen undertakes a thorough analysis of the lives of ethnic Hausas in Sabo, their inter-relationships with the surrounding ethnic groups of Yorubas, and towards the end of the book with the Ibo's, yet another Nigerian tribe known for their entrepreneurial skills. He also examines the linkages and kinship ties the Sabo residents of Hausas maintain with their fellow ethnic Hausas in the North. He concludes that despite the change in policies after independence and the challenges that came with it to detribalise the Hausas under the umbrella of the nation of Nigeria, ethnic Hausas were able to use strategies to maintain their cultural distinctiveness and indeed succeeded to re-tribalise.

Throughout the book, Abner Cohen never draws comparisons with related studies. He obtains his insights from the case study (though towards the end he makes a reference to other related studies) and argues that his conclusions are applicable in other areas too.

One great value of Cohen's work is that its in-depth analysis of ethnic Hausas lives in the Quarter of Sabo helps to generate questions about how other ethnic migrants attempted to maintain their cultural distinctiveness in a host country; e.g., a migrant ethnic group in the UK. The writer also notes how certain issues are valued more than others in certain cultures. For instance, he shows how business is more valued [than education] in the Hausa culture, compared with the Yoruba's and explores the implications of this on the Hausa's struggle in the face of detribalisation following policies after independence. This is a characteristic noted in values of other cultures too; for instance, Eritrean muslims attach more value to business (e.g., Kuhlman, 1994) than, say, Ethiopian Amharas. Cohen also shows how ethnic identities and linkages help in accessing jobs and the status, within the Hausa ethnic migrant group in the Yoruba Quarter of Sabo. He analyses this ethnic networking in relation to access to information, language and accommodation, which even today are vital elements, as my study shall investigate, in access to the job market. The importance of length of stay to integrate into the Sabo Quarter is also addressed in Cohen's work.

One of the drawbacks of Cohen's work is that it focused on internal migration, from Northern Nigeria to the West of the country. The validity of his conclusions could therefore be limited when tested against external migration. Is it, for instance, the same for an Ethiopian to migrate from an Oromo or Amhara area to an Afar or Wolayita regions within Ethiopia compared with migration to the city of London? Cohen's work was also undertaken a while ago, during and in the immediate years following colonialism. A few things are changed in our times of today, especially with globalisation making access to information much easier and where continuum of 'cultural conservatism' is challenged by it. Given the low bargaining power of migrants (especially refugees), how can Cohen's argument of 'political frictions' between the new comers and the host population develop due to economic competition? Lastly, are his conclusions of struggle to maintain cultural distinctiveness (re-tribalisation) applicable to other areas where the specific circumstances of ethnic Hausas in the Yoruba quarter of Sabo are not necessarily the same? Before we try to investigate this in relation to other studies and the findings of my thesis, we will analyse ethnicity-related arguments from a different perspective to that of Cohen.

2.3.3. The 'melting pot'

The melting pot argument is very closely associated with the seminal book by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan entitled *'Beyond the Melting Pot"*, (first published in 1963, when race and ethnicity was a hot issue in the United States , edited with a 90-pages *introduction* in 1970, and printed for the 14th time in 1995). Although the writers were not anthropologists by profession[16], their work still influences ethnic thinkers in Anthropology.

Glazer and Moynihan start with the premises that ethnicity and race dominated the city of New York and their work analyses the patterns of adaptation of the different ethnic

[16] This was noted by Banks, 1996. Tim Allen and John Eade also write that Daniel Patrick Moynihan has been an influential US Senator and former Harvard professor (Allen and Eade, 1999:11)

groups that migrated to America: White Anglo Saxon Protestants (WASP's), Irish, Jews, Italians, Puerto Ricans and 'Negroes'[17]. One of their core objectives is to investigate the relationships between these various ethnic groups, especially the blacks and Jews and Puerto Ricans who arrived in the US after the WASP's group. The writers show that people of different ethnic groups are tied to one another by kinship, which is also linked to 'interest' (in other words, they are also 'interest groups'). After an in-depth analysis of relationships between the different ethnic groups in New York City, the writers arrive at the conclusion that the 'melting pot' has not happened yet.

Beyond The Melting Pot is indeed an influential work for anyone interested in ethnicity. It provides a graphic portrayal of the circumstances under which these ethnic groups arrived in the US. It investigates the issues of adaptation and integration by the different ethnic groups and sheds light on what the labour market looked like for the different groups and how the groups did interact with each other. I am limited by space to go into the individual ethnic groups analysed or the inter-ethnic interactions looked into in as much detail as I would like to.

But one may have reservations about some claims made in the book, especially on the chapter that deals with blacks. My study is interested in refugees and their integration into the labour market system rather than going deep into race issues, except attempting to assess it as one relevant factor in refugees' employability. This makes it imperative not to ignore some of the claims made in *Beyond the Melting Pot* on blacks. Some of the authors' arguments which are "based on judgements rather than facts" as they themselves repeatedly admit, may sound heavy-handed against blacks, possibly a reflection of the views of sections of the New York population in the 1960's, a decade of racial tensions in America. Although the authors mention on occasion that they are referring to black 'militants', not to successful blacks, as they themselves admit some of their remarks can offend many readers as they sometimes make gross generalisations. For instance, Glazer claimed in the first edition of 1963 that blacks came to the US with no culture of their

[17] Unlike the 1960's, the term Negro is derogatory in the present generation, so from now on I will use the word 'blacks', to mean the 'Negroes' that the writers use throughout the book

own until he was forced to admit his mistake openly and withdraw his remark in the 90-page introduction to the second edition in 1970. The writers talk about black 'violence' at length, a problem any reasonable member of society should not condone; however, they never try to discover whether racism, of which there is vast evidence, has contributed to violence. A modern day sociologist would also try to analyse the discriminations American societies may have against minorities including blacks or Jews and other ethnic minorities. In their detailed analysis of ethnicity and colour they accept the significance of colour in the NYC system. However, apart from few examples of discrimination suffered by blacks in the labour market, they do not investigate in a systematic way, what form this discrimination takes and how it uniquely affects blacks compared to the other ethnic groups that arrived in America. To merely state discrimination exists or - even worse – that colour discrimination is used as an excuse by blacks to justify the difficulties they face can be seen by modern day sociologists as too simplistic, given the vast body of evidence of racism in multi-cultural societies, not only in the US and Europe but also in all other parts of the world including the Third World.

Moynihan and Glazer's conclusion that the melting pot did not happen was based on a methodology that sees the different ethnic groups as completely distinct. They explain that the groups are also 'interest groups' but they do not show whether these interest groups cross boundaries of ethnicity. For instance, in today's Britain, gender as a basis of 'interest group' can cross the boundaries of colour in the sense that white and black women can have more commonalities as women than differences in terms of colour. Black and white youngsters have the same difficulties in penetrating the labour market and could therefore be perceived as 'interest groups'. Refugees from Ethiopia are affected by the asylum system in the same way as a white East European refugee, so are 'interest groups'. Moynihan and Glazer do not tell us if there were 'interest groups' formed between the Jews and blacks or the Irish, for instance. It is with such premises of focusing only on differences that they conclude that the melting pot did not happen. We could therefore ask whether this methodology is accurate for modern day societies. As noted above although the race issue is just one of the many factors linked to refugees' employability an attempt is made in our study how it affects integration or contributes to

the 'melting pot' debate of Glazer and Moynihan in the UK context. This will be attempted to be done by looking mainly at the refugees' perspective with other corroborative studies.

The de-tribalisation and re-tribalisation thesis of Cohen and the melting pot arguments by Glazer and Moynihan are assessed in relation to our findings, especially on the topic of whether refugees feel integrated or not.

2.3.4. Ethnic Group Organisations, Solidarity and integration

The way ethnic group organisations in a host country are set up can vary according to the criteria used: home-country related political groupings, professional, economic, faith-based or simply community organisations and others depending on the cultural values of the ethnic group in question. In relation to refugees Daniele Joly (cited in Griffiths, 2002) categorises refugee associations as those with a political project and those without. It is arguable though that there is no fine line between the two as economic groupings (e.g., groups who aim at remittances to country of origin) may also have a political agenda in the way they remit resources and cannot be said to be purely non-political. The same applies to ethnic based professional groupings, which might be influenced by some particular types of political attitudes.

Ethnic and community groups in general help immigrants to resettle in the new host country. For instance, David Styan (2003) in his study of the Francophone African settlement in London in the 1990's, indicates the importance of community groups and churches in the communities to expand in the host country (see also the importance of ethnic churches in the post Second World War immigration in Bohning (1981).

One way ethnic community groups help in integration is by acting as a common meeting point for migrants of a country or ethnic group, especially when they are vulnerable. In his study of Somali and Kurdish Refugees in London, David Griffiths of Oxford Brookes

university emphasises that the central theme in refugee association is creating a national identity (Griffiths, 2002).

The veteran Sociologist thinker, Rex, outlines that the main functions of community associations are overcoming isolation, material help, defending interests and promoting culture (Rex, cited in Griffiths, 2002). By doing so, ethnic links could be created and strengthened which can help to promote settlement in some areas (Bloch, 1999) and thereby expand the community (Styan, 2003). It can lead to what Steve Gold (1992) calls 'ethnic solidarity'. Gold, in his comparative study on Soviet Jewish and Vietnamese refugees argues that the ethnic solidarity created within such groups has helped to breakdown discrimination in the labour market and acts as a means of interest. He also points out that disadvantage and discrimination encourage group organisation.

Varying evidences show that the argument about whether ethnic and refugee associations can help integration is not a simple one in the sense that in some host societies they have proved effective for example in the case of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in the Sudan (Kuhlman, 1994) and Soviet Jews and Vietnamese refugees Gold studied. They can also help facilitate integration through reception of new-comers and creating jobs for their communities (Valtonen, 1999; see also her earlier work on Vietnamese refugees in Finland, 1994), or by facilitating links between refugees and employers (Hurstfield, 2004).

On the other hand, it is also possible that ethnic groupings can harm rather than encourage integration. The more ethnic groups focus on their ethnic 'enclaves', the more they can be detached from the host country system. In the UK, today, for example, the government is keen to promote integration through the learning of English. It is also possible that home country political divisions which have an impact on the diaspora can cause 'suspicion' and negatively affect the process of integration through the associations.

In this section an attempt has been made to assess some of the relevant literature on ethnicity in the context of the schools identified; groups' endeavours to maintain their cultural distinctiveness; and the role ethnicity plays in adaptation and integration. The aim was to highlight influential thinking in the area and identify under-explored aspects (gaps) my study attempts to investigate. In later chapters, findings on ethnic community organisations role in integration have been examined. In the next section we shall examine a related topic, networks, linguistic and kinship ties as they play a crucial role in integration into the labour market, and through that, into the host country system.

2.3.5. Social Capital: Networks, Linguistic, Family and Kinship ties

> Intrinsic to the concept of networks are the elements of choice and decision making by the actors. They are required to choose who to recruit to their networks, how many links to utilise to achieve a particular end, whether or how much to reciprocate to other persons in the network, for how long to operationalise a network, how frequently to interact with their links, etc.
>
> A. Ersan Yucel, 1987: 119

The importance of networks and linkages in adaptation to and integration into a new society has been emphasised by various writers across the globe. Janet MacGaffe and Remy Bazenguissa –Ganga discuss anthropologists' views of network, whose focus is on relations between people, as well as the views of geographers and historians, whose concerns are with spatial migrations, and economists, who emphasise forms of exchange[18]. However, even if these various disciplines show interest in network analysis as Ersan Yucel, quoted above, says it is anthropology which most successfully developed the concept of network analysis.

In his study of Iranians in the Netherlands, Khalid Koser (1997) writes that although a rich body of empirical literature has established the importance of social networks for the

[18] By 'forms of exchange' they mean that economists also speak of networks and differentiate exchanges along them from other forms of exchange. When items exchanged between buyers and sellers have qualities which are not easily measured and are transferred in the context of long-term and recurrent relations, these exchanges constitute a network rather than a market transaction.

dynamics of labour migration to Europe (since the late 70's), it is only recently that emphasis has been placed on networks as a theoretical framework for studying international migration. According to Koser there are at least two strengths of the network approach. First, it is an integrative approach that combines previously distinct micro and macro-level approaches to migration. Secondly, it is an interactive approach that provides a single framework for studying the variety of economic, social and political factors that are involved in the migration process.

Links and networks among migrants can be established along different lines. The basis of links can be family or kinship; or religion (for instance, the Mouride Islamic brotherhood which links large wholesalers in Dakar, Senegal, to networks of traders in New York, Paris, Brussels and Dubai (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa Ganga, 2000:15). Basis of linkage can also be linguistic (e.g., Ethiopian Somalis and Somalis of Somalia; Ethiopian Tigre's and Eritrean Tigre's; or Ethiopian Afars and Eritrean or Djibouti Afars; Ethiopian Oromos or 'southerners' and linguistically related people in neighbouring Kenya); or basis of linkages can simply be country of origin. Indeed, an even wider basis of linkage can be 'continent of origin'; e.g, AFFORD (Africans for development, based in London) is striving for African development through co-ordination and creating networks among African diaspora.

Ersan Yucel's study takes Turkishness as a basis of network and in his empirical study of a small Turkish community in the then Federal Republic of Germany (before Germany was re-united by the end of the 1980's). He breaks the basis of ties down into different categories to indicate the levels of strength of the linkages and ties. An inner core consists of relations with *yakin akrabalar* (close relatives, including affines as well as kinsmen) with whom mutual binding obligations are acknowledged. Around this are relations with more distant relatives (*uzak akrabalar*) and *hemsehriler* (fellow countrymen) and *arkadaslar* (friends). Yucel, whose study was based on participant observation, investigates how the Turkish diaspora took it as their obligations to help vulnerable community members, especially those living on low wages and 'illegal migrants' (Yucel refuses to use this term and re-names them as 'spontaneous migrants'). Yucel shows how

it is 'un-Turkish' not to help such vulnerable fellow countrymen. He argues that networks start in pre-migration times and explores how pre-migration networks help to supplement official information. His research is backed by statistical evidence and shows that pre-migration network was a primary factor in deciding to come to FRG.

The importance of ethnic identities, and the networks formed on their basis, in accessing jobs is well documented. Yucel's study, for instance, shows how ethnic identity helped to access jobs, indeed to 'colonise' some work places in the host society. Indeed the study on Vietnamese and Soviet Jews refugees in California by Steven Gold (1992, et al.) reveals that ethnic networks offer 'alternative effective means' to access California's job market, and help to exercise rights as Tamme Wittermans study (1991) on the Ambonese refugees in Holland also argues[19].

As shown above common country of origin can be one basis of social network in a host country. Network can also be based on kinship ties. The study by Keith Hart (1988) based on a fieldwork two decades earlier on the *Frafra* migrants in Ghana (a migrant tribe from north-east Ghana in the slums of Accra, capital of Ghana, named Nima)[20] is one interesting work which demonstrates the crucial role kinship ties play in a host society. Hart shows how trust plays a key role in economic relationships, such as credit provisions, in the context of Frafras in Nima where legal structures are weak or non-existent in reinforcing formal contractual agreements. By using case studies, Hart also shows how entrepreneurs rely on kinship ties to be economically self-sufficient and he

[19] The Ambonese, also called the Moluccans, were Indonesians transported to Holland in 1951, in the aftermath of the Indonesian revolution when they disagreed with the new Indonesian forces as the Dutch expeditionary forces were leaving the country. Tamme Witterman's study was an Anthropological study of the Moluccans for a Ph.D. thesis at London School of Economics in 1955 and was re-published by Fridus Steylen, 1991.

[20] Hart's Nima can have similarities with the Sabo 'Quarter' of Abner Cohen's case study in Nigeria in the sense that both are quarters within the territory of other parts of a country. However, there are also differences in that Cohen is mainly interested in the issue of struggle of an ethnic group (Hausas) surrounded by an ethnically different geographical area of the Yoruba's to maintain their cultural distinctiveness whereas Hart's main focus is economic organisation of Frafras and issues of informal work and the crucial role that the notion of 'trust' plays. Hart is not as concerned as Cohen about ethnic frictions and relations between the Frafras and others in Accra.

emphasises that kinship ties play an even bigger part than trust, which is an important way of life within the group.

Compared with ties and links on the basis of other commonalities, family ties constitute probably the strongest form of kinship. James Fawcett (1999) designs a conceptual framework of linkages between sending and receiving countries and asserts that family relationships have an "enduring" impact on migration. He argues that when policies and even norms change, obligations among family members are of an abiding nature. Family members, as Fawcett argues, are also trusted sources for information about migration (compared with media and job recruitment sources).

2.3.6. The Role of Social capital in Integration

As we observed in the previous section the consensus is that ties and networks among migrants play a central role in accessing jobs. However, caution must be exercised as to the belief that jobs obtained through such means always help to promote integration. What a close look at the literature reveals is that in the context of western host societies, the notion of whether kinship ties speed up or delay integration is a controversial subject. There are studies which indicate that very strong kinship ties between migrants/refugees either do not exist, or if they exist delay, rather than promote, integration. There are also studies that conclude the contrary, i.e., they believe kinship ties speed up rather than delay integration.

In relation to the first view, i.e., scepticism about the positive role kinship ties and networks play in promoting integration, writers argue from different angles, such as how it is difficult to maintain strong linkages. The Californian study on Soviet Jews and Vietnamese refugees by Gold (1992) reveals that new arrivals want to network with earlier ones but the later are not willing to do so when integrated into the mainstream system. Marita Eastmond's study (1997) on Chilean refugees in the US also argues that in host countries in the west, social ties and bases of collective authority are weakened by

the system. A recent study on Ethiopians entitled EMBRACE – UK project (2002) also indicates the difficulty of having and lack of strong social networks among Ethiopians in the UK. Eastmond's argument is shared by Kathleen Valtonen (1999), who studied integration of Vietnamese refugees in Finland and Canada. Valtonen uses societal participation as an analytical framework to study the integration of Vietnamese refugees in Finland and Canada. While the writer touches on various issues in relation to kinship ties, like Marita Eastmond she argues that host country circumstances in Finland and Canada discourage kinship related support amongst refugees. Even when kinship ties are possible, Valtonen is not convinced about the importance of unlimited use of kinship ties to speed up integration on the grounds that too much dependence on community delays integration into the mainstream (see also Bloch, 1999).

The opposite argument to the above is that which suggests that kinship ties speed up, rather than delay, integration. In empirical terms, a study conducted in Chicago by Harvey Choldin (1999) on individual migrants is a good example. Choldin shows in the Chicago study that family and kinship ties promote integration due to the support it makes available for new arrivals. According to the study, migrants receive three kinds of help on arrival: material assistance; intermediary help (activities which aid the migrant in overcoming ignorance of customs, geography, and other facts about the new community) and making new social connections. Indeed Choldin argues that kinfolk is the most important of all other networks including host country institutions. In terms of finding jobs, the Chicago study found that those who depend on kinship ties are under less pressure to find jobs. Khalid Koser's study on social networks of Iranian refugees in the Netherlands (1997) also has similarities with the Chicago study by Choldin. Tom Kuhlman's study on Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in the Sudan (1994) also supports the view that ethnic links speed up, rather than delay, integration.

Therefore as Yucel stated above (the first quotation on this section), in networks people can choose which networks to join (family, kinship, community, etc.). Networks can last for long or short period, as earlier arrivals join the mainstream system and are unable to network with new arrivals as much as the new ones may wish. Networks and linkages

help to access the job market but the question of whether ethnic ties and linkages help to speed up or delay integration is a controversial issue. How does it work for refugees in the UK in general and Ethiopians in particular? An attempt has been made to answer this question throughout this study where relationships between Ethiopians were highlighted under the different topics. The topic in chapter four, where the issue of willingness for mobility is affected by unhappiness not to leave existing networks is highlighted, is an example of where network issues are addressed. The issue of networks has also been assessed under the findings of 'jobsearch methods'.

2.4. Host-country Related Notions and Issues

2.4.1. Socio - Economic Positions of Ethnic Minorities

In a recent work entitled *'Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage'*, 1997, Modood writes,

> Employment is at the centre of most discussions not just of racial equality but also of social justice generally. It is probably also the topic on which the most extensive comparative data on ethnic minorities and white people are available, and on which *theorising* about 'race' has most focussed (1997:5).

Modood's work focuses on a comparison of 'ethnic minorities' with 'white people' in the British labour market by taking a sample of ethnic minorities from the Caribbean, South Asia and African Asians and a sample from the 'white population'. While his findings reveal that the ethnic minorities under consideration are disadvantaged, however, he does not investigate (and/or clearly show) the causes of disadvantage. In other words, the work only shows ethnic minorities' generally higher level of unemployment, lower earnings, levels of responsibility etc. when compared with 'white people'. There is no explanation of the factors hindering the former group from attaining the levels which the latter group reaches. His investigation of disadvantaged ethnic minorities may imply racial discrimination in the labour market (the focus of the research is a comparison of situation

based on colour – between 'white people' and a diversity of 'coloured' people). Yet, in his assessment of 'Equal Opportunities and Discrimination' or in other similar topics, concrete detail is given regarding how racial discrimination, for example, by employers and policy, is practised. In fact, in the absence of a clear cut specification of the role of racism, there is room for thoughts that Modood does not believe that racism is responsible, perhaps inconsistent with the overall approach and context of the research. All he discusses are 'impressions and perceptions' of ethnic minority respondents (see, for instance, pp.129-132). It appears that this constitutes a weakness as it does not help to detect ways of discrimination in the labour market. Our study attempts to overcome this short-coming.

Another piece of research around ethnic minority migrants and their position in the UK socio-economic system is that of Floya Anthias (1992). Entitled *'Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration'*, Anthias' work focuses on Greek-Cypriot migrants in Britain. Anthias devotes a particular interest to the notion of 'ethnicity' and critically examines various viewpoints before making her own.

Focusing on migrant women, she demonstrates how these migrant women's position is to be found at the 'intersection point of gender and ethnic disadvantage', how this is realised and intensifies exclusion for these groups, more so than for their male counterparts, whose combined situation was explored earlier.

Being concerned with an empirical study of one 'migrant community' – the Greek-Cypriots - Anthias also raises the question of race. She argues that the issue of commonality between 'white' and 'black' migrant groups in Britain is "still rarely raised". She draws on common features of Greek Cypriots and New Commonwealth as colonial migrants and all common ideological/political implications for exclusion and hostility in the host society. She also insists on the diversity of positions within the racialised ethnic groups. In explanation of this reasoning, which is supported by Modood's (1997) survey and Miles (1982; 1993) Anthias (1992) asserts that:

> Any 'cultural choice' has to be conceptualised in addition as a 'management strategy' vis-à-vis the disadvantages attending migrant or ethnic minority position (disadvantages that may vary for different ethnic groups) and *not only* in terms of a 'racialised' divide (emphasis my own).

To support this assertion, in a subsequent paragraph she outlines a figurative explanation to indicate how Greek-Cypriot migrants can be more disadvantaged in some ways than their 'coloured' counterparts, while in a better position in other ethnic groups.

Anthias and Castles and Kossack are particularly interested in highlighting that migrants are in a disadvantaged fundamentally because they are migrants, black or white. Taken together, the assertions by both Anthias and Castles and Kosack implicitly undermine the significance of race (colour) in the labour market. Anthias' demonstration of comparative positions of Greek-Cypriots migrants and 'the racialised/black' ones referred earlier is an example of this. Without questioning or contesting the existence of relative positions, (i.e., Greek-Cypriots being more or less disadvantaged than 'coloured' Caribbeans), I would hold that this is only part of the whole. In fact, Modood's (1997) survey findings reveal individual instances in the labour market where certain groups of 'black' ethnic minority immigrants are in a better position compared *even* with the 'indigenous white people'. As he makes it clear, however, this should not lead us to believe that the two groups are equally disadvantaged. Indeed other studies (e.g., Ballard and Holden, 1981; Collard, 1970; Panayi, 1993; Pile, 1997).

Selected writers and research referred to above have paid attention to the processes of exclusion and the positions of labour migrants and ethnic minorities in the host country's socio-economic system. But how are appearances and processes of discrimination and exclusion explained? The next section attempts to deal with this issue.

2.4.2. Issues of Ostracism and Disadvantage in the Labour Market

As Blackburn and Mann suggest to explain discrimination (and exclusion) a wider historical and sociological approach would be necessary (1981:77). Therefore, the

reactions of some academic writers and theorists to this question have been assessed briefly below.

Writers have attempted to systematically contextualise the formation of practices of "disadvantage, discrimination and exclusion" against labour immigrants in the British economy in general and the labour market in particular.

Bohning's (1981) *'Self-Feeding Process of Post-1945 Economic Migration'* hypothesis to Western Europe, also applicable in the UK, highlights the appearance of "undesirable jobs", necessitated to recruit foreign workers, the "polyannual migrants". Bohning then argues that the economic situation the "polyannual migrants" found themselves in the host society and the fact that they became part of the system of norms, values and deprivations of the consumer society influenced them to stay longer.

Bohning then argues that the polyannual migrant then is constantly torn between desire to overcome deprivation and desire to return home to a social context where deprivation is felt 'even more deeply than when he left'. The result is he habitually extends his stay abroad. In the end this process will lead to a significant number of target workers settling down in the host country, bringing in their families and the establishment of ethnic groups with ethnic shops, churches, schools and other facilities:

Whilst Bohning's thesis helps to explain from a historical perspective not only how the disadvantaged economic position of labour migrants came into being in post-1945 immigration history. It also shades some light on how adopting a new consumption pattern and consumers society explains how refugees from underdeveloped countries, the main focus of this study, tend to stay longer than they intended to, to be absorbed in the ethnic minority groups. Bohning's work, however, is based on the two pillar assumptions of circumstances confined to the 1950's and 1960's, which may not necessarily be the case today.

Stephen Castles and Godula Kosack (1981) agree with the West's motive to encourage immigration to fill vacancies. However, they provide a broader explanation for encouraging labour immigration. They argue that this migration was part of the general capitalist rule to maintain the system through two mechanisms: the 'industrial reserve army' and a 'labour aristocracy' of the native work force, both intended to create a split between immigrant and indigenous workers along national and racial lines.

Stressing that the post-1945 "encouragement" of economic migration should be seen within this broader context, Castles and Kosack also have their explanation on how practices of discrimination, exclusion and disadvantages began. According to them, newly-arrived immigrants from under-developed areas have little basic education or vocational training, and are usually ignorant of the language. They know nothing of the prevailing market conditions or prices and the writers say this is taken advantage of by the capitalist system.

Another writer within the Marxist school is Miles. Miles (1982) agrees with the above argument but adds that the fact that these immigrants came from the British colonies and ex-colonies has contributed to the discrimination they face in that,

> The negative imagery of these 'colonial subjects' (as inferiors) which is signified in the meaning attributed to phenotypical difference, was available for re-interpretation...

And this and related circumstances resulted in

> Migrants occupying a structurally distinct position in the economic, political and ideological relations of British capitalism (165).

The explanations of Castles and Kosack (1981) on how the exclusionary practices began, as it seems to me, however, raises some questions. Castles and Kosack's assertion that Third World immigrants who, as they claim, had little basic education, vocational training or language ability is contestable as research indicates otherwise (e.g. Bohning, 1981:36; Nuffield Social Mobility Survey, 1972; Modood, 1997:141; in relation to

refugees, see also Home Office Res. No. 141, 1995; RC, 1997). Moreover, at least in the British case the fact that these immigrants came from colonies or ex-colonies weakens the argument that they were "ignorant of (English) language".

Another model that attempts to provide a fuller description of discrimination and disadvantage is the *Dual Labour Market Model.* The major *Dualist* Neo-classical theorists, P.B. Doeringer, and M.J.Piore (1971) assert that the labour market is increasingly divided into 'primary' and 'secondary' sectors.

According to the *Dualists*, the 'primary' sector consists of monopolies; capital-intensive, highly profitable and technologically advanced firms and industries. The 'secondary' sector comprises small, backward firms located in competitive markets in, such as retail, trade, services and non-durable manufacturing industries such as clothing or food processing. The 'primary' sector is high wage, highly unionised and contains internal labour markets. In the extreme form of the internal labour market, the *Dualists* argue, only the lowest manual jobs are filled from outside, whereas the remainder of vacancies are filled by promotion from within, either by seniority, ability or a mixture of the two.

Two factors account for the development of the internal labour market in the big firms, according to the *Dualists*: the first is that production needs are stable and secure. The employer's need for stability from his workforce becomes even greater and the reduction of labour turnover (hiring and firing) and steady production from workers is vital. Secondly, the 'primary' sector becomes more and more capital-intensive and any worker's unreliability will result in greater damage. Thus the employer prefers to retain experienced staff through labour incentives.

The consequence is that while the 'primary' sector is looking more than ever for the stable worker, the secondary sector must use turnover and redundancy to adjust employment volume to unpredictable product markets. Thus secondary employers abandon the 'queue' and look for 'unstable' employees such as women, *ethnic minorities* and other marginal and relatively 'docile' groups. The result is a stratified labour market.

The *Dual labour market* model is applicable under certain conditions, especially where the proportion of immigrant or ethnic minority workers in the total employed population is very high and where this gives rise to high concentrations amongst manual workers in a few industries.

As Blackburn and Mann (1981) argue, one central difficulty with this model is that it does not provide a wider historical and sociological approach. As Blackburn and Mann point out,

> Like any neo-classical (economic) theory which contents itself with analysing existing market forces, it can only take as 'given' the parameters of that market. If discrimination between races and sexes is built into the structure of the market, the theory must content itself with an explanation of rational choice made within that structure. To explain discrimination itself, a wider historical and sociological approach would be necessary...that this model does not provide (1975: 81).

The second major problem with the *Dualists* is that their model is more of a hypothesis than established fact. There is very little hard data to support their arguments (see, for instance, Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Doeringer, 1973; Bosanquet and Doeringer, 1973).

Blackburn and Mann (1981) argue that segregation between ethnic groups within the labour market is far from complete and express their scepticism of "the extent to which real labour markets, certainly, in Britain, approximate to the dual model".

Whilst use a large amount of data to support their arguments it seems to me that their underlying assumptions contain at least two problems. The first is that their analysis of data assumes that "most immigrants in Britain have full freedom on the labour market" (81). They do not explicitly explain what they mean by "full freedom". This goes against the widely held belief by other academics that black immigrants do not enjoy 'full freedom'. For instance, *Migration Today*, 1990 indicates that "although black migrants in Europe are fully integrated into the labour market of the host country and subject to the

same pressures to migrate within the EC, they have no right to cross frontiers to look for work" (*Migration Today*, No.42; 1990:9).

To summarise, this chapter has discussed the waves of migration, including refugees, to Britain over centuries, though with more emphasis on the last century and on recent decades including the 1990's in particular. The responses of successive British governments to this migration have been highlighted. Secondly, based on evidences from experienced researchers, it was established that the academic response to migration of refugees in particular has been a recent phenomenon, is still at an early stage of development and thus has many unexplored issues. It has also been established that the weakness of research is greater when it comes to refugee studies. Recognising, however, that academic work of this kind needs to utilise theoretical approaches and debates, the theories, approaches and debates related to migration, ethnicity and ethnic minorities and the labour market have been employed, with accompanying justifications from contemporary academics.

In doing so, I have chosen to focus on those approaches that will facilitate the construction of a research model in a later chapter. This will then be used to conduct the academic investigation. Accordingly, I have categorised these academic responses into two broad areas: The first contains those dealing with the nature of academic responses and their stages of development, together with indications of socio-economic circumstances in which immigrants and ethnic minorities find themselves. The second category of response consists of those concerned with why and how the disadvantage and exclusionary practices towards immigrants and ethnic minorities were created, formulated and what they consist of. In all cases a critical analysis has been attempted. All works discussed in this chapter are focused on economic migrants from ethnic minorities. These works do not cover the unique issues facing refugees and which place them in a worse position than labour migrants. The next chapter will deal with the issue of integration as a solution to ostracism before the construction of the research model.

CHAPTER THREE

INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES IN THE LABOUR MARKET

3.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, I have attempted to critically entertain some of the main academic debates in response to both the socio-economic positions of immigrants and ethnic minorities and the historical context within which exclusionary practices against these groups (taken generally) took shape and is taking place in the West in general and the United Kingdom in particular.

Effective integration of refugees in the labour market can be a means to combat ostracism as employment has a key decisive role to play in effective integration within the host society. It is therefore important to investigate at what level of integration refugees are currently. This work attempts to assess this and in this chapter I will attempt to entertain some of the main surrounding issues of integration before I construct my research model. The surrounding (accompanying) issues to be treated in this chapter include the importance of integration; the problematic nature of the notion of integration; how it is perceived by decision-makers in Western Europe in general and the UK in particular and, finally, some academic attempts made to define and analyse integration. The intention is that these issues help to pave the way for my research framework that I have constructed at the end of the chapter.

3.2. Importance of Integration

Many writers concerned with the problem of social exclusion agree that integration has a major role to play in helping to tackle the problem of social exclusion. For the Social Exclusion Unit report (1997), the 'best yardstick for success' in tackling social exclusion

or one of the intended goals of the Unit in dealing with the 'problem' is to "reintegrate deprived communities into mainstream markets". However, a possible question that may arise from this is that reintegration of "deprived communities" implies that these communities have been once integrated, which may not be the case for refugees and asylum seekers.

The then European Commission Employment Commissioner, Flynn, (1993) claimed that the Commission's intention (in fighting social exclusion) was to promote a Community initiative on human resources, which, *inter alia*, will be "devoted to integration of those excluded from the labour market".

With particular reference to refugees and asylum-seekers, the UNHCR (1997) argues that integration is one recommended solution for the life of uncertainty that refugees may be forced to live.

For Gaim Kibreab too, the refugee problem cannot be solved in a context of exile if, among other things, host governments do not subscribe to integration of refugees (Kibreab, 1999:389). Basing himself on the experience of the Horizon project for European Refugees and Migrants, Nicholas Walter also argues that recent arrivals into the UK have undergone an initial settlement process – housing, legalities, benefits etc.. But, he emphasises "this process was not on-going and refugees and asylum-seekers were easily 'lost' to the labour market" (Walters, 1996:1). Arguably, this implies that for refugees not to be 'lost' to the labour market, support for the process of their settlement and integration in the host society is of crucial importance. After an in-depth analysis of the current asylum and immigration issues internationally and in the Western world, Castles and Miller (1993) also conclude that one of the 'central issues' that immigration countries need to deal with should include "integrating (these) settlers"(262) and argue that there is a mutual benefit for the host society and immigrants in socio-economic and political inclusion.

On top of these considerations that necessitate integration, the writers mentioned above also argue that there is no justification for excluding these groups (e.g., Castles and Miller, 1993:263), while the UNHCR stresses that under the UN 1951 Convention, refugees have the 'right' to get the support of the government of asylum for a successful resettlement, which can only be achieved if they can be effectively integrated.

In the above sub-section, an attempt has been made to establish that integration both as a matter of necessity and right offers a crucial solution to the problem of social exclusion. However, integration is far from being a simple notion. Rather, research shows that it is a problematic concept. Below, an attempt is made to assess the problematic nature of the concept of integration.

3.3. The Integration Problematic: Introduction

Tom Kuhlman (1991) writes that there is "a dearth of theoretical reflection" in the migration literature on the question of integration of refugees. As mentioned earlier on, this chapter outlines the theoretical model of my study on the question of integration of refugees in the British labour market, taking on board the issues of the labour market, interactions and positions of refugees within it. Before this and my proposed definition of integration, however, perhaps it would be wise to assess insights from the relevant migration and acculturation literature.

3.4. Why Problematic?

Robert Miles (1993) problematises the understanding of integration by European governments from two perspectives. He begins by noting that the notion of integration refers generally to a process of mixing or amalgamation of a previously external population with another pre-existing population in a nation state. The assumption, he argues, is that the former population is not yet a participant, or not yet an equal participant in social relations. According to Miles, herein lies the origin of the

problematic status of the concept because it denies that refugees have been, from the very instant of their arrival in Western Europe, an integral part of these social formations. He claims that they have participated in commodity production and exchange through the taxation of their wages and of the expenditure of their income. Thus,

> The notion of integration *exteriorises* in thought, and in politics, those populations which are already, indeed have always been, a constituent element of the social formation (1993:175).

Furthermore, he argues that the notion not only has a subject ('the immigrants') but also an object, namely the social formation into which they are supposed to be 'mixed'. He establishes that while all the social formations of Western Europe are dominated by the capitalist mode of production, the cultural and political form taken by the nation-states varies in that there is a difference in the "mode of belonging, of affinity to the nation". Based on this, he goes on to argue that not only is the concept of integration implicitly "prescriptive"(as 'the immigrants' are required to 'belong' in the culturally prescribed manner), but in addition, it is a nationally variable issue in the sense that within Europe, what it means to 'belong' varies from one nation state to another. In a nutshell,

> While the word might be the same in translation, and might have the same general object, the idea of integration has discrete nuances and refers to distinct practices in each nation state. In other words, while the French, Dutch and British states all claim to be implementing a policy of integration, what is meant differs because the structure of the nation, and the nature of its imagining, varies (1993: 176).

Below let's briefly see Miles' critical analysis of the *perception* of the concept by Western European.

3.5. The Question of Integration: Perception and Treatment in Western Europe

Miles' looks at the report of the Netherlands' Scientific Council for Government Policy (NSCGP, 1990) on integration of immigrants, for as he claims, "the circumstances in which the report was written prevail elsewhere in Europe (including Britain)" (1993:192).

To a lesser extent he also draws some ideas from the OECD (1990) review of international migration – in the main OECD host countries.

Miles criticises the NSCGP and OECD reports on report for not offering proper definition or 'yardstick' or what is meant by 'equivalent participation'. Based on his critique, he underlines the "lack of clearly demarcated *object* but, as a result, the concept has an important ideological role which implies that if immigrants have to be integrated into society, then they must first be outside of it. Intentionally or otherwise, he argues the ideological consequence is a legitimisation of the notion that immigrants are apart from, or outside, 'our' nation state, that they do not 'belong'. "Mistakenly", he goes on to argue, it suggests that these 'social problems' are a consequence of immigration and, therefore, that crime and unemployment can be reduced by means of an integration policy.

Miles also uses his second critique on the reports' treatment of the question of the unemployment problem and the 'solution' proposed by 'integration' and attacks it as it "deliberately almost ignored racism and (NSCGP) demonstrates that the integration problematic signifies the immigrant presence and attributed immigrant characteristics as the primary, if not the sole, reason for their subordinate social position. For Miles, this is an interpretation which leaves the existing structure of political and economic relations "largely *undisturbed*".

In fact, Miles links this with the immigration control measures taken by the European governments, including Britain. In addition to this, Miles also explores how these measures focused on Third World immigrants, "despite their very low number compared with EU immigrants". His conclusion is, therefore, that despite appearances of universality, the integration problematic is not concerned with the integration of immigrants generally (i.e., with *all* immigrants), but rather with a certain category of immigrants, i.e., those of the Third World.

As a final conclusion, he stresses:

> The problem, therefore, is not the problem of integration, but rather a problem of inequality and exclusion, a problem which tests the capacity of capitalism and of the nation state to realise in practice the values of universalism and equality (1993:193).

Miles' argument is quite free from vagueness and well elaborated. His interpretations of the contents and implications of the focused reports are based on rich documentation and deep substantiation and leave space for a wide range debate. However, I have chosen to focus on what I think are the most relevant ones. Miles' observation of the perception of integration issues has at least two great merits in relation to the case of the UK.

First of all, for some decades now the UK governments have been attempting to 'integrate' immigrants, but with little success. In his own words:

> Successive British governments since the mid-1960's have promoted integration policies. Yet its effects have been limited, at least if we take account of the evidence concerning the extent of exclusionary practices inspired by racism and the structural position of certain groups of migrant origin (1993:174;).

It seems to me that this 'limited success', at least partly, could have something to do with the deliberate or otherwise perception of integration by these successive governments in the way Miles understood the NSCGP report, i.e., by focusing primarily on the 'subjects' (which, according to Miles are 'Third world immigrants') rather than on a radical move to address the root causes of exclusion. For instance, one of the main "justifications" given for controlled immigration policies in the 1980's in the UK was to "create good race-relations" (e.g. Kaye, 1994; Prashar, 1986: 106; Conservatives' Campaigns Guide, 1992:217-18; Kenneth Clarke, *The Guardian*, Nov. 1992, quoted in Kaye, 1994:155) which by implication could shift the blame entirely on arrivals of immigrants from selected origins, as Miles stresses. Indeed, in none of the debates within the government circles at the time the tightened 1993 and 1996 Asylum Bills were passed, has the

question of integration been raised as a serious issue (see, for instance, *Hansard* Publications, 1992 and 1996[21]).

Secondly, both the NSCGP report (although Miles' puts into question its trustworthiness) and himself attach central importance to the problem of exclusion as a deterrent force against successful integration. This is an issue raised by many writers (referred in previous chapters) but rarely addressed in relation to integration. I believe this is the core issue in the question of integration and hence I shall come back to it later.

On the other hand, it seems to me that there are at least two limitations in Miles' analysis of the 'integration problematic' with reference to his critique of the reports in question.

The first is that while Miles does not entirely dismiss the reports' claim of the problem of integration in relation to 'the attributes' of immigrants, his main concern shifts to the ideological impact of such claims. Being seriously concerned with this issue, he seems to play down or, at least not take as seriously, the role such 'attributes' play in the disadvantageous positions of the immigrants. This especially is linked to the fact that immigrants come from countries of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds which may partly, but by no means wholly, contribute to the difficulties they face in the receiving country. Research confirm this almost unanimously. This is especially relevant in the case of refugees and is an issue to which I will return later in this chapter.

Secondly, while challenging the definition of integration proposed by the discussed report in relation to participating in 'host institutions', Miles holds the view that they are 'participating' in them. He elaborates where they are placed within the 'host institutions' exemplified based on his interpretation of what these 'host institutions' are. But I believe this could cause some complication if it is seen in relation to one group of immigrants: the refugees, especially those with relatively shorter length of stay. With an apparent concentration in the 'informal sector' (e.g. AET, 1998), in which 'host institutions' can

[21] See particularly Hansard, 'Parliamentary Debates', House of Commons, Sixth Series dated 22/10/92; 2/11/92; 11/1/93; 11/01/96; 11/12/96.

such refugees be placed? Or where are they? In general, despite the significant relevance of Miles' observation of the perception and handling of the 'integration problematic' by governments in Europe in general, and UK in particular, its debates are more concerned with the integration of post-1945 immigrants. It seems to me that it would be wise to look for more evidence somewhere else to assess integration issues in relation to refugees.

Below I shall review some definitions and studies conducted in relation to refugees in particular briefly. Following that, I will outline my research model.

3.6. The Concept of Integration in Refugee Studies: Another 'Problematic' Issue

As I attempted to establish in an earlier chapter with documented references, the absence of 'comprehensive', let alone 'systematic', studies in relation to the settlement of refugees is a central problem in the field of refugee studies in Western Europe. Few writers have attempted to deal with the subject in relation to refugees in Third World countries, which according to UNHCR figures are by far the highest recipients of refugees, compared with the developed world. Because refugees in all parts of the world have some common characteristics as aliens to the host society within which they have to mix, I believe it would be useful to get some insights from such studies. Below I shall attempt to assess some selected studies briefly.

In this area, several writers attempt to define 'integration' in different ways. For Mekuria Bulcha, an Ethiopian scholar based in Holland, integration is "a mutual 'live and let live' attitude based on tolerance of differences, solidarity and positive interaction". Bulcha holds the view that "this is not to suggest a harmonious equilibrium or a static balance between the different groups. Conflict is naturally part of the relationship" (1988:86).

Whilst Bulcha's "mutual live and let live" suggestion may make sense at the level of definition, the apparent problem lies in the difficulty of measuring the basis on which it is founded, that is, "tolerance of differences, solidarity and positive interaction". Bulcha

also takes 'conflict' to be 'part of the relationship' in the process of integration, with no explanation of what 'conflict' could constitute. This leaves it open to the possibility that it may include 'conflict' of economic interests, resulting in positioning one group at a higher economic level at the expense of others. This could be the logical consequence of his definition, and if we follow Bulcha's definition further, this is "part of the integration process". However, Bulcha's discussion later on in his work stops us from thinking so as he opposes 'integration' to 'marginalisation' which he defines as "withdrawal of the minority group into certain occupations, separate areas of residence or an inferior status..."(Ibid.). I believe his definition of 'marginalisation' could fit into one outcome of 'conflict' of economic interests, which is deemed to be part of the 'integration process'. In other words, it seems to me that there is a lack of compatibility in the two cases.

Harrell-Bond defines integration in a different way. For her, refugee integration refers to "a situation in which host and refugee communities are able to coexist, sharing the same resources - both economic and social – with no greater mutual conflict than that which exists within the host community" (1986:7).

This definition would seem to imply that the apportionment of 'economic and social resources' between refugees and the host community and the degree of mutual conflict between refugees and the host economy compared with that within the host economy are the measurements of 'integration'. In the absence of further explanation, which is the case here, this definition is too simplistic. In fact, further on Harrell-Bond herself admits this definition to be too simple on the grounds that access to resources may be unequal, one group may be exploited by another, and conflict within the host society may have increased due to the pressure of refugees' presence (Ibid.). Clearly what the notion of 'conflict' means and how 'access to resources' is measured are problematic issues as these have not been elaborated as in the case of Bulcha (1988).

A few other writers have also attempted to define 'integration', setting up their own criteria (see, for instance, Wijbrandi, 1986: 17-18; Bernard, 1973:87). I have chosen not to go into their definitions in much detail as the circumstances within which they are

trying to deal with 'integration' are relevant mainly in the Third World, as I indicated initially. A closer look at these different definitions with different sets of criteria makes one realise that the subject's meaning varies not only among different nation states as Miles(1993) argued (referred earlier), but also within the academic circle. It seems to me that this is another 'problematic' nature of the problem that should be added to those that Miles discussed and which I attempted to entertain. In other words, there are so many dimensions to the concept that there is not one single universally accepted definition of the subject not only across different nation states, as Miles' problematises, but also within one country.

Of all the definitions of 'integration' discussed above and available in the consulted literature, the definition proposed by Tom Kuhlman seems to be the most comprehensive and well elaborated one. Kuhlman believes that:

> If refugees are able to participate in the host economy in ways commensurate with their skills and compatible with their cultural values; if they attain a standard of living which satisfies culturally determined minimum requirements (standard of living is taken here as meaning not only income from economic activities, but also access to amenities such as housing, public utilities, health services, and education.); if the socio-cultural change they undergo permits them to maintain an identity of their own and to adjust psychologically to their own situation; if standards of living and economic opportunities for members of the host society have not deteriorated due to the influx of refugees; if friction between host population and refugees is not worse than within the host population itself; and if the refugees do not encounter more discrimination than exists between groups previously settled within the host society: then refugees are truly integrated (1991:7).

Indeed, Kuhlman provides measurements of evaluation of what he calls "true integration" and full substantiation of what he means by these measurements.

Based on this definition and the accompanying sets of yardsticks, he combines the 'Refugee Movements' and 'Immigrant Adaptation' models of Kunz (1981) and Goldhurst and Richmond's (1974) respectively and constructs his own model of 'Refugee Integration' (1991:12) followed by what he thinks are the limitations of the model.

Importantly, he recognises that the model he sketches in this way is a 'multi-disciplinary' one and emphasises that students from various disciplines concerned would have to specify those variables which they are qualified to study. He then focuses on the economic dimension of the model and designs a model of that version. I am not going to use his model because the variables used there are designed for integration of refugees in the Third World[22]. Furthermore, my study's interest in refugees integration narrows down to the labour market.

As I have attempted to reason from the outset, I focused on the labour market because there is strong evidence which shows that employment lies at the very core of the economic and social positions and settlement issues of immigrants in general and refugees in particular in host societies (e.g., OECD, 1990; NSCGP, 1990; Miles, 1993; Joly, 1992, 1997; Modood, 1997). So I need a type of model which needs to take account of the crucial issues that surround the issue. Nevertheless, I believe that Kuhlman's proposed research model is helpful as a point of departure, especially in designing areas of interrelationships among issues linked to integration.

Below is the research model that has been constructed and used in this research to assess the level of integration of refugees in the labour market of the host society. As I made clear at the beginning of this work, for practical purposes my research takes the case of the Ethiopian refugees in Britain as an empirical study. But the objective of the following research model is not only to lay down a systematic academic framework of analysis for this empirical study, but also to help future research students in the field of refugee studies to use or take account of this, at least as a starting point.

3.7. Integration of Refugees In the Labour Market: A Research Model

In their book *Basic Concepts in the Methodology of the Social Sciences,* Johann Mouton and HC Marais stress that "the term *model* is probably one of the most ambiguous in the

[22] Kuhlman makes clear that this model was applied in a research project on Eritrean refugees in the region of Kassala, Eastern Sudan, and was in its embryonic stage at the time of data collection.

vocabulary of the social scientist". They discuss the confusions that arise in the literature and attempt to clarify the concept of model. They add that models are also known as *scientific metaphors* and hold that by investigating a specific phenomenon, the researcher reveals certain similarities or relationships, and systematises these (in a simplified form) as a model of that phenomenon (Mouton and Marais, 1990:138; see also Greef, 1999:41-47; Rosen, 1991). The research model used for this study (which is presented below) seeks to be consistent with this meaning of *a model*[23]. The model is a graphic model[24].

The model captures the themes and issues of the literature referred to in this work in conjunction with the gap this study seeks to fill. The model categorises the case study data into three groups, namely *the employed, the unemployed* and *the self-employed* and identifies the various ways of interaction of refugees with the labour market. Then under each of these categories, the model features variables that help to explore the forms and processes of exclusion and disadvantage, and how integration is promoted or obstructed. Below, following a discussion of its determinants, a definition is proposed for the term *integration*.

The study assumes that the level of participation in the labour market and the extent of exclusion and disadvantage play key roles in determining the level of integration in the labour market. These are my measurements of levels of integration of refugees in the labour market of the host society. Quite obviously, these measurements need to be contextually and comprehensively defined, including the whole range of factors that in turn determine them. I will come back to their definitions at the end of explanations of the variables; so, I will begin with the main factors that determine them. I have categorised the factors that determine levels of exclusion and participation in the labour market of the host country into two:

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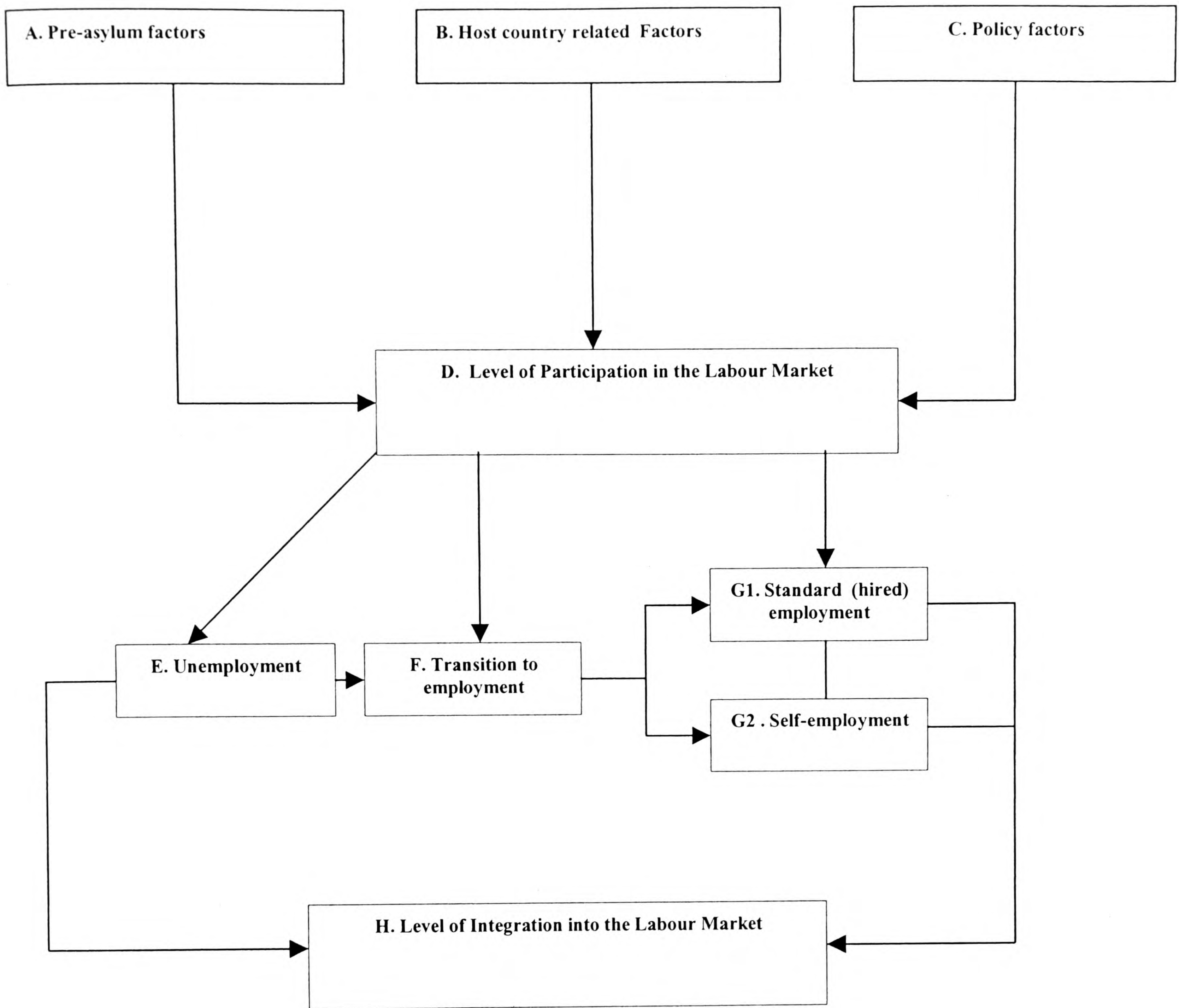
[23] Similar 'formats' of model have been used by academic researchers such as Kunz, 1981; Goldlust & Richmond, 1974; Kuhlman, 1991.

[24] The meaning and benefits of graphical models are discussed in more detail in Whittacker and Stewart (1999)

1. **Explanatory Variables**:- These are the main factors affecting the participation of refugees in the host society's labour market. I have chosen those factors that affect refugees. These are located in the model on the top bars as pre-asylum (bar A), host country (B) and policy factors (C).

2. **Explained Variables** :- These are related to the level of participation of refugees in the host society's labour market as a result of the impacts of the explanatory factors mentioned above and constitute the main body of analysis. Level of participation in turn breaks down into unemployment, transition to employment (e.g. informal jobs and jobsearch towards formal employment).

These are shown in the model below.


A. Pre-asylum factors
B. Host country related Factors
C. Policy factors
D. Level of Participation in the Labour Market
G1. Standard (hired) employment
E. Unemployment
F. Transition to employment
G2 . Self-employment
H. Level of Integration into the Labour Market

The top part of the model (A-C) are the explanatory variables. Level of participation in the labour market is depicted in the model by (D) and is determined by the explanatory variables: D = f(A,B,C), hence explained variable. E, F, G1 and G2 are variables that capture *the unemployed, those in transition to employment and the employed* (those in standard employment and those in self-employment). In the main body of the thesis the issues, problems and the process of integration within each of these explained variables are investigated and comparisons have been made to other refugee groups and ethnic minorities using findings of research in the field. Below, I shall elaborate what the explanatory and explained variables mean and comprise.

A. Pre-Asylum Factors

This variable includes factors which are mainly related to the circumstances of refugees before they claimed asylum. They include personal attributes such as the age and sex composition, cultural affiliation, language, (ethnic) identity, social capital and networks within the refugee group. It also covers other attributes of refugees that affect the level of their participation in the host society's labour market. These are any 'special virtues' or 'unique efforts' they have as 'any immigrants' (Lewis, 1968; Horizon -the University of Surrey, 1996; UNHCR, 1997); readiness to sell their labour power (OECD, 1990); willingness of mobility to find jobs (Ballard & Holden, 1981); access to information and knowledge of how the host society's labour market works, of job-search methods, of work culture and code of conduct – in general, knowledge of the 'rules of the game'(e.g. HO, 1995; AET, 1998).

B. The Host Country Related Factors:- This categorises the factors that exist in the host country and those that are available to refugees and which are crucial in their interaction with the host country's labour market. Included under this variable are existing socio-economic position of ethnic minorities where they belong to, refugee related voluntary organisations to which the UK government gives support and main

responsibility of refugees settlement (e.g. Joly, 1997); community organisations helping refugees in accessing employment (AET, 1998); existing systems of norms & values of the labour market and the consumer society (Bohning, 1981); structure of the labour market, i.e., skilled and manual (Modood, 1997; Miles, 1993); economic cycle i.e., boom and recession (e.g., HO, 1995); spatial distribution of jobs; length of stay, existing stereotypes and images of refugees which includes the role of the media; skills and qualifications obtained and accessible in the UK and transferability of home-gained skills and qualifications. Media and remittances, which are linked to integration into labour market also fall under this category.

C. **Policy Factor** :- Policy is a host country issue. However, its causes and impacts are more sophisticated, not least because it has a political dimension and possibly deliberate and more far-reaching consequences than the ones listed above. For this reason, I have chosen to categorise it separately. Policy-related factors as determining issues in the participation of refugees in the labour market include: immigration legislations especially those related to asylum status that are believed to cause confusion and ambiguity for employers; government rules and regulations on employment and education in relation to refugees and policy of equal opportunity.

Based on the literature reviewed and arguments made we propose the following important definitions.

Exclusion :- For the purposes of this study, 'exclusion' in the labour market constitutes those practices by host country institutions, employers and overall society attitudes that have the effect of directly or indirectly marginalising refugees or treating them as 'outsiders within'. These can be manifested in the form of difficulties in getting jobs and the various issues associated with workplace practices (for the employed) and self-employed.

Disadvantage:- For the purposes of this study, 'disadvantage' comprises those factors that put refugees in comparatively unfavourable situations in relation to the general host society's labour force, owing mainly to the fact that they are aliens. The causes behind this disadvantage could be linked to home country background or could emanate from the host country (e.g., language difficulties).

Now, based on this, I define 'integration of refugees in the labour market' as:

> A process of full participation of refugees in the host society's labour market in terms of access to and interaction with the labour market and unhindered by any exclusionary practices from enjoying the same rewards as the general indigenous labour force without being disadvantaged or excluded owing to being an alien and a refugee.

This definition takes account, and should be seen in the context and meaning, of all the attempted explanations preceding it.

The definition, the accompanying measurements and the research model are proposed in such a way that the sample case study, i.e., the Ethiopians interaction and integration with the British labour market can be analysed.

As I attempted to make clear initially, the above three categories (i.e. pre-asylum, host country and policy factors) are based on the findings of selected research referred to in this work. These factors are identified as playing the most decisive roles in determining the level of participation, which later indicates level of integration.

3.8. Summary

The settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in a host society is a fundamental issue from the perspectives of both immigrants/refugees and the host society and government for a number of reasons, some of which are mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

At the same time, the question is a problematic one not least because its meaning and perception varies not only from one nation-state to another but also in one and the same country. This is the case in Western Europe in general and the United Kingdom in particular. Whilst governments in Western Europe (Britain included) have attempted to promote a policy of integration over the last few decades, in general the intended goals have not been achieved. Some writers mentioned in this chapter argue that the main reason for this failure lies in the 'deliberate' or otherwise wrong perception of the meaning of integration and the wrong solutions that are prescribed.

There are strong indications that refugees, who arrived in recent years and decades, are found in the most disadvantageous economic and social positions compared with other immigrants and ethnic minorities. Given that integration provides the most 'durable solution' to the whole range of problems they encounter (UNHCR, quoted), the subject is too crucial to ignore. In the case of the United Kingdom, the difficulty of integration of refugees is a persistent problem. In the academic circle, lack or rarity of 'comprehensive' studies of refugees' settlement and integration, let alone a theoretical reflection, is a highly documented phenomenon.

This work focuses on the integration of case study refugees (who arrived in the last 10-15 years) in the host society with a particular dimension: the labour market. For practical purposes the study takes Ethiopian refugees and the UK's labour market as a case study. A research model has been designed with the aim of showing level of integration of the refugees in the labour market. This is done by categorising the subject groups into the unemployed, those in transition towards employment (e.g. those in jobsearch, volunteering or informal jobs) and those in employment (i.e., 'standard' or hired jobs or self-employment). On the basis of the arguments of the entertained literature and the

derived research model, the following chapters offer a detailed analysis of the sample in unemployment, hired employment and self-employment.

CHAPTER FOUR

SAMPLE STRUCTURE AND CHARACTERISTICS

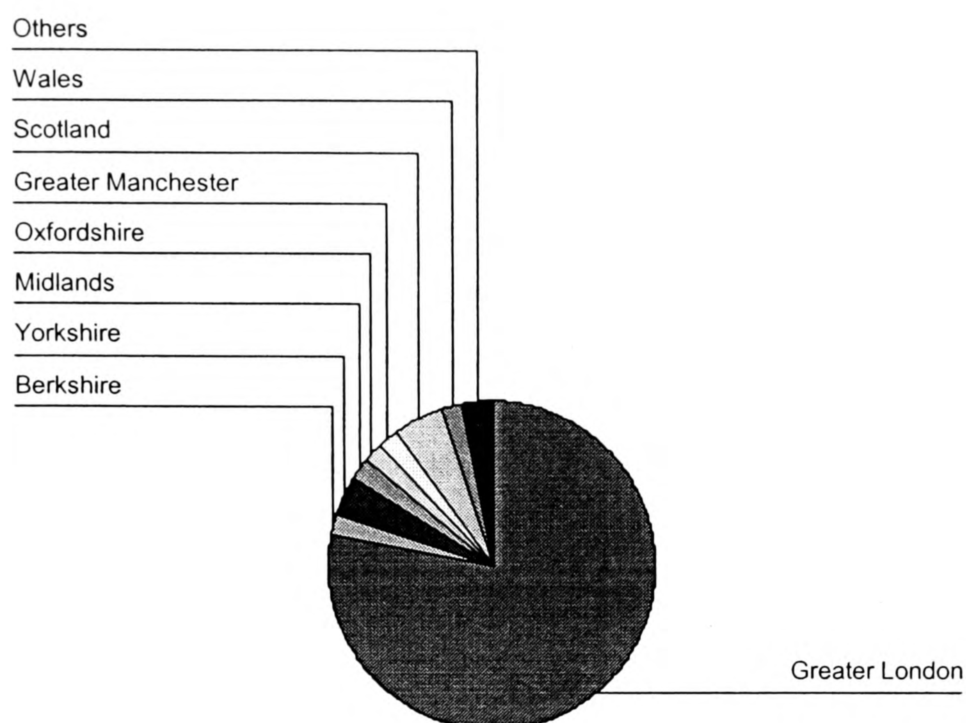
4.1. Introduction

This chapter gives preliminary details of the study's 100 sample interviewees whose interaction with the labour market both in employment and unemployment is analysed in chapters five to nine. These chapters will be followed by the observation of the circumstances of the self-employed using 14 sample interviewees. The details outlined below are chosen to be the most important factors, according to the literature reviewed, that affect refugees' employability. In addition to these there are also other factors that may have effects on employability, such as ethnicity and networks. These will be treated separately using a slightly different methodology.

4.2. Area of residence of sample group

This study claims to be a national study, embracing respondents from all parts of the UK: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Proper representation to reflect the actual concentration of refugees was given due consideration.

Chart 4.1. Area of residence of Interviewees



Accordingly as shown in Chart 4.1 above the vast majority of the respondents were sampled from Greater London, constituting 78% of the data. This is consistent with the available literature on the areas of concentration of immigrants. Looking at this issue over a period of time, as far back as two decades ago, Castles and Kosack (1981) write that the overwhelming majority of immigrants live in highly industrialised and fast growing urban areas like London and the West Midlands. Earlier in the mid-1970's, more than one third of all immigrants were to be found in Greater London compared with one-sixth of the total population. Immigrants made up twelve per cent of London's population (1981:48). More recently, Anthias (1992) also shows that ethnic minorities tend to be concentrated in the South East. Yet another recent publication of the Office of National Statistics in 1996 entitled Social Focus on Ethnic Minorities reveals that people from ethnic minority groups are not evenly distributed throughout Great Britain, "tending to live in the most populous areas of England, in particular in the South East (HMSO, 1996:7).

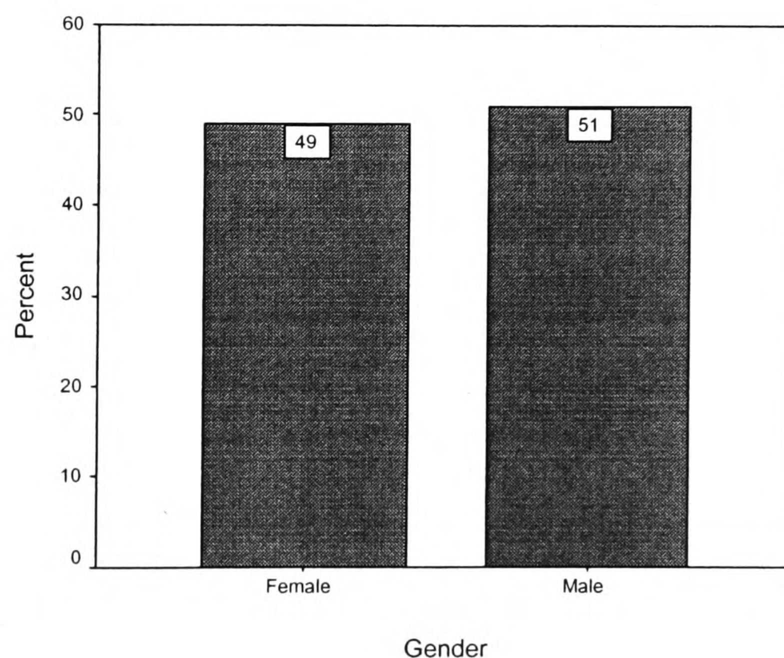
As the diagram above shows, following Greater London our samples are taken from English cities and counties (15%), which include Berkshire, Yorkshire, West and East Midlands, Oxfordshire, Greater Manchester, Cambridgeshire, East Anglia and Bath in the

Southwest; Scotland (5%) and Wales (under 5%). One additional interviewee has also been included from Northern Ireland[25]. Men and women are interviewed from in and outside London in a fairly proportional rate.

4.3. Gender Composition

As Graph 4.1 below shows, out of the 100 interviewed sample respondents 51% are men and 49% are women. This may not necessarily reflect the actual male to female ratio of the Ethiopian refugees or all refugees of other nationalities in the UK. However, as the aim of the research rather is to investigate their circumstances and the main issues in the labour market, this half-half representation is believed to allow the analysis to have a fairly unbiased observation across genders in personal background characteristics (attributes) as well as circumstances in the labour market.

Graph 4.1. Gender composition of Sample



[25] The interview from Northern Ireland focuses mainly on the circumstances of refugees in Northern Ireland, which, for the purposes of this research is taken as a slightly different environment. Moreover, the respondent was interviewed on the phone.

4.4. Age Composition

The research being concerned with interactions of refugees with the labour market the age group composition was designed to represent level of activity in relation to age in the job market. Accordingly as Table 4.1 below shows, the sample has not included those under 18, as it is normally not legally allowed to work under this age. Those between the age of 18 and 25 also represent only 14 percent of the sample population. This small representation is mainly due to the fact that not much can be observed on interactions with the labour market from this age group as many individuals have been inactive for at least two reasons: first of all, especially as foreigners, refugees in this age group seem to focus on continuing their studies which are likely to be incomplete or interrupted when they fled their countries of origin. Re-education is also another matter they may need to spend their time on around this age. Secondly, even if they have fulfilled their study ambitions (to whatever extent that may be), such young age groups generally find themselves struggling to penetrate the labour market (*e.g. Delors, 1993; Drew, Gray and Sime, 1992; Modood, 1997*). Moreover as this problem in trying to penetrate the labour market is shared by the native youth of this age group, it makes it less interesting for this research as it aims essentially to investigate the unique problems of refugees.

Table 4.1. Age composition of the sample

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
(18-19)	2	2.0	2.0
(20-24)	12	12.0	14.0
(25-29)	32	32.0	46.0
(30-34)	24	24.0	70.0
(35-39)	21	21.0	91.0
(40-44)	4	4.0	95.0
(45-49)	2	2.0	97.0
(50-59)	1	1.0	98.0
(Over 60)	2	2.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Likewise as can be seen from Table 4.1, the representation of age groups beyond 40 also tends to decrease (totalling only 9%). Here again there are associated reasons. To begin with, refugees tend to arrive at a young age (*e.g., Straw, 1999*), and the likelihood of them fleeing their home countries as a refugee after the relatively settled age of 40 is low. Secondly, even those who arrive at around that age can be considered to be less and less active in the labour market as the demand for them by host country employers may not be that remarkable in light of the fact that they tend not to have British work experience and language proficiency. Indeed for the professionals of that age, the competition with their British age counter-parts is stiff as the latter are likely to have many years of accumulated British work experience, leaving aside other relative advantages owing to the fact that they lived in the host country for longer than the newly arrived refugees. As will be seen in chapter 5, employers are also less interested in such age group of refugees for various other reasons. The sample included fewer than 5% from the age group 'over 60's' as this group is also a member of the refugee group whose circumstances in the labour market should not be ignored. Therefore, these mature or older refugees are found either in the 'unemployed' category, mainly due to their old age rather than other refugee-specific characteristics (which makes it less interesting for this research), or in the self-employed category which will be considered in Chapter 8.

This leaves the sample to focus on the age group between 25 and 40. Of this interviewed sample, those in the age group (25-29) represent 32%, while those in the age groups (30-34) and (35-39) represent 24% and 21% respectively. To sum up, the age group between 25 and 40 represents 77% of the sample data, of which 34% are women and 43% are men. The discrepancy between the two genders' representation is to some extent made up for in the other age groups where the majority are women. The different age groups are spread across both the employed and the unemployed and how their age affects the different groups in their interaction with the labour market will be explored in the relevant chapters.

4.5. Family Background: Marital Status, Children and Family Re-Union

Of the total sample population, 52% are single (23% women and 29% men); 40% are married (21% women and 19% men), 5% are divorced and fewer than 5% are widowed. Within the married group, just 5% and much fewer have their spouses in Ethiopia and in a third country respectively.

About one-third (33%) of the interviewed sample have children. Of these parents, 25% are married and 8% are either single, divorced or widowed. Almost all of their children are dependents. Within this group, 15% have children between the age of 0 and 5; 6% have children in the age group 6-10; under 5% have children between 11 and 15; 5% have children above the age of 20. There are many who have more than one child. Among the 33% with children, the majority 26% have their children in the UK, whereas the rest, about 7%, have them in their country of origin. As indicated in both cases, re-union with family members, notably children and spouses, is an important issue for many in relation to job search.

4.6. Religion

Religion-wise, 96% are Christians (of which 24% are 'very practising'; 42% are 'practising' and 30% are 'liberal') and 4% are Muslims (all 'liberal')[26]. Whilst religion was picked randomly, one other reason for the disproportionately high representation of Christians could possibly be related to the fact that most Ethiopian refugees come from urban areas like Addis Ababa, where many Christians live. Nevertheless, whether this proportion represents the actual figure of the Ethiopian refugees or all nationality refugee communities in the UK, is not the interest of this study. In other words, even if this proportion changes, it will not make a difference to our aim, which is to look at the

[26] 'Very practising' are those who are regular (weekly) church or mosque goers and who attend regular prayers; 'practising' are those who are less regulars (only practise occasionally) in these and 'liberals' are those who don't practise in either way.

effects of religion on the types of jobs refugees want to take, rather than the number of people practising different religions. Thus, some respondents have said that their religion restricts them from doing certain types of jobs.

4.7. English Language Command

None of the respondents have English as their mother tongue. Although respondents are not from an Anglophone country, English is generally believed to be the second language for almost all respondents.

Table 4.2. English Language Self-rating

Command	Self-rating (%)					
	Excellent	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	Total (%)
Understanding	16	49	31	4		100
Speaking	10	32	45	12	1	100
Writing	13	33	43	11		100

Respondents were given an explanation of these measurements before they self-rated themselves. 'Good' is defined as the average level in terms of understanding, speaking and writing. 'Excellent' is the highest level; e.g., 'fluent' in speaking. Those who believe they are between average and the highest value are rated as 'very good'. On the other end, 'very poor' is valued for those at the very lowest level of command. In many cases, respondents rate themselves 'excellent' in one task, such as speaking, but 'very good' or 'good' in another task, for example, writing or vice versa. This is interpreted as indicating that they have in general been reasonably objective in judging their English language abilities.

4.8. Immigration Status

As will be seen in almost all of the chapters that follow, the immigration status of refugees is arguably the most important factor that determines their success or failure in their interaction with the labour market. The findings of the research, as will be seen in more detail in the chapters that follow, indicate that this is mainly linked to the fact that immigration status holds the key to the rights for education and employment as well as other factors that affect employment like housing and emotional stability. In collecting the data, the issue of a balanced representation of the immigration status of refugees has been given utmost importance and consideration.

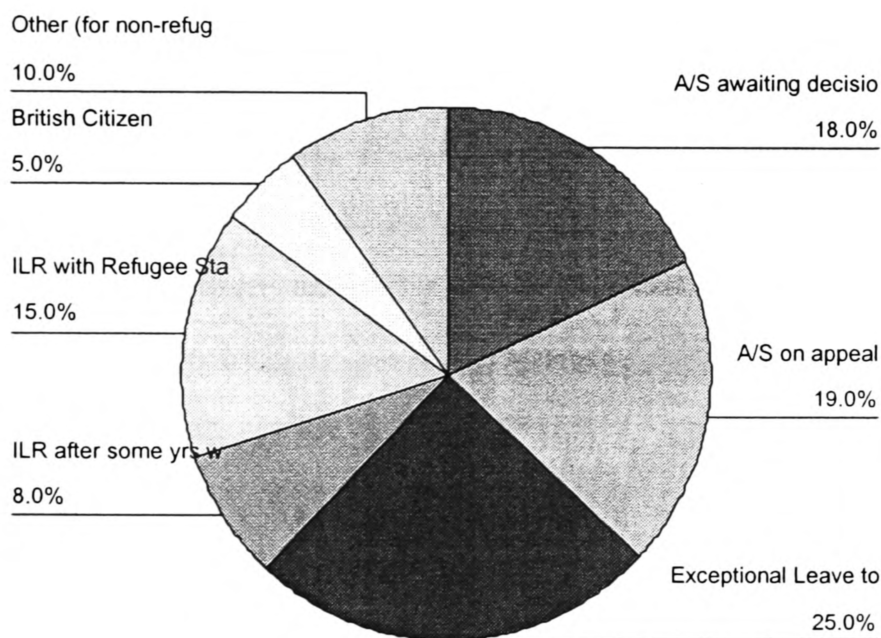
The immigration status of the sample data *is* presented in Chart 4.2 below. As the Chart shows, the majority of the sample population (37%) are asylum seekers of which almost half (i.e., 18% of the total) are awaiting a decision, while the remaining 19% are at various stages of appeal, after being refused asylum by the Home Office. Those with Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR)[27] constitute 25% of the sample data. Those with Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) account for 23% of the data, this being split between those awarded Refugee Status[28](15%), and those with ELR who had been in the country for some years (8%). The next group, which accounts for 10% of the sample population, is the 'minority' group which comprises those living in the country without claiming asylum or being refugees (asylum-seekers) but who have other immigration status (this will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 8). The last group (5%) are those with British citizenship. People in this group have come as refugees and even if they now have citizenship, they still share some common problems with other refugees and their past

[27] Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) is an immigration status granted to those whose asylum cases are not accepted by the Home Office under the terms of the UN 1951 Convention Related to Refugees but who are allowed to stay in the country at the discretion of the Home Secretary on 'compassionate' grounds. It is renewed every 3-4 years (twice before 1999 and just once after 1999) before Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) is granted. Those with ILR (Indefinite leave to Remain) can stay in the country 'indefinitely'.

[28] Refugee Status is granted to those whose asylum claims are recognised by the Home Office as based on a 'well-founded fear of persecution' as defined under the terms of the UN 1951 Convention. Currently those granted this Status are awarded ILR at the time of issue of the Refugee Status.

experience before becoming British remains important in their current position in the labour market.

Chart 4.2. Immigration Status



Representing asylum seekers in such a large number was a deliberate choice. It is believed to reflect reality for at least three reasons: first of all, most asylum seekers' cases are either undecided or refused for many years before they are granted some sort of immigration status or, in some cases, deported. This was especially true at the time of data collection, in the years before it and in the post-data collection times. Secondly, as mentioned earlier on lacking asylum status is the most serious factor affecting refugees' interaction with the labour market. Exploring to what extent and in what ways this effect is felt is made possible given the representation of asylum seekers in the sample. Thirdly, in light of the fact that this study intends to investigate the unique circumstances of refugees' interaction with the labour market, asylum-seekers would help most to track down these crucial issues, compared to those with ILR or ELR, who share many of the education and employment rights enjoyed by the native ethnic minorities. In a nutshell, as this study is concerned with issues of refugees' unemployment owing to their being

refugees, as opposed to mere members of ethnic minorities, the issue of immigration status is an indispensable aspect of our investigation.

However, those with ILR and ELR have also been included in the data as they share various other factors that affect asylum seekers. A case in point is that those with ELR have fewer economic and social rights than ethnic minorities with permanent leave to remain; they are for example banned from receiving bank loans above £5,000 for the purpose of setting up their own business, as shall be seen in Chapter 8. Those with ILR are also affected by issues unique to refugees, not least because they might have lived in the country for many years as asylum seekers or with ELR, when most of their employment and education rights were restricted, which could have repercussions on their current positions in the labour market; that is, even if they had ELR or ILR at the time of data collection, some have been in the country for many years as asylum seekers, denied of basic rights. As the effects of those years are still being felt, having a fair representation of these groups allows us to explore these issues more comprehensively. Apart from the fact that this consideration is consistent with similar research undertaken by various researchers in the past, the pilot survey has also confirmed its importance.

As mentioned above, many refugees had to wait for some time before they were awarded ELR and ILR. The time spent without proper asylum status plays a key role in affecting refugees' interaction with the labour market, as many education and employment rights are affected by asylum status. The following table shows time spent before either ELR or Refugee Status (or ILR) is granted.

Table 4.3. Types of asylum status (ELR or ILR) and number of years waited before being granted status

Time spent before getting current asylum status	Type of asylum Status and number of respondents granted

current asylum status	ELR	ILR after some years with ELR[29]	Refugee Status /ILR directly
Immediately (up to 6-months)	1		
6-months – 1 year	1		
1-1 ½ years	2	1	
1 ½ - 2 years	2		1
2 – 2 ½ years	2		1
3-4 years	1		1
4-5 years	3	3	
5-6 years	5	1	4

As the table above shows the majority had to wait for more than five years, in some cases over 8 years, before they obtained their current asylum status. Reasons for waiting this long include delays in decisions of asylum cases by the Home Office; time spent on appeal procedures; and the legal waiting time before ILR is granted. During these years, various economic and social rights that affect employment life are restricted or totally curtailed. These, as we shall see in the coming chapters, have significant deterring effects on success rate in the labour market.

4.9. Women and Asylum Claim

Within the married group, about 4% of women respondents have asylum claims which are dependent on their husbands. It is interesting to see whether this has affected independence, especially from an economic point of view (in relation to eligibility to work). This seems to differ from individual to individual, mainly depending on their asylum status. If the partner has Indefinite Leave to Remain and if the same status is granted to the wife, this then grants automatic eligibility to work. For asylum seekers generally, permission to work and National Insurance number can be granted separately

[29] ILR figures include some who are already granted British citizenship, hence a slight difference in the figures of total in the previous chart showing asylum status.

from the husband, allowing independence to work. However, it is found out that a wife may not be granted separately if the husband is the main asylum claimant.

It was also considered whether lacking asylum status could encourage single women to look for a marriage of convenience. The aim was to get some insight on the possibility of exposure to unwanted relationship and thus possibly to domestic violence. Out of 29 women who were asked this question, about half (14%) have said they have not ruled out considering a marriage of convenience. About 35% of the interviewed women refugees say that they have considered or been tempted to choose such an option. Had it not been for religious and moral reasons, they could have actually gone for it. Fear of danger (violence) and being granted asylum status while considering it have also acted as deterrents. The consideration or temptation of such an arrangement was caused by the lack of asylum status or necessities like a council flat, which can be secured by marrying someone who has obtained asylum status. A single mother, for instance, says:

> Yes I have considered marrying someone only to secure asylum status but when I think of my son (from previous relationship) I find it more painful to bring someone home without genuine love only for the sake of obtaining residence permit. I do not want to live with a man who might not care for my son. (Y168)

Marrying for convenience has still not been ruled out by a very small proportion in the sample, and temptation is said to rise whenever the "hassle" from the authorities is too much to bear (through letters and court procedures). Whilst almost everyone in this category are asylum seekers, there is also one woman with ELR who has been tempted to choose such a marriage.

About 15% of the women respondents asked this question say that they have actually made some steps towards marriage only to secure a residence permit, when they felt trapped by the lack of asylum status. Indeed, a respondent said she was considering suicide when she was told that she could not sit for an exam. However, the great majority in this group did not go to the ultimate of getting married because of various reasons, including control by family members or lack of experience, or the fear of living with

someone they did not have feelings for. A respondent reported the case of a friend who suffered domestic violence after marrying somebody to secure asylum status. She subsequently escaped with help from the police.

In sum, about half of the respondents were tempted to, or actually chose to marry for the sake of securing asylum status. They have reasons for not going all the way, but some have still not ruled it out, potentially putting themselves at risk of domestic violence, which they have seen happening elsewhere. The remainder of those who have been asked this question say they have never considered it at all. The reasons are various but the majority lived in hope that one day they would get asylum status as their cases have not yet been rejected by the Home Office or they believe their asylum cases are too strong to be rejected; others would rather try to flee to another country than go for a marriage of convenience. Being married or having a partner as well as religious and moral considerations are other reasons mentioned. Inappropriateness due to age is yet another reason not to go for marriage of this kind.

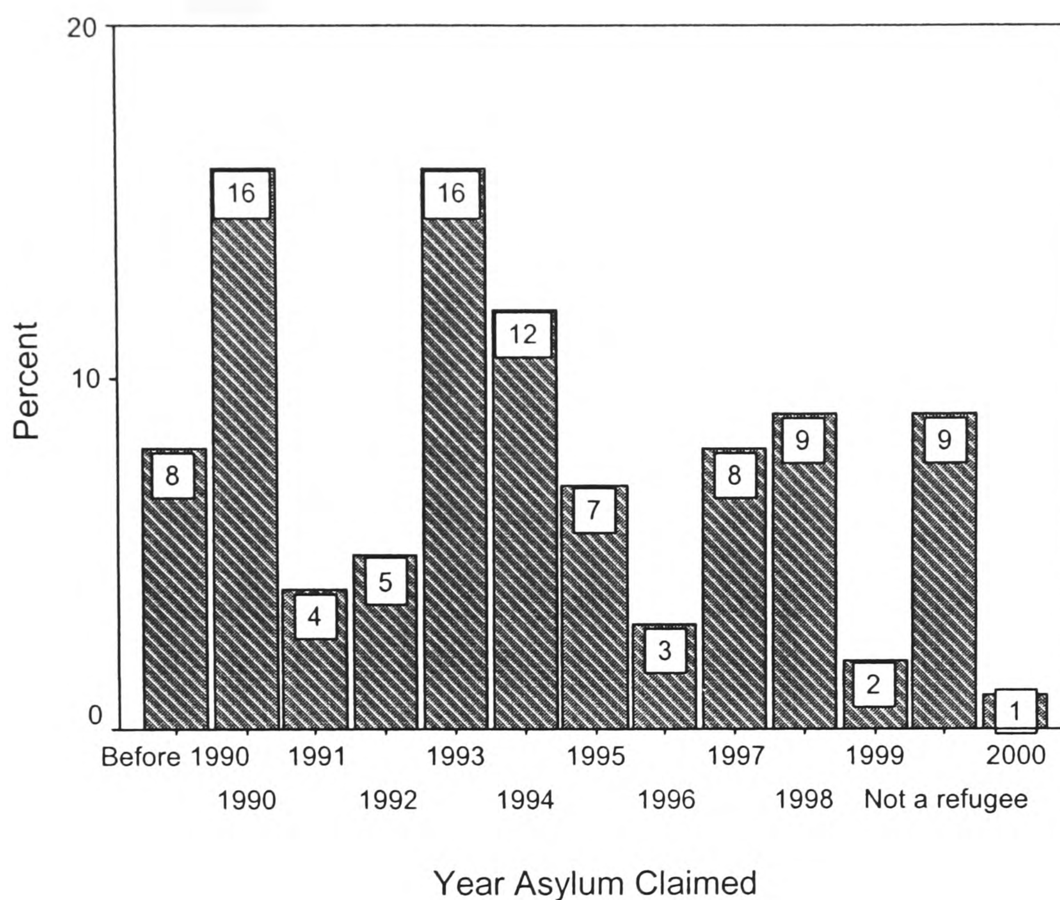
4.10. Length of Stay

A fact emerging from the literature reviewed is that 'length of stay' plays a crucial role in fitting into the labour market system. The questionnaires used in this research were designed to investigate the historical progress of the interviewees' lives and their interaction with and the resulting success or failure in the labour market. However, in including respondents in the sample, it was also necessary to set a time limit on the years of arrivals of individuals, in relation to developments in immigration policies likely to directly affect refugees' opportunities for employment.

In this regard, although the issue of asylum had been on the political agenda since the mid-1980's, the desire to deter asylum seekers from entering the UK can be traced back to the 1987 Carriers Liability Act (*e.g. Kaye, 1994*). This was followed by the tough asylum policies of the 1990's, notably that of 1993, 1996 and 1999. On the other hand,

although refugee outflow from Ethiopia mainly started in the mid-1970's following the overthrow of Emperor Haile Sellasie in 1974 (reflected in Graph 4.2 below as 'before 1990'), Ethiopian refugees had not reached the borders of the UK in significant numbers before 1990. As Graph 4.2 below shows, 1990 and 1993 have the highest sample population represented (16%). This may reflect the large number of refugees from Ethiopia and Eastern Europe admitted by the UK government at the time of dismantling of the Communist bloc, to which Ethiopia and Eastern Europe belonged. At the same time, as preceding research works in the field, notably that of the Home Office and Salford University (HO, 1995), argue and as confirmed by the pilot survey, the experience of asylum seekers with anything less than two years stay may not satisfactorily be relied on for any sound conclusion. In other words, any employment-related problem refugees with less than two years stay may face could mainly be due to how recent their arrival is, and it could be difficult to detect other important factors causing their unemployment problems. Accordingly, in terms of time of arrival, the great majority of the sample data cover the period from 1990 to 1998, accounting for 80% of the total interviewed samples. Jointly, those who arrived at the UK shores in the years 1993 and 1994 account for 28%. It is believed that having such a large representation allows a sensible conclusion on position and circumstance in the job market, as it is neither too far nor too close to the time of data collection.

Graph 4.2. Year asylum claimed

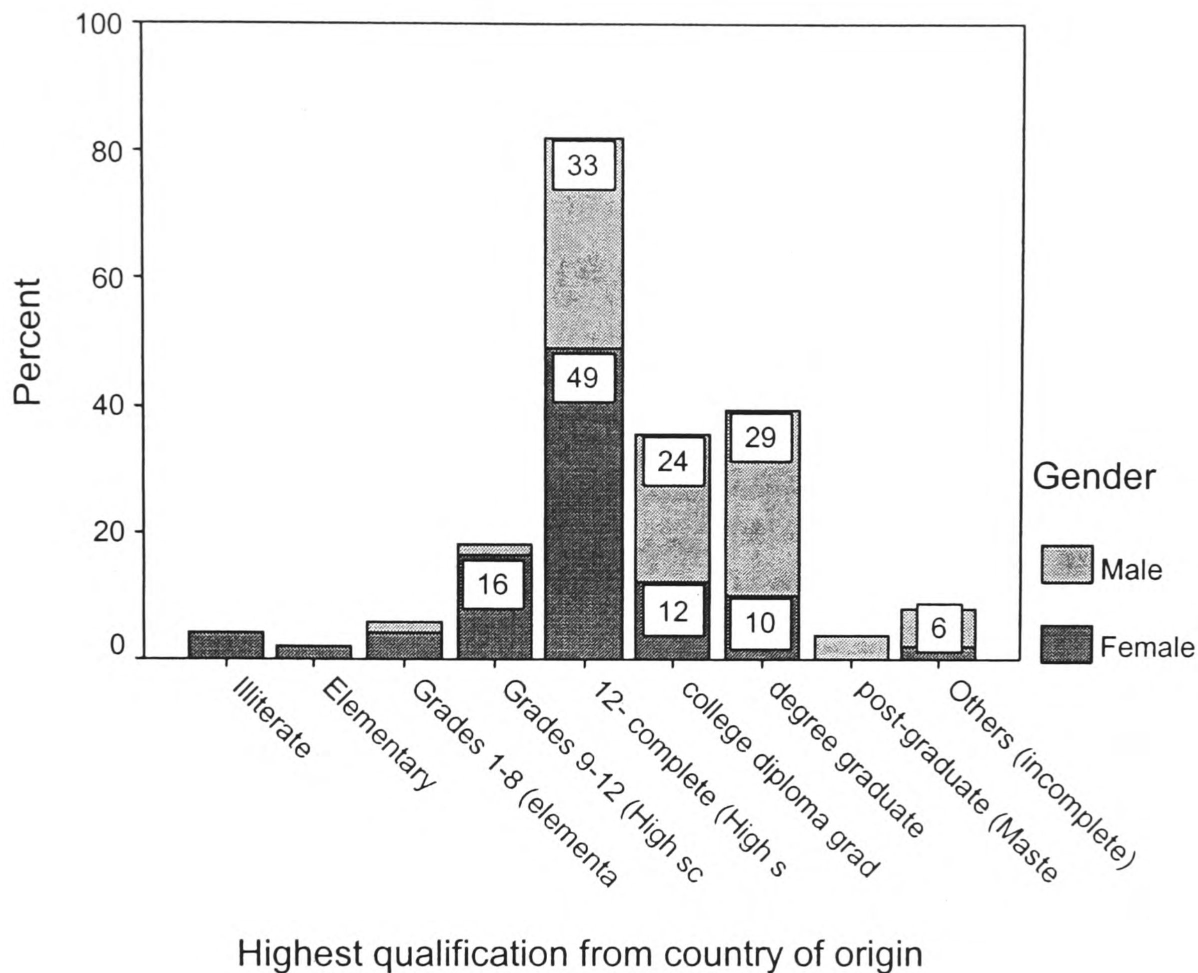


4.11. Qualification Background

a) Home Country Gained Qualifications

As it was established in the literature review, it is usually the young and the educated who are targeted by authoritarian regimes in refugee-sending countries (RC, 1997) and it is mainly this group that forms the highest percentage of the refugee group in the host country. This study has taken this theorem as a main yardstick in framing the sample structure in terms of qualification representation. Qualification level, as linked to employment, was assessed on the basis of the country where it was attained. Graph 4.3 shows the highest level of qualification attained in country of origin.

Graph 4.3. Home Country Highest Qualification



The graph counter-balances the view that most refugees flee countries of origin to the West after reaching a good level of education and that not all refugees fleeing their home countries are highly educated or the 'cream of the society' (RC, *Credit to the Nation*, 1997). This is reflected by the fact that the qualifications of the great majority of the sample interviewees is diploma and high school graduate levels. This group represents 59% of the sample population and includes high school graduates (41%) and diploma graduates (16%). Having such representation will also help to provide good data to analyse the challenges and opportunities refugees face in pursuing higher education in the UK, as people in such groups tend to show interest in continuing their education in the receiving country. Degree graduates constitute 20% of the data, followed by drop-outs from high school in their country of origin (8%). Then comes the two extreme levels of education, from those with post-graduate levels as well as elementary school qualifications down to those without any education – the 'illiterates'. The respondents' professions include, at various levels of qualification, fields as varied as accounting,

social science, natural science, engineering, medicine, law and 'others'[30]. In addition to these mainstream academic qualifications, nearly half of the respondents have taken various short-term courses, including computer-related ones. Only a small proportion have left their country before completion of their courses, the main reason for disruption being the need to leave the country.

Both men and women are represented proportionally in the different qualification levels. As the graph shows, of the 88% sample population with highest home country qualifications ranging from high school level to degree graduate level, 45% are men and 43% are women. The distribution of men and women in the different qualification levels also shows the 'realities' on the ground, namely that cultural set ups in the Third World deter women from pursuing education to a high level (*Efrem, 1992*). Hence, women are less and less represented as qualification level goes up beyond high school graduate level.

b) Transit Country Gained Qualifications

About 30% of respondents have lived in a transit country in the immediate months and years before they came to the UK, while the rest came directly from their country of origin. The countries (regions) where they lived in transit were Africa (12%); Eastern Europe (8%); Western Europe, Middle East, Asia, and USA (together 10%). The length of time they stayed in the transit country varies from some weeks to many years[31]. An attempt was made to find out if those who came in transit obtained some qualifications in these countries as this would have an impact on their interactions in the host country (the UK) labour market. Just above 50% have not gained any qualifications in transit countries while the rest have gained various qualifications, including first degree and postgraduate (5%) and other qualifications, including incomplete ones (9%). The great majority of those who gained qualifications in the transit countries are those who were

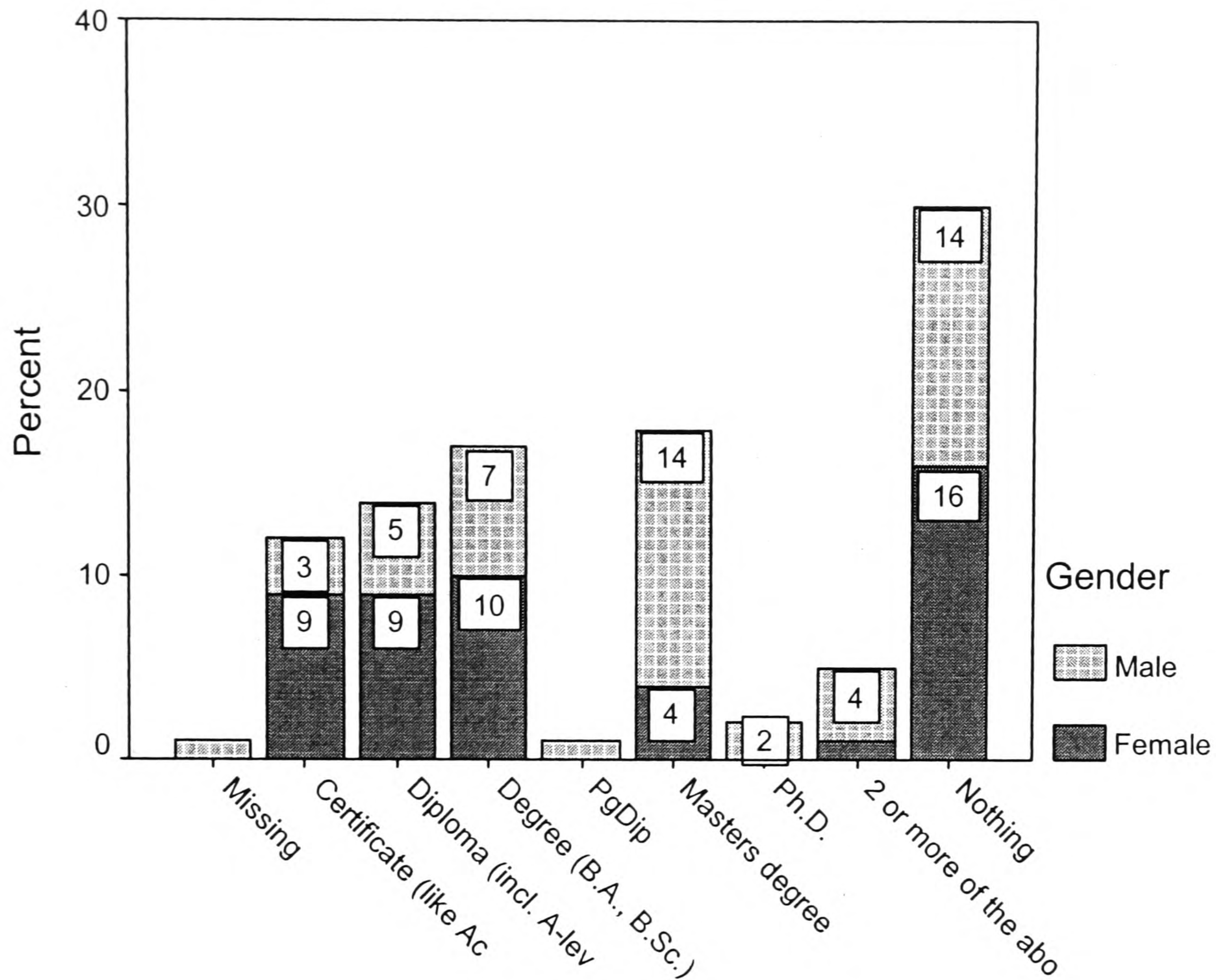
[30] 'Others' includes those under high school level where there is no specialty of profession.
[31] As the intention here is to look at qualifications and work experiences gained in transit countries, regardless of length of stay all who come from Ethiopia to the UK through a third country are taken as staying in a transit country.

high school graduates or above in their country of origin. Almost all respondents who started and could not finish their courses say that they could not do so because they had to leave the country.

c) Host Country Gained Qualifications

The interviewees' highest qualifications attained in the UK are presented in Graph 4.4 below. As can be seen in the graph, the largest category of interviewees have not attained a qualification level beyond what they had when they arrived in the UK. This is shown in the graph as 'Nothing' which accounts for 30% of interviewees. Men and women in this category are evenly distributed. An almost equal proportion of interviewees, that is, 18% and 17%, have improved their qualifications to a Masters and a Bachelor degree level respectively. While another 14% have improved their qualifications to a diploma level, 12% have gained certificates. Two interviewees have gained Ph.D. degrees and one has obtained a Post Graduate diploma, and just fewer than 5% have gained two or more of these qualifications. Again as can be seen in the graph, men and women are found in each category in a fairly equal proportion.

Graph 4.4. Highest Qualification Attained in the UK



One question arising from this is whether those who qualified in their home country also obtained qualifications in the UK. This issue is analysed in the table below.

Table 4.4. Highest Qualification Gained in the UK Against that brought from Country of Origin

Count

		Highest Qualification Attained in the UK								
		Certificate	Diploma	Degree	PgDip	Masters degree	Ph.D.	2 or more of these	Nothing	Total
Highest qualification from country of origin?	Illiterate								2	2
	Elementary								1	1
	Grades 1-8 (elementary-junior)		1	1						2
	Grades 9-12 (High school)	2	3	2					2	9
	12- complete (High school complete)	3	8	10	1	4		1	14	41
	college diploma graduate	3	2	2		4	1		6	18
	degree graduate	3				9		3	5	20
	post-graduate (Masters, PgD)					1	1			2
	Others (incomplete)	1		2				1		4
Total		12	14	17	1	18	2	5	30	99

As the table above shows, of the 30 who haven't gained any qualification in the UK[32], 14% were those who came as high school graduates; 6% already had diplomas and 5% were degree graduates. Many in the home country high school graduates category have continued their education in the UK, 8% graduating with diploma; 10% with Bachelor degrees; 6% with Post-Graduate Diploma or Masters degree or with two or more of these. This indicates that this group, which constitutes the highest percentage of the sample population, is an active player in refugees' interaction with the education system which has a direct link to the labour market. As indicated in the previous section, only a small number of respondents qualified in transit countries before coming to the UK.

4.12. Work Experience Background

About 64 per cent of respondents have had office work experience before they left their country of origin. Under 5% had managerial positions, the rest being in various non-managerial positions. In terms of length of work experience, 19% have had work experience from 0-3 years; another 19% from 3-6 years; 17% from 6-10 years and 8% for over 10 years. There are also those who were self-employed, from 0-3 years (5%); 3-6 years and 6-10 years (5%). This includes those who worked solely for themselves as well as those who had a hired job alongside running their own business. Those too young to

[32] This doesn't include short courses like ESOL that they might have taken

be in paid employment were sometimes able to gain experience by working for relatives. Otherwise, the remainder did not have work experience before they came to the UK except those (about 10%) who worked in transit countries for some time.

Other Background of Respondents Directly Affecting Employment

4.13. Effects of Gender on Restricting Employment

Gender and cultural stereotypes restrict the types of jobs open to women. Such jobs include those that may contain an element of danger, such as mini-cab driving, those in remote locations, and night shift jobs. Respondents have also said some employers give excuses not to employ women, although it is a type of job that they can do. A university student who wants to work part-time in her neighbouring petrol station says, for instance, "There is a petrol station in West London (near my residence) I want to work for. Although unofficially, they told me they would not take women as it is a rough area (not recommended for safety) but I could do day time. It is a till work" (T155). Another woman respondent, an asylum seeker, agrees that there is restriction on female employment and mentions construction work because "they don't bother" about National Insurance number. She mentions that 'it is possible to find work in the construction industry because they don't bother about NI, but they don't want to employ women even if we can physically do the job' (T163). For one respondent, family building is felt as being far more restrictive for women than men. The respondent says "I want a core diplomatic job. The job requires travelling outside the UK. It goes against my interest as a woman to be settled with a relationship (and build a family)". (T164)

Moreover, in some cases, women cannot take up jobs that are open to them because of religious taboos. These include working for pubs and night clubs or being a stripper. An unemployed Pentecostal church believer woman respondent also adds that "I sometimes think of opening a restaurant...but because alcohol is against my religion, I rule it out immediately. I worked once in a restaurant and left it for the same reason" (T123).

4.14. Networking and Willingness for Mobility to Find Jobs

About two-thirds of the respondents (67% of the sample) say they are willing to move to cities away from where they live if they can find a job that they want (in terms of qualifications and pay). This shows some similarity with ethnic minority youngsters, who are found to have the same willingness towards mobility as their 'white' counter-parts (Ballard and Holden, 1981:165). It also confirms the argument, noted in the literature review, especially chapter 3, that refugees show interest to integrate. The rest 33% say they are not willing to do so, the reason for many being that they do not want to be far away from their community members. These are mainly those who live in London. Others also give various reasons which include: staying in touch with home-related issues, poor health, need of assistance, studies, unwillingness to disrupt children being educated locally, fear of being uprooted and losing long-established ties, family networks and friendships, restriction by the Home Office on place of residence, dread of loneliness and depression, access to organisations (in London), charities and church communities providing advice. The possibility of family members moving together has also been given as a condition by some. Respondents who are unwilling to move include those who live both in and outside London though the reasons vary. They also include both the employed and the unemployed. In addition to the above, some women respondents have mentioned that they feel more secure living in their current areas of residence where they are surrounded by community members. Refugees value family and kinship networks to the extent that some prefer not to leave their current areas of residence even if they find work elsewhere. However the findings of this research indicate that the majority (67%) would move location if they could find relevant employment. Moving location does not necessarily mean detaching from networks permanently and finding work is more preferable to staying in the area and remaining unemployed. It should be noted that the decision to stay in a particular location is motivated by additional factors to remaining in a certain network. When refugees refer to networks in relation to jobs, our evidence shows that the networks referred to are not necessarily based on kinship. They can also be networks established with the host community. The role of networks in enabling refugees

to find work is briefly touched on by the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002). The study notes that one of the barriers to finding appropriate work is related to an absence of contacts within the host society, which UK nationals would have. It quotes a respondent as saying, "when we come here, it is different...we cannot achieve what we want to. For example, to be a doctor here needs more than studying...contact, friendship...are needed." (p.143)

4.15. Awareness of Some Basic Issues Before Getting a Job

Respondents were questioned about their job searching strategies, namely how did they set about finding a job and using what means. About 23% of sample respondents mentioned national or local newspapers, job centres or word of mouth. About 74% mentioned additional sources such as shop windows, employment agencies, magazines, internet and university networks. This echoes the findings of Alice Bloch's research for the Department for Work and Pensions in 2002 as well as those entertained in the literature review earlier on(ch.2). Bloch's research shows that a third of those who had worked before coming to the UK had found work through a family member and she also shows the different other networks. Bloch's findings, as those of this thesis, illustrate the importance of private agencies but differ regarding help offered by community groups. Bloch contended that community groups were not good sources of help, however this should not be interpreted to mean that they are of no use. This is discussed in more detail in a different chapter of this research.

In relation to the application process, namely filling an application form, respondents were asked if they faced any difficulties or unfamiliar problems. About 40% of respondents say they have never faced any problems at all, while 17% say they have never filled an application form in the first place. About 5% say they have problems with the 'equal opportunities' and reference sections. In relation to the Equal Opportunities section, an asylum seeker in the East Midlands, for instance, says he is confused where to categorise himself in relation to ethnicity. Some also mentioned that they were quite

sceptical about this question as it could be used to target them. In relation to the reference section, many had a problem providing referees as they had been studying for many years, rather than working and no employer could be available to be their referee. A respondent in Yorkshire, for instance, says "It is difficult to get university referees after two years of leaving it. It is also difficult to get employer referees as you are unemployed" (T135).

About 25% of respondents have mentioned 'other' problems in job application forms, which include technical terms and jargons, example: excellent communication skills and other related terms 'which may not be relevant to the job'; difficulty to understand what the employer wants (job descriptions vs. job specifications or person specification); being confused or unfamiliar with questions like 'how do you describe yourself', 'what will you contribute to the company', '...drawing on your experience'; being bored by the length of questionnaires; tiredness (one says, for instance, 'makes you think a lot about past achievement'), language difficulties; gaps in CV, that is, gaps in chronological work experience; different education system from home country and hence difficulty to understand A-levels or O-levels that may be asked in the forms; different ways of naming from home country and confusion on 'surname'; different calendar and difficulty in converting date of birth from home country calendar; difficulty to respond to requests of practical piece of work, example, piece of broadcasting work for broadcasting job; demands for NI numbers which are difficult to obtain, especially for low-paid jobs; demands for bank account details which many asylum seekers cannot provide as they do not have a bank account; feeling uncomfortable with questions relating to ethnic background (A university student seeking a part-time job said a retail shop asked for his picture and asked "Why am I asked? To be dropped as a black person"?). The number of application forms completed by respondents vary and many say they experienced these problem in the first years after their arrival as well as experiencing them in the present.

The remainder, about 11%, have said they have faced about two problems among those listed above ('equal opportunities', 'reference' or one or more in the 'others' section). Very few have faced about 3 - 4 problems.

Once the job application form or procedure has been completed, the job interview may also present challenges for refugees in relation to knowledge of what impresses job interviewers. About 25% of the total sample population say they do not have any idea of what impresses job interviewers, as either they have not attended job interviews at all (17%) or are not sure even if they attended some (8%). In some cases the refugees were confused thinking the interview went well only to be told afterwards that they had not been successful.

The rest of the sample population have mentioned what they think impress job interviewers. The most common factors mentioned include (British) work experience, including voluntary one (but they do not want those who have a history of changing jobs frequently as they could not trust them); confidence (showing through voice, body language, ways of expression, eye contact and willingness to speak to the panel); personal appearance (clothes, hair style, neatness, readiness for the job); punctuality/time-keeping; clear understanding or knowledge of and interest in the job; using key words linked to the job; background knowledge about the employer; qualifications; language fluency and confidence and communication skill including accent and pronunciation (being able to explain oneself properly and elaborately); manner of speaking; politeness; amiability; giving appropriate and precise or straight answer to question asked/ articulation (in presentation) or 'organised' answers; persuasiveness, clarity; achievement in past work experience; women without children as the employer desires flexibility (even for 'volunteering'); for manual jobs, physical strength; age; being local to the area as well as having a fixed address; immigration status; willingness to do overtime, being 'submissive'; commitment to full time work; having special skills and original ideas.

Many say the type of job matters, as different employees might be impressed by different things. There are many who believe that qualifications are important. Respondents in this group include both the well educated, including Ph.D. degree holders or those who seek job types that do not demand a high level of qualification. On the other hand, being over

qualified could also be seen as a problem. The same is true for other factors including work experience. In relation to colour/race too, there are many who think it is crucial, while there are others who do not think so. It is said by those holding the latter view that it depends on the type of job. While it is mainly thought that being black could lead to being discriminated against, it is also thought that depending on the type of the job, being black could be an advantage. An accountant respondent from London who believes he has been a victim of this recalls, for instance, that "Once I went as far as Reading for an interview with an insurance company after I spoke to him (the employer) on the phone and received a letter about the structure of the interview (1st 30 minutes interview then 20 minutes questionnaire then 10 minutes discussion on the outcome of the interview). The minute he saw that I was black, the interview was rushed through and he told me on the spot that I had not been successful" (T102). Some also insist on country of origin. According to a respondent in Yorkshire, being a Black French or a Black American is better than being a Black Ethiopian. The majority of respondents tend to have undecided views on the matter and believe that it is hard to tell whether colour/race has a role to play in impressing job interviewers as it is not taking place visibly, and as such, there is no evidence. Almost all the respondents mentioned these factors from personal experiences, including feedback received, although very rarely some mentioned what they learnt from their surroundings rather than from personal experience.

4.16. Employment Status

In this chapter (excluding chapter 8, which looks at the self-employed), the ratio of the unemployed to the employed is about 60:40, that is, the unemployed constitute about 60% of the sample while the rest, about 40%, are the employed, both defined in the chapters that deal with them. A ratio of 60:40 may not accurately represent the actual figure on the ground, as an even higher proportion of the unemployed compared to the employed can be found among refugees and the case refugee group. By having more employed refugee group members in the sample, however, it is believed that a better

judgement can be reached on the circumstances of those in employment, as chapters 8 seeks to address.

To sum up, this chapter has attempted to describe and analyse the characteristics of the sample population. It has also tried to detail how the different variables linked to employment are included and structured in the data. It provides reasons for inclusion and structuring of the various variables linked to employment of refugees.

It has presented the different attributes (characteristics) of the sample population and explanations of how representative they may be of the actual refugee population from which the sample is taken. The chapter has also endeavoured to highlight the respondents' level of background knowledge (awareness) of issues linked to the labour market in the UK, indicating that however differently they may conceive it, they do possess some knowledge of how the labour market works, especially in job search, application and recruitment. Then with these characteristic features what are the issues for those who are unemployed and employed. These are the areas that the next chapters will attempt to address.

CHAPTER FIVE

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

5.1. Introduction

Our findings indicate that the majority of unemployed men and women respondents think that jobs needing little or no skills can be found without much difficulty although a small number of respondents either believe no job is easily available or have no idea which job is easily available. In general, therefore, what we found is that except perhaps in relative terms, there are no such things as 'easily found jobs', applicable to all refugees and asylum seekers.

Even if such menial and petty jobs exist, however, the great majority of respondents claim not to choose to do them as their proper jobs for the sole reason that the pay is too small to live on. There are many who have issues that have to do with mis-match of their qualifications with such menial jobs and also those who don't like the working conditions of such jobs. Our findings, however, confirm that if the pay such jobs provide was enough to live on they would still be willing to take them. This is an indication that in contrast to the media's claims that they are economic burdens, refugees are willing to do any jobs that can help them to survive.

Of course it is true that they have ideal or preferred jobs they wish to do, as we found out in our survey. Most of the educated ones want jobs that are somehow linked to their professions. As to the level of the jobs, however, we find that they seem to be wanting jobs that do not exceed their skill levels. They also seem to be flexible rather than 'rigid' in the types of jobs they aspire to, as long as it is within the vicinity of their specialisms. The less educated ones (at or below high school level) also seem to recognise their limitations in terms of skills and mainly want jobs that are flexible, offer adequate pay and fair working conditions. Some also mention that they would prefer to be self-employed.

The finding of the survey is that save a very small proportion of respondents who are 'trapped' by personal problems, the great majority of respondents have in mind jobs that they want to do. What are then the obstacles that prevent them from doing so? This is what this chapter attempts to address.

The situation of refugees shows a "striking finding on the level of unemployment" among the sample of the Home Office (and Salford University) research report (1995), the figure being 57% of the economically active population. According to the findings, this is considerably above the national rate of 8%, and even well above the rate of 24 per cent for ethnic minorities living in Inner London.

The generally disadvantaged position of refugees in the labour market in terms of unemployment is confirmed by other research. A recent survey-based research by the African Educational Trust (AET, 1998) with a sample population of over 40 refugee community organisations, reports that the situation is worse in London, where there is the highest concentration of refugees in the UK. According to the research report, estimates of unemployment rate vary and range from 75% to 90% of the refugee population. It highlights that one community worker from a women's refugee association specified that only 7 out of 409 refugees interviewed had succeeded in getting proper jobs (1998: 32). Alice Bloch's study of refugees' employment position in East London (Newham) also found out that out of 180 respondents only 25 were employed. Shuttle (1996) specifically reported the difficulties refugee medical doctors and teachers face in getting employment even after they pass the UK skill equivalents such as PLAB.

These research findings as well as many others suggest a number of interlinked factors account for the position of refugees. These barrier-related factors include 'length of stay': the longer respondents have been in the country, the more likely they were to be employed, although it took a long time before there was any significant improvement; language: English language ability; geographical location: those who lived in London were more likely to have secured employment than those who lived outside;

qualifications and work experience in country of origin: those with qualifications and work experience in their home country were more likely to have employment in the UK; difficulty in skill and qualification transferability; the then (early 1990's) recession; difficulty of getting proofs of qualification and work experience as well as references from countries of origin; racial and religious discrimination and harassment; question of permission to work and leave status and the confusion it causes for employers; lack of information and financial difficulties for job search; restrictions in access to training; break in careers and study after having to flee the home country; difficulties associated with settlement in Britain, including housing, financial, and health problems; prejudices created by media hostility; unfamiliarity with British job culture, code of conduct, application procedures; psychological problems associated with being a refugee(HO, 1995; Pile, 1997; Shuttle, 1996; Praxis, 1997; AET, 1998).

I shall investigate these factors later on in this work. However, it would be worth noting that in a nutshell while refugees share the disadvantaged, discriminatory and exclusionary experiences of ethnic minorities (as members of it), there are also many other unique problems that put them in a worse position in the labour market.

5.2. Barriers to Employment of Case Study Refugees

Given that the case study refugee group is a member of both the ethnic minorities and refugee community the issues raised above are particularly relevant to it. This chapter assesses these barrier factors. Rensen argues that in Europe immigrants employment barriers could vary from people to people depending on their background (Rensen, TENSOR, 2000). Almost all respondents in the case study group say that the barriers to employment are multi-dimensional. Each individual lists his/her barriers and I have ranked them in the order of seriousness from one to five. Additionally the respondents were also asked to mention those that they include as 'other' problems after the fifth most serious problem. These will be examined below. In line with the research model these

barriers are grouped into the following: (i) pre-asylum factors; (ii) host-country-related factors; and (iii) policy factors.

5.2.1. Pre-asylum related barriers

These are factors that contribute to the unemployment problem of refugees owing mainly to the circumstances of refugees before they came to the UK. In some cases it can be related to the personal attributes of refugees principally as people from a foreign land ('alien'); they include the following:

i. Language Difficulty

Proficiency in the language of the country of asylum is fundamental for the social and economic integration of refugees (Bloch, 2004). Undoubtedly, as Bloch holds, those with fluency in the language of the host country have a greater range of employment options. In this study, none of the respondents have English as their first language. Language difficulty has been mentioned as a contributory factor to unemployment by about 51% of the sample. The rank language difficulty is given in comparison with other barriers to employment is shown in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1. Language Difficulty as a cause for unemployment

Seriousness as a cause for unemployment	*% of sample*
The first main cause of unemployment	2
The second main cause of unemployment	3
The third main cause of unemployment	7
The fourth main cause of unemployment	5
The fifth main cause of unemployment	9

'Other' cause of unemployment	25
Sub-total of respondents who feel language difficulty is a problem	**51**
Respondents who didn't mention language difficulty as barrier	**49**
Total sample population	**100%**

As Table 5.1 above shows, just about 5% of the sample have considered language difficulty as the most serious cause of unemployment or as the second main cause; 7% as the third main cause and 5% and 8% see it as their fourth and fifth main reasons respectively for not being able to get jobs. About 25% of respondents do not rank language difficulty within the 1-5 range but rate it as one of the 'other problems'. None of the respondents have mentioned language difficulty as the sole factor responsible for their unemployment. Interestingly the rest of the sample i.e., about 49%, either do not accept language difficulty as a cause of their unemployment or never mentioned it as one.

Of those who mentioned language difficulty as one of the causes of unemployment two-thirds are women. It is also a barrier mentioned by respondents of different qualification and age levels, asylum status as well as length of stay in the country. For the elderly, language difficulty seems to be worse as their communication with the host society is likely to be quite limited. Even well educated and experienced people who came to the country at such an age face language difficulties more than the youngsters do. An elderly person says "most of those in my age, even if educated, have forgotten the English language (which they used in schools and colleges) in their working life as Amharic [the official government working language in Ethiopia] was what they have been using". The different respondents who think difficulty in English language is one cause for unemployment see the problem in different ways depending on the types of job they want. The way language difficulty affects them is different from individual to individual depending on certain factors. These factors can be grouped as follows:

a) Nature of jobs wanted

For some, language difficulty is a barrier as the type of jobs they might opt for requires good language command. These include different professionals who are qualified and experienced at different levels and want to pursue careers in journalism and broadcasting; marketing publicity and advertising for business companies and secretarial jobs.

b) Accent and Communication Skill

Others think it is not only language command that matters, but also accent and communication skills. They include those respondents who are for the most part educated above degree levels. A medical doctor who wants to work in a hospital and a Masters degree holder who taught in the UK adult education system and in a college in her country of origin, for instance, think that accent and communication skills are important. Some respondents from Northern England think similarly about accent and communication skills, not just knowledge of the English language. "Getting your accent understood is very important in this area" says another unemployed Masters degree holder living in Manchester.

c) Language Command for confidence

English language command is also regarded as important from the point of view of building confidence in the job application process especially for jobs that involve direct contact with customers. Most in this category have a relatively low level of education or no education in the UK. They are inclined to do smaller jobs such as cashier in restaurants and sales assistants in shops. They say that they are not confident enough in their language abilities to apply for jobs which would involve communication with customers or to set up their own business without business partners. Lack of confidence to communicate with authorities who deal with the self-employed is also said to be a problem. What may also be important to note with this group is that none are linking the lack of confidence to past experience and failures in communication with employers and customers.

d) Requirement by recruiting employers and its use as an excuse to refuse jobs

Recent research by the Industrial Society indicates that language may be used as an excuse for racial discrimination (Sargeant, Damachi and Long, 1999:13). In the communities case as well as other groups of refugees and asylum seekers (not included above), there is a view that language command is important not necessarily because the jobs necessitate a high level of language proficiency but because it is a criteria included in the adverts. It is thought that these could be deliberately done by employers to use the criteria to refuse jobs to non-English speakers which these refugees are. They also think that not being as fluent as native candidates during job interviews could be a disadvantage. Yet others in this group believe that for the jobs they seek they have enough command and can still improve at work and they insist that the main and real problem is that some employers are prejudiced against refugees and use 'language difficulty' as an excuse and some employees even think it is a measure of intelligence. A college student woman asylum seeker who lived in London for about 7 years says:

> I understand that every employer wants somebody with good language command. But I believe I have enough language command for the jobs I went like cleaning and cashier. But many employers think we don't even understand anything not just language. Some even think that not being fluent in (English) language is being ignorant of everything. They never think it can be improved... (T101)

The respondents who think that language is used as an excuse to refuse jobs tend to possess a reasonable level of education (at or above diploma levels), men and women mixed and in their late 20's. There are others in this category who stress that language can not be a problem for jobs they go for such as chef assistant or setting up partnership small businesses such as clothes shop and any small job (like cleaning). Yet others, including a Ph.D. holder, say they have proved their language abilities in colleges and universities as well as in previous employment and based on that, they claim that language difficulty cannot be taken as a problem (except as an excuse by employers).

To summarise, as the refugee literature traditionally tends to indicate, language problem is not believed to be a number one problem. Many do not deny it can be a problem but given the types of jobs they go for and their past UK education and work experience, it can be used as an excuse by prejudiced employers. As Bloch (2004) writes, language is the most common barrier to employment for refugees although there are many others. The findings of my study confirm that language is not the number one problem as different individuals have different levels of language competence and also the kind of jobs they are looking for match their language ability. So there must be other additional barriers to finding jobs that are worth considering. When language is a problem, it can manifest itself in various forms such as accent, communication skill and confidence.

ii. Culture

Cultural differences between the host country and country of origin can have an important effect on the employability of refugees and asylum-seekers, as 25% of respondents confirmed. To use a respondent's word "cultural breakthrough" could be difficult for many but the way it affects refugees may again differ from one to another, depending mainly on their career types, gender, age and how recent their arrival is.

Some career types are culture conditioned. A refugee who was a cultural dancer in his home country, for instance, says his professional dancing skills that he made his living from in his country are not transferable skills and do not fit into the tastes of the host society and this has been a major barrier to employment. For some women refugees, culture-related shyness during job interviews has been mentioned as a problem. These respondents say that unlike home, where it is culturally accepted (and expected) for women to be shy, in the UK shyness is interpreted as a lack of confidence by job interviewers. Recalling a practical experience , a woman refugee said "I was told by one accounting firm employer who interviewed me that I failed because I was too shy and unable to assure them of my capabilities". In this connection it is worth noting that in the absence of proof, this is an area where a prejudiced employer could discriminate and

reject women refugee job candidates. The time elapsed since arrival also seems to be directly related to the difficulty of fitting into the host society culture. What is noted is that some time may be required in the host society before adapting to the culture even in cases where refugees were in other European countries in transit. It is said by some that this was only a problem in the first years after they arrived.

Age also has a crucial role as adapting to the culture of the host country is more difficult for the elderly than the younger refugees and asylum seekers. There are also those who believe that adapting to the culture is not a problem for them. Respondents with different attributes including length of stay are found in this group.

To sum up, difficulty in adapting to the culture of the country which for most refugees and asylum seekers is different from what they knew in their home countries as well as some transit countries is known to be linked to the causes of unemployment. The way and degree it affects employment however is different depending mainly on the individual's profession, gender, and length of time in the host country. Although not directly related to employment, the EMBRACE – UK study on Ethiopians (2002) in the UK has also found that cultural differences play a major role in adapting to the UK system. The study notes that it is especially difficult for those of mature age to adapt to the culture of the society and that not adapting to the culture is a cause of stress, depression and poor health. These have direct roles to play in participation in the labour market. What seems to be interesting is that as much as cultural difference is a barrier to integration into the labour market, thereby the host society, it can also be a source of strength in times of difficulty and thereby help to integrate into the system. The EMBRACE-UK study notes that several participants see their religion as a central part of their cultural identity that they do not want to lose. It highlights that it has helped them to 'survive' in time of stress and depression, that it was seen as a link with their past and also that attending church reminded some of them of being in Ethiopia (EMBRACE-UK, 2002:124)

iii. Difficulty in self-promotion ('selling' oneself)

Lack of experience in 'selling' themselves adequately has been identified in the literature review as one of the possible problems refugees have compared to indigenous job applicants. adequately. This was revealed to be the case, albeit at different degrees, for about 40% of respondents. Basically, lack of experience by the refugees in "selling" themselves properly is linked to the culture they originate from. The great majority of respondents falling under this category say that they are not accustomed to speaking of their own achievements in their culture. They expressed their difficulties in saying 'I can do this and that' as in their home country, talking about oneself is not recommended. In contrast, in the UK employers do want to hear about the individual's experience and what he/she can do. "There it is considered to be bad behaved to talk about yourself until you show (prove) it. But how can I prove I am capable of doing the job in an interview?", asks a respondent. Another diploma holder male respondent believes he lost a job because of this problem. The respondent says, "The last job I had I was laid off. I could have been promoted and still be there. A South African employee who took the post I was supposed to have was someone I taught about the job, but he was good in telling the bosses about himself".

Some say they are just getting used to the new experience of self-promotion of this country while others say they 'undersell' themselves, some deliberately. An unemployed Eastern European educated medical doctor says he never tells anyone he is a doctor as it is "demoralising" while doing a manual job. Yet others say their principles and circumstances influence them not to self-promote themselves as it might feel like lying. A very practising Christian refugee woman and an elderly man are a case in point. They think that if they have to 'sell' themselves and make the employers happy, they have to lie and their religious principles and age go against that.

Women refugees seem to dominate the group which thinks that difficulties associated with self-promotion has a role to play in causing their unemployment. Kelly documents that throughout history, women have typically been granted only social rights. She stresses that women enjoyed civil and political rights indirectly through their husbands, fathers, sons, or other legally designated male protectors (Kelly, 1991:8). While Kelly's

observation focuses on the western world in particular, the situation can be worse for Third World women (e.g., Efrem, 1992). The effect of this may have been extended to the problem of difficulties in self-promotion. The findings of the survey in this study reveal that the problem of gender in self-promotion starts from the country of origin background and impacts directly right here in the host society as it puts the women in a comparatively disadvantageous position in the labour market, compared to the indigenous job searching women. A woman asylum-seeker says:

> In my culture and society back at home, I can say we are the first women generation to be working outdoor. So there is almost nothing we can learn from our mothers and grand mothers on work outside the kitchen.....I was raised in and came from a culture where a woman is expected to be shy and under men. But here the women are sophisticated and they know how to self-promote themselves (T103).

It is also mentioned that the job interview is not a common practice in Ethiopia as employers there take it lightly and give applicants the chance to show their abilities on the job. This means it is a new experience for many and thus some say they depend on interview skill guidance books and other resources; in addition they never know what the interviewers feel as the respondents have never been on interview panels in the past.

Deteriorating confidence in 'selling' themselves properly is what naturally follows from here; i.e., being unaware of what interviewers like to hear and see in the process of recruitment (application and interview). A UK Engineering degree holder with additional IT-skills says, for instance, that he wonders if failing to sell himself properly is the cause of failure of his job applications over the last seven years. Others explain in different ways that they cannot confidently say whether they are self-promoting themselves properly. This could carry the risk of overdoing them and going into irrelevant issues as much as underselling them, both being equally damaging (i.e., underselling and overdoing self-promotion).

Contrary to those who say difficulties with self-promotion is an issue, there are also others who say that they do not have any problems in selling themselves because they

have taken relevant courses and can explain themselves properly in their CV's, although no proof is given except what they claim to be.

The EMBRACE-UK study also highlights "selling oneself" as a problem. It quotes an expert participant as saying:

> I believe those Ethiopian values and beliefs affect Ethiopians. There are also some negative aspects as Ethiopians come from a background of a religious society, where modesty is considered to be one of the good qualities. So, in a competitive society you find it very difficult to compete with the rest of the society and achieve. .. (p.143)

Our findings correspond to the findings of the EMBRACE-UK study (2002).

To summarise, our investigation has revealed that 'selling' oneself in the labour market is perceived to be a serious setback to the employability of refugees. Their problem starts from their home country where talking about past achievements and experience is not well received culturally especially for women. Lack of much work experience in the UK can also make them tell lies to make up for it which some say is hard to do due to religious beliefs and/or age. Lacking much experience in attending job interviews or being on interview panels at home is also said to make them lack confidence in 'selling' themselves properly.

iv. Impressing Job Interviewers

Impressing job interviewers has similar features to the 'self-promotion' or 'selling oneself' issue discussed above but it is specifically all about what goes on when they are interviewed on the actual interview day.

About forty-one per cent of the unemployed have said difficulty in knowing how to impress job interviewers has a role to play in their being unemployed. Respondents in this category have different characteristics (personal attributes) and therefore it is hard to

associate the problem, and even the way the problem is manifested, with any particular group of respondents. The fact that it affects the sample population across the board can be taken to mean this problem is too important to ignore. How it affects the respondents varies depending on the types of jobs, regardless of the levels of qualifications or other attributes they have. The various ways in which this difficulty manifests itself are examined below.

As stated in the previous sub-section, undergoing job-interviews is at variance with what most Ethiopian refugees and asylum seekers experienced in their home country's labour market where the culture of job interviews is not common. Even for those who could have some awareness or experience of job interviews in their country, it is said that uncertainty regarding the expectations of employers in the UK during interviews is a problem. A respondent who worked in his country for 13 years in government, private and international offices as a senior electrician, for instance, says "I don't know what they want" and gives the example of his job application for British Railways which attracted the comment "high satisfaction" (which he offered to show), only to be told by letter after the interview that he had been unsuccessful. It seems that even post-interview explanations by employers are not satisfactory for the respondent candidates. Knowledge of internal information of the employing organisations is also mentioned as playing a key role in impressing job interview panels. Lack of self-confidence in relation to language command is also said to play a negative role during job interviews. For others, the difficulty arose from the fact that they have never been invited for job interviews and lack the practical experience. Yet other respondents say that the interviewing skills courses they took and internet information facilities have helped in this. The Europe-wide study on refugees of different nationalities with special focus on the UK is consistent with the findings of this study although they are not as in-depth as our findings. The study documents that many refugees of various nationalities have found that the recruitment process is different from their experiences in their countries of origin. It indicates that in some of these countries, recruitment was simpler (e.g. straight to jobs after graduation without being interviewed); or in interviews talking about themselves was seen as boasting which is not a positive attribute in their countries. It quotes an Iraqi woman who

said she thought she was going to die when she went for an interview and underlines the difficulties they face in impressing their job interviewers.

v. *Unfamiliarity with the British Job Culture and Code of Conduct*

Some refugees and asylum-seekers believe that the fact that they are unfamiliar with the host country's job culture is partly responsible for their unemployment. This is not again associated with any particular group or any particular attributes. Some report that they could not get jobs because they are alien to the UK's labour market system and do not have enough awareness of the 'rules of the game' or lack confidence that they have a good understanding of them. Awareness of the code of conduct in the work place is also perceived to be an important factor in getting a job and staying employed. A woman refugee with a UK-degree in Computer Science recalls her experience in a PLC. She says that knowledge of the code of conduct of the company one works for is important. "Some colleagues were (as usual) gossiping about one of their colleagues which I was uncomfortable to participate in, as I grew up being told that gossip is not a good behaviour. The talking man didn't like my silence and turned round and said 'come on, it is only (for laughs)'... in some work places you have to behave like them or they hate you, especially in PLC's" (T154). For this respondent, it has contributed to losing her job. Other respondents who were not in employment in the past think that not experiencing the work places have denied them of the awareness of normal unwritten codes of behaviour at work.

A significant number of respondents do not believe or are unsure if this is an obstacle to employment. "They do not have any special job culture from what I knew in Bulgaria", says a UK degree graduate who lived in transit for many years there. Some who stayed in the UK for some years say it is not a problem any more, or they have been working and now know it is not difficult to fit in. There are also those who believe that it is possible to learn it easily once at work, or with the help of some training; some even say they have studied it. A recent arrival living in the Midlands says it could be a problem but not

significantly as he believes he has better understanding of the job culture than other refugees he knows (with whom he competes in the area he lives). Many others believe that they can't say certainly whether they have the correct understanding until they are employed and see it in practice.

The Europe-wide study on refugees of various nationalities confirms that not knowing the latest languages of equal opportunities, "what clothing is conventionally worn to work" and so on, have negative effects on employability (Jonker, 2004).

vi. Difficulty with skills and experience transferability

Nearly 20% of case study refugees and asylum-seekers believe that the issue of difficulty in skill transferability to the demands of the UK labour market is a contributory factor to unemployment. It is mentioned, for instance, that for accounting professional refugees the UK accounting system is different from what they knew before they came here as they grew up learning and practising the American accountancy system in their home country. But it is also believed that short-term re-training can convert some of the skills to fit into the demands of the UK labour market. What is observed more importantly from the survey is that almost all the respondents in this category believe that in reality this is a problem due to mis-perception and bias used as an "excuse" by employers. An accountant says, "my auditing qualifications are recognised internationally but not accepted as transferable in here". Similar feelings have been noticed in the case of those with different skills and also those who gained their qualifications in other parts of Europe.

Very few respondents take the view that this is not a problem, having gained their qualifications from an internationally recognised university or having done similar jobs in their home country. A minority believe that because they gained their qualifications in the UK, it is not an issue.

vii. Absence of high level (in-depth) qualifications

A recent finding positively correlates employability with education level and states clearly that those with only basic education experience much higher unemployment levels throughout much of Europe compared to those with higher education qualifications (TUC, 1998:7). Indeed Glyn and Salverda (2000) tell us that the deteriorating position of less-qualified workers has been a growing cause for concern in many OECD countries in the 1980's and 1990s. They argue that as well as contributing directly to rising inequality, it compounds the difficulties faced by workers already disadvantaged in the labour market for reasons of age, gender or race. We will attempt to see if the problem of unemployment for some case study refugees is linked to lack of higher qualification. According to one-third of respondents, limited qualifications is connected to the problem of unemployment. The majority in this category are below degree levels, and includes both men and women. For some it is related to the fact that they have not pushed their qualifications to a level where they can confidently go for the types of jobs they aspire to. These include university students who seek professional part-time jobs and some with lower qualification levels. Others, although they have degrees, either from here or from their home country, think they need additional short-term IT or profession-related skills to fit into the specific demands of employers and thereby to widen their employability. There are also those who say that they have got qualifications but not sufficient enough for the requirements of some job specifications or job advertisements "The Management course I took (for my degree) is too wide but shallow" (T112), says a degree graduate woman refugee, for instance. Others see the importance of more qualifications from the point of view of their being foreigners. Being a refugee makes it difficult to get a job with a qualification level which could have been enough for the natives, it is thought, i.e., a refugee in general should be a step ahead in terms of education level to be able to compete with a native. Yet for others the absence of high level qualifications from the host country UK is a problem.

Contrary to those who believe they are not qualified enough to fit into the labour market, there are some who think that the level of qualifications is irrelevant. They believe that

even the skills they have are not of benefit to them to find a job level that matches them. These include both host and home-country qualified respondents. Others believe that a lack of qualification is not a problem if they go for menial jobs. This group includes those who want to be self-employed, which they believe does not require high levels of education.

Therefore the findings of this survey show that qualifications are not seen as the most important problem, though it has a role to play if the refugees want a job they can fit in. Our findings somewhat differ from the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002) which found that the lack of qualifications constitute a major problem for many Ethiopians. Indeed the study sees it as the second biggest problem next to lack of British work experience, and above immigration status. However, it is not clear what the study means by 'need more qualification', and from what level to what level, or if it includes re-qualifications, such as Ethiopian medical doctors who need to take PLAB tests. It also presents conflicting information. For instance, after mentioning need for more qualification the study highlights efforts some Ethiopian makes to improve their education and at some point the study, which is produced in partnership with Middlesex university, also highlights that Ethiopians are one of the best and highly educated refugee communities with a wealth of professional experience and yet find it difficult to find jobs that is to the standard of their qualification and experience.

Our findings are also different from the findings of studies on ethnic minorities. Modood's survey, for instance, reveals that if we distinguish between the high unemployment of recent entrants into the labour market and the long-term youth unemployment, especially among those with no or few qualifications, both are more severe for ethnic minority than white men. (1997:90).

The argument put forward by Castles and Kosack (1981), observed in the literature review in chapter 2, that immigrants' low level qualifications is taken advantage of by western society's, is also contested by the findings of our study. It should be borne in mind, however, that the writers' argument was linked primarily to the immigrants of

post-war immigrants to Western Europe, although they seem to make general conclusions to all immigrants.

viii. Age

As indicated earlier on in this chapter, age plays an important role in employability with the general trend that the youth and the elderly tend to be over-represented in the unemployed category (see also TUC, 1998; Glyn and Salverda, 2000). In the sample, for about 15% of case study refugees and asylum-seekers age is perceived to be partly responsible for unemployment. This is not necessarily true for those above mature age levels (i.e., those above 40's). It also includes mainly those in their thirties. A Masters degree holder with many years of home country work experience, now living in Greater Manchester said:

> "As a foreigner, over 35 years of age is useless. An employer openly told me that he prefers a younger person whom he can shout at than someone like me" (T152).

Respondents in England and Wales stress that employers in this country prefer fresh graduates in their early 20's. A thirty-something with a Masters degree in Journalism Studies says "media companies prefer those between 18-25 to train and keep them. I have tried for such jobs and failed. Even job adverts make that clear". It is also linked to the impact of age on other issues like physical and mental strength. A respondent who gained his medical doctorate from Eastern Europe who wants to take conversion courses says his age is impacting on his ability to sit for long hours of reading unlike before (T200).

The UK may not be an exception in witnessing problems with youth unemployment (see, for instance, Berkel, Coenen and Dekker, 1999). For refugees and asylum seekers, as can be seen in this sample study the youth and elderly age groups seem to be in a worse position. A recently published book by Norton and Cohen entitled Out of Exile: developing youth work with young refugees, argues that young refugees in the UK face

immense problems of racism, unemployment and alienation. Basing themselves on the survey of youth refugees up to the age of 25, the writers continue to hold the view that many want to integrate with dignity into British culture and society while at the same time being free to value and cherish their own particular culture and identity. These refugees also seek to be economically independent and to contribute to the economic life of their adopted country. "But all too often they are hampered by language difficulties, discrimination and the lack of appropriate skills, training and services (*Norton and Cohen, 2000: Preface: vii*). For those above 60 bad health could be a problem and even for those with relatively good health the labour market deems them unfit for jobs that they could do in their home country,. One such respondent says: "It is so frustrating. Even for security jobs back at home the elderly are preferred as they thought to be more responsible (trustworthy). Here it is different and those under 40 who are physically fit are preferred. This is a problem even for their own people (i.e., the natives). Even if job centres force them they don't take us. Once I was given a job in a shop, but I left it as it didn't match my age". To be too young, "added to being a refugee", has also been found to be another cause linked to unemployment, as discovered in the survey. A recent research by the Industrial Society indicates that some of the difficulty associated with age for such groups of refugees (in general) is caused by the upheaval of leaving one country and the time taken to relocate in another, which can take several years. The finding states that there are many stories of people who have lost a few years getting the right paperwork sorted out. This is seen to be a slow process and the net result is that, even for young people, having lost a few years, they are then older than the competition applying for posts (Sargeant, Damachi, Long, 1999:22). This seems also to be the case for many in the case study community. Similar trends have been observed in related research although the various dimensions of the effects of age on refugees' employability has not been explored as our findings did. Existing research indicates, for instance, that both young adults and people over 50 have higher than average rates of unemployment and economic inactivity in the UK (Hasluck, 1999; Ashdown, 2000, cited in Bloch, 2002) and this pattern is most marked for people from ethnic minority groups.

Bloch's study for DWP (2002) shows that the majority of refugees are relatively young on arrival to Britain, and for instance in 2000 less than 5 per cent of applicants were aged 50 or over (Matz, et al, 2001, cited in Bloch 2002). Older refugees also experience problems because they tend to be more established in their existing careers and may be more reluctant to adapt to a different labour market, convert their qualifications or retrain (Bloch, ibid). The EMBRACE-UK project also highlights that unemployment was relatively high for older Ethiopians but shows how they try to take up courses to improve their opportunities of finding work.

Our findings are not exactly the same as existing literature on the circumstances of the native population or ethnic minorities as the focus is mainly on youth unemployment. In Europe, back in 1993, the then president of the European Union, Jacques Delors, announced that one third of the long-term unemployed in the community were young people who had never had a job, and he further pointed out that the long-term unemployed accounted for around 46% of the total number of jobless in the European Community (1993:3).

In Britain, some of the few surveys concerned with the relationship between age groups and unemployment with regard to ethnic minorities are those of Modood (1997) and Drew, Gray and Sime, (1992). Modood stresses that one well established feature of most labour markets is that new entrants are more likely to experience unemployment than those who are already established. Moreover, he argues that many young people experiment with a variety of occupations, and so experience higher rates of movement into and out of employment than those who are more settled. He therefore ascribes young people's higher rates of unemployment to these factors but fails to back up the former assertion with data or reference. However, according to Drew, Gray and Sime writing six years earlier (1992), ethnic minority young people consistently have higher rates of unemployment than the corresponding 'white' population (39). An important point worth mentioning here is the fact that the minorities community is more skewed towards young people than that of the white population (Modood, 1997; RC, 1997). In fact, the National Statistical Office indicates that the ethnic community population has a much younger age

structure than the white population (HMSO, 1996:10). Given that refugees tend to be the dominantly youngsters, this can be one difficulty that contributed to their unemployment problem. Our findings correspond to existing literature, as it confirms that young age affects employability negatively. However, our study also differs from the literature on ethnic minorities, as refugees can have serious problems in getting jobs at a matured age, especially if they arrive in the country at such an age.

ix. Health

Around 10% of the sample population have unemployment problems linked to poor health. Nearly half of them are permanently out of the labour market system or couldn't take courses to gain employable skills entirely due to bad health and have been spending many years in pursuit of medical treatment. Others couldn't actively search for jobs or look for their preferred part-time jobs, as part-time jobs are (said to be) more difficult to find than full-time jobs.

While health problem can also negatively affect the natives, there is a case where being a refugee has increased the vulnerability of the respondent. A woman refugee, for instance, was seriously injured at work where she was a cashier in a shop and couldn't get compensation that would help her to heal in good time to be ready for jobsearch. The respondent says "the manager didn't give me compensation and when I asked him he told me that I employed you as an asylum-seeker (without proper documentation) and he took advantage of my vulnerability. I spoke to lawyers and they worked out the cost-benefit and were not willing to help me. Even the job centre refused to give me Incapacity Benefit saying that I haven't contributed to NI" (T128). The EMBRACE-UK study (2002) looks primarily at the health problems of Ethiopians. It looks briefly at employment and how employment-related stress leads to health problems. The study has similar findings to ours as it mentions that health problems are obstacles to employment. However, unlike this study, the UK-EMBRACE study does not go deeper into the matter.

x. Gender-related barriers

A labour market performance assessment in the UK and Europe undertaken by the TUC (1998) reveals that by European standards, there are exceptionally large numbers of women in the UK who would like to work, but who fall outside the ILO definition of unemployment. When we look at the circumstances of refugee women, in addition to the problems observed under various headings, above, there are also gender-specific additional barriers that refugee women face. These include primarily childcare. Apart from a single father and a respondent whose wife is not in good health, the issue of childcare affects women exclusively. It constitutes the prime reason for leaving jobs or being unable to actively search for jobs, the length of time spent out of work depending on the number of children they have. Training and qualification levels that have a direct link to employment are also affected by childcare. Some also express concern about their future in terms of difficulty to plan their career progress and education. The issue of child care is also observed in section 4.5.1(*x*) above. A recent publication by Hildegard Dumper (2002) confirms our findings on the problem of childcare as a key issue for refugee women's employment. The study, which was the largest survey of refugee women conducted in London (focusing on skills audit), accepts that refugee women experience problems all women face in participating in the labour market. In addition, however, they have lost all the support systems that they traditionally received from family and friends. The study argues that this has a particular impact on their ability to arrange childcare and also highlights the emotional support they miss from their kinship ties as discussed in the literature review, Chapter 2.

Apart from the more obvious issue of childcare, many women respondents have also expressed the feeling that they are discriminated against for reasons linked to their gender. Employers are said to be reluctant to take up women job candidates who are at a 'child-bearing' age. Respondents also mention that some employers try to use gender as an excuse to refuse jobs to women. For instance, some jobs in the construction sector or night shift jobs in, say, a petrol station are said to be wanted by some women partly because they do not bother asylum-seekers with proof of immigration status or are convenient for study. Examples of outright rejections are said to be ascribed to gender

unsuitability. Similar treatments have also been given as an example in voluntary activities. Even once a job is found being a woman is claimed to cause 'problems' not experienced by men. A professional refugee woman who had been working in the past recalled such bad experiences. Lack or low expectation of achievement from women, especially black women is claimed to be one issue while sexual connotation "from which there is no running away if you work with men", as described by one respondent is another. Some treatments like unwanted approaches and invitations for a drink are said to be seen as harassment, "unless taken lightly". Such approaches could be damaging to relationships at work "especially when the man in question is a boss", as another professional woman respondent mentions.

Our findings are in marked contrast to the findings of the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians which states in passing that "there is no statistically significant association between gender and employment status" (2002:138). As can be seen above our findings exhibit the various forms of disadvantages they encounter both in the same way as all women, as well as immigrant foreigners and in particular as refugees. On the other hand, our findings correspond to what immigrant women can undergo as investigated by Floya Anthias, in her study of Greek-Cypriot immigrant women undergo (Anthias, 1992). However, Anthias' study doesn't cover the special issues of refugee women, especially those who come from the Third World, whose pre-asylum disadvantaged background have a direct impact on integration into the host society. This includes a generally lower home country educational background than their male counter parts (e.g. Ephrem, 1992).

xi. Parents with Children

Rosemary Crompton (1999) tells us that Britain has the lowest level of state-provided childcare in Europe and many women [parents] are in 'non-standard' part-time employment in order to accommodate childcare[33]. However childcare itself can cause difficulties in looking for a job. About one-fifth of the total sample respondents

[33] 'Non-standard' employment, according to Crompton relates to casual, part-time, and short contract working, as well as self-employment and outworking.

unemployment is mainly caused by childcare problems. Of these about 50% say it is their number one cause for unemployment while for 33%, it is their second main cause. Parents with a childcare problem include both women as mothers and men as fathers and it gets worse for lone parents, whose unemployment level is also high for the general UK national figures (TUC,1998:21).

Respondents claim the problem in this regard is linked to the fact that childcare expenses are too expensive to be covered by the types of jobs and prefer to take care of their children themselves staying at home. Some say they have been completely tied up with child-caring for years and others said they had quitted the small jobs they were doing prior to the arrival of their children. Absence of crèche facilities in training centres has made it difficult for some mothers to take up courses. It is also noticed that agencies that offer work placements are reluctant to take mothers with children for fear that they could have child care problems. Even when there are facilities in some localities, it is said that they are not reliable and are available only for a few days of the week.

Here again, like 'health-related' problems, refugees and asylum-seekers could be thought to be having problems that the natives can also have. Whilst this is correct, there are other issues that refugees and asylum seekers uniquely go through. There are cases where parents have to look after their children, even if they are of school age, if they have just been reunited with them. A single mother in Scotland, for instance, says she had to abandon work and stay home mainly because her 10-years old son arrived from her home country only recently and needed help to fit in the school or anywhere else due to language difficulties and she had to look after him.

It is also claimed that there is discrimination in nursery facilities in some places. A refugee mother in Yorkshire says, for example:

> Part-time childcare is free in the college. When it comes to nursery they don't give attention to foreigners (not necessarily refugees or blacks as there are many blacks here). For the natives they get support for children less than a year old. I doubt if I could get that support next year when I want to continue my study even if the college pushes them (the child care providers). Nursery is

advantageous because it is full-time (8:00a.m. – 6:00p.m.). Also it has more facilities like lunch provision.

Moreover some refugees and asylum-seekers need to take education and training that the natives may not need; e.g. English language courses. This can further place them in a disadvantageous position owing to the problem with childcare. Secondly, the partners of these refugees and asylum-seekers who could be from the same country of origin are more likely to be unemployed than the indigenous population. The resulting lack of income and other associated problems can perhaps also be taken as additional problems compared to the indigenous people needing child care support. Our findings on the problem of childcare as a barrier to employment (specially for mothers) is also confirmed by the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002).

*xii. **Other Pre-asylum related barriers to employment***

Apart from the above personal attributes-related barrier, respondents have also mentioned other issues which might contribute to unemployment, one of them being the decision to pursue their studies in order to be able to compete effectively in the labour market. There is concern however about their fate after graduation. Another case is a non-refugee respondent who came to the UK to study but who also wants to work part-time; he says he is not encouraged by his family to take time off from his studies. Sample respondents in this category are not actively searching for jobs, other than probably small part-time jobs. Lack of networking and contacts are also mentioned by some as a barrier to employment. Such connections are enjoyed by competing natives as opposed to most refugees and for some job types, job advertisements are not relevant per se. For others who were mentioned in an earlier section, being self-employed is the preferred option, and the difficulty in getting start-up capital and premises has been mentioned as the main barriers. Yet for others, low expectations and motivations can also be an obstacle. Those in this category say that for a long-time they never thought that

refugees could get jobs in line with their professional aspirations and this has dented their motivations. Over-qualification is another barrier to employment as research may indicate (e.g. Sargeant, Damachi, Long, 1999) and as confirmed by well-educated respondents. In some parts of the country, jobs may not be available at a level matching the respondents' qualifications or skills, and even if they apply for them, employers are said to be reluctant to take them on, preferring those who match the job specification perfectly. It is also observed that employers could see the well-educated as expensive, which could be a hindrance to a smooth boss-employee vertical relationship want to take you. An unemployed UK PhD graduate says: "The issue of over-qualification is only used as an excuse...as they take you as a threat. An employer told me that because you are highly qualified you will be 'bored' here. He saw me as a problem, not as an input". (T118)

One of the problems for those who are engaged in higher education (as students) is that they may deliberately opt for part-time unskilled jobs for reasons of convenience. For others, there are indications that they have difficulties in obtaining the help and support they need with job search, CV writing and other related skills. (Y167)

Finally, personal attributes problems are linked to special factors that cause difficulties in searching for jobs actively. These include depressions caused by special individual circumstances like bereavement; being uninterested to work in the UK; lack of confidence due to psychological problems; time constraints which limit availability to work

5.2.2. Host country related barriers

i. Prejudices against refugees

A recent ECRE project aimed at improving the integration of refugees in the 15 Member States of the European Union mentions that refugees often face problems of direct or indirect discrimination in the labour market which are difficult to prevent in practice even

in countries with strong anti-discrimination legislation (1999: Introduction, pp. 52). In the case study community, more than 40 per cent of respondents have mentioned this problem as a main barrier to get a job. Eighty-three per cent of these rank employers' prejudice as one of their first five problems. Respondents mention several incidents as proofs of prejudices against refugees by employers. These moments could be at various stages of the job application process. Below are some of the findings:

a) Application Stage:- Those in this sub-category are almost all educated to above degree-level. They believe that employers start to lose interest in them when they see their name and accent and think that they do not even want to see their CV's. A respondent, for instance, says he has been told by many employers that the cost of re-training and re-advertising for the job in case of termination of contract outweighs the benefit. It is also said that in the course of informal drop-in inquiries for any vacancy, some employers' faces change the moment they realise that the individual is a refugee. In some parts of the country it is also believed that employers identify the applicant by their address and lose interest. A respondent who has been living in Leeds for about a year says, "I live in an asylum-seekers hostel. When I tell my address to job centres they know automatically that I am an asylum-seeker. (Due to the frequency of failure of applications) I am starting to believe that my address biases the job centres and some employers". A UK Masters degree holder recalls that "In early 2000 I was asked by a job centre to hand in my CV for a job in a Mortgage Company. When I sent my CV the next day the employer told me the job had gone. I suspected this happened either because he saw my refugee status or nationality in my CV or it could be because I was over-qualified. But if it was the latter I guess they would tell me". Some application forms also stipulate that the applicant should have European (or other) work experience, but never African. Journalism is mentioned as the case in point. Existing stereotyping perpetuated by the media which portrays refugees as scroungers and problem-makers as well as harmful propaganda spread in

some parts of the country by extreme right parties like "the BNP" also hinder refugees' chances to get past the first stage of the application process.

b) Interview stage:- Many refugees believe the moment the job interviewers discover that the applicant is a refugee is when they lose interest. Many incidents are mentioned as 'evidence' of this. For instance a respondent who was a professional dancer in his home country says

> "In 1994, I went to a large dance group in Birmingham to ask for a dancing job. I showed him (the employer) my documents and videos and he tested me for informal dancing for a few minutes with some group of dancers. Then when he asked me my immigration status and I told him I am a refugee I noticed a bad face in him. After a couple of hours he told me that I haven't been selected because I had to be fluent either in English or French. I felt he rejected me because I am a refugee and complained to him exactly on that because otherwise I didn't need language (fluency) to be re-trained as dancing is done by number codes like nota in music". (T109)

A woman refugee (now married to a white Irishman) says "In 1994, I applied for a job as a cashier. The employer looked at my papers and as my ELR was not renewed he used that as an excuse to say no to me. I believe he was prejudiced because otherwise I had a NI number and he also knew that I could get him a confirmation paper from the Home Office indicating renewability of my ELR...this is just one of the examples I faced in relation to this". A BTEC distinction graduate in Business and Finance remembers one of his interviews with an employment agency, "I went to an employment agency called ABC Agency based in Croydon and the person who interviewed me was very friendly at the start and we chatted for a long time. He gave me an aptitude test and told me my result was very high. He gave me good promises. Finally he asked me my identity (card) and I showed him my Home Office paper. Thereafter he changed immediately and cooled down. I haven't heard anything from him since". Another respondent with a B.A. degree in Accounting and now doing an ACCA course puts the problem of employers prejudice against refugees as his number one

problem. Recalling such an incident he says: "I applied for the post of junior auditor at one certified accountants' firm. I was short-listed and given a written examination and oral interview after having told them about my qualification and experience. The interviewer was very positive towards my response. The final question was about my immigration status. The moment I let them know that I was an asylum seeker the interviewer was prompted to open the door and let me leave his office without saying a word. I thought he was about to open the door to let someone in, but it was to drive me out" (Y167). All the above are examples of how being a refugee can influence the outcome of an interview. It was also noted that even in the case of a good interview, one can still be faced with rejection. A UK engineering degree graduate recalls such a case, "for instance, in 1998, I applied for an assistant production manager job in an ointment production company. After I passed the interview, they refused to give me the job as my ELR was only valid for one more year (with possibility of renewal). I experienced many similar incidents due to being a refugee. The question I am often asked is: *why did you come to this country?* I have faced such questions in every interview (about 25) of them" (T121).

c) After successfully volunteering:- It has also been noted that employers may not want to employ a refugee when they realise their immigration status even if they acquired valuable experience through volunteering. It does not even matter what type of status- ELR or ILR- the candidate has; what seems to matter most is the label of refugee. A case in point has been mentioned by a woman refugee:

> "I was doing a work placement in a Chartered Accountant's firm (in Olympia, Kensington) last June for two months doing 3 days a week. I was doing an accounting work like payroll without anyone helping me. They were very busy and I helped in tackling their workload. At one stage the manager wanted to employ me and asked me for my CV. Then when he found out from my CV that I was a refugee he said if you are a refugee it could be complicated for me to recruit you (even didn't ask me my status) and you either continue working for free or leave it. This hurt me very much. I know many

friends of mine who are very much educated but couldn't teach where they deserve except in refugee adult education centres". (T128)

Some also recall their encounters with employers who have hired them for brief periods without knowing their immigration status in advance. There are also cases where refugees have been mistreated in colleges and universities by students and lecturers alike after their status (being refugees) was revealed. These 'mistreatments' sometimes cause those affected to drop out of these academic institutions. Even in unpaid work-placements, agencies acting as a go-between are said to discourage the refugees from revealing their immigration status. The respondents believe that their circumstances in this regard are even different from those of black ethnic minorities and that in fact "even blacks are ashamed of us (because of their refugee status)".

The above accounts seem to confirm the views of many respondents who believe that employers' prejudices against refugees is one of the main barriers to employment. This seems to be the case at all stages of the recruitment process. For some employers it does not even matter what immigration status those candidates have (ELR, ILR). All refugees are seen the same way. Other studies confirm our findings on the issue of problems many refugees face in relation to the employers due to their refugee status. The existence of discrimination and harassment by employers is a recognised issue by the UK government[34]. Alice Bloch (2002)[35] underlines that perceptions of employers' discrimination are evident among ethnic minorities in general and refugees in particular and cites various examples to corroborate her arguments. An interesting Europe-wide refugee studies with a focus on the UK documents this problem. It shows how almost "all interviewees" from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East are of the opinion that employers are prejudiced against their foreign qualifications and working experience (Jonker, 2004). It shows how discrimination is now openly acknowledged and associates

[34] This was mentioned by a representative of a Cabinet Office in a European Conference on *Successful Integration on the Labour Market*, Copenhagen 4-5 July 2002, with particular reference to the wider ethnic minorities.

[35] Alice Bloch's study's survey is on refugees of particular countries of origin but is taken to be the study of the wider refugees.

the worsening of the problem with bad media coverage and the events of 11 September. The findings of our research on discrimination refugees face in the labour market are also consistent with those documented in other countries; e.g. Canada (Krahn, et al, 2000).

ii. Racial and Religious Discrimination

There are indications in other studies that racial disadvantages suffered by ethnic minorities in the labour market are on the decrease (e.g., Iganski et al. 1996; Modood, 1997). However, these writers are quick to remind us that the effects of racial discrimination are still being felt by ethnic minorities. Our findings indicate that some refugees claim to have suffered discrimination in the labour market both as refugees, as shown in the previous section, and also as members of ethnic minorities, or according to some, as black people. Around 42% of respondents say that they are also victims of racial discrimination as black people. For 64% of these, racial discrimination is one of the first five barriers to employment identified earlier. A UK Law degree graduate woman refugee believes racial discrimination is her first cause of unemployment and says "whites' domination in management" is responsible for this problem. "There was a case", she recalls "where myself and a white woman candidate were left as final competitors. She was selected and no explanation was given to me". She says "I am fluent in English and they appreciate that...from experience even if a competing woman is a foreigner or even a refugee with poor English command, they tend to prefer them if they are white [e.g., from Eastern Europe]". For this respondent being a refugee can put one in an advantageous position at times and being black is worse than being a refugee. Another woman refugee mentions a similar incident:

> "When I enter the interview rooms, before they see my clothing they look at my face and from their expression I know I lost 50% of the total score. I know business areas like Edgware Road, Oxford Circus, Kensington, Holborn, anywhere they prefer, say, a Polish white girl (to) blacks even when our (English) language is better than them. In early 1994 after I got my NI number I was working in a Turkish-owned textile factory (about 6-months after I came) with an Ethiopian friend of mine. When the business cooled down they sacked us and kept the white women who were much older and slower than us and who were hired long after us. When I worked as a

> chambermaid in Earl's Court area, everyone before us (the whites) were not checked but when I and another black friend were leaving the compound, the security woman showed us a bad face and checked us. I can mention many similar experiences". (T101)

Racism could be linked to area (continent) of origin (see for instance, Sargeant, Damachi, Long, 1999). In the case study group, country of origin related racism (i.e., as an Ethiopian) has also been mentioned by some refugees. "When you tell them you are from Ethiopia, they say 'oh you are a refugee'", says a young woman refugee who is looking for small jobs. This prejudice can arguably be linked to damaging reports by the less than effective and accurate Western media (see, for instance, Styan, 1999; AFFORD, 2000:29). The result of such racist behaviour is erosion of confidence for the refugee. Sometimes racism is overt and can manifest itself as verbal and physical abuse. A woman refugee who says she volunteered in an elderly care centre in Muswell Hill says some of the elderly there used to call her 'nigger', 'coloured'. Remembering one incident she recalls, "Once an elderly man whose beard I didn't shave in time threw a hot water on me and said 'you deserve it because you are a dirty black...' I was so upset by his remark but it is difficult to take such people to court".

On the issue of racial discrimination, our findings indicate that the way racial discrimination is manifested is not visible and hence is hard to prove, but they "sense" that the recruitment process is racist as some of the explanations they give are not satisfactory (leaving no room for other suspicions as causes). Only one respondent living in the Midlands and not actively seeking employment thinks that there is no racism where he lives "because there are many ethnic minority people in the area I live". However, the story of the respondent in the Turkish-owned factory quoted earlier on is indicative of the fact that perpetrators of racist procedures in recruitment can also be ethnic minority employers.

Religious discrimination is also mentioned, but very rarely. A Christian respondent in Leeds says the only jobs he can find relatively easily in Chapel town (part of Leeds where many ethnic minority communities live) is in small businesses like shops owned by some Asian ethnic minority members. "When I ask them for vacancy, they tell me I have to be

a Muslim to get the jobs". The Europe-wide study on refugees of various countries of origin, with focus on the UK, documents several cases which confirm our findings that refugees feel the way they are treated by employers such as the NHS system is racist and biased. The EMBRACE-UK study's findings also corroborate with the findings of our survey. It indicates that racism is a serious barrier to employment. It also shows that more than a quarter of the participants felt they had experienced discrimination and racism when seeking employment. It quotes one respondent who said, "It is mainly your language and also your name. If two people with names Tsehaye [Ethiopian name] and Steven applied for a job, they give priority to Steven while they have the same qualification. Therefore if you are a foreigner it is very hard to get a job..."(p.143). The study also highlights that speaking on the telephone to employers with a non-English accent evoked unfavourable responses. Alice Bloch's study for DWP (2002) on refugees of different nationalities, (other than Ethiopians) has also found out that out of about 15 barriers, employer discrimination ranks fifth.

Our findings are consistent with the findings of other studies on ethnic minorities. One potential issue many researchers have drawn attention to is the role race plays in relation to the high figure of unemployment among ethnic minorities. As I attempted to point out in an earlier chapter, Modood's survey findings (1997) provide a diversified figure of ethnic minorities in the labour market compared to the 'white' population. However, overall one may observe the relatively high unemployment rate of minority ethnic groups. This situation and its link to race is also confirmed by Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992). These writers indicate that the issue of racial disadvantage is a common point of agreement among researchers, particularly in relation to economic disadvantage against, though they acknowledge differences between ethnic groups.

In an earlier work, Braham, Rhodes and Pearn (1981) document that an increasing body of evidence shows that as unemployment rises, 'black' workers are disproportionately affected (see also Smith & Wistrich, 1998). For these writers, who conducted an objective test survey on recruitment among black and white graduates, race is the single most important factor for the higher proportion of unemployment among the former.

iii. The Policy-makers and employers' perspective

The main intention of our study is to explore the circumstances and difficulties refugees experience in the labour market, taking Ethiopians as case studies. The objective is to examine the issues mainly from the refugees' perspectives. It is, however, wise to try to assess what policy makers and employers think. In the literature UK policy makers are not generally heard commenting much on the issues raised by refugees. As noted in the literature review, especially in Chapter 2, Modood, et al (1997) gives concrete details regarding how racial discrimination, for example, by employers and policy is practised. It is also observed in the literature review, Chapter 3, how Miles assesses the understanding of integration by Western European states, especially the focus of their integration models on Third World immigrants and how the UK governments tried to integrate immigrants for sometime but failed. As a continuation of this effort, following the integration strategy initiated by the Labour government since the late 1990's, the Home Office has commissioned and produced several reports around refugees' integration. However, most of them are not focused on labour market issues, except probably the Skills Audit report of 2004, which again is concerned with other issues than the concerns of our study. In these reports, employment is seen only as one variable of integration although it is always argued that it plays a central role. However, the findings of the widely known report by the Home Office (Carey-wood, *et al,* 1995) corroborate, many of the findings of our study. To conclude, it seems a politically sensitive issue for government to comment on the difficulties refugees experience in the labour market. That task is mainly left to the voluntary sector (that the Home Office sometimes sponsor), or to independent researchers. Therefore, not much is known about the government's views on the difficulties faced by refugees in the labour market. The Social Exclusion Unit's report of 1997 looked into in the literature review, Chapter 3, which recommended "re-integration" of communities has limited relevance to refugees. This is because as argued there "re-integration" implied that communities were once integrated, which has not yet been the case for many refugees and asylum seekers.

In relation to employers it is difficult to find what their views are on refugee employees (Hurstfield, 2004). The research report of Alice Bloch for DWP (2002) does not examine in depth the views of employers but recommends that employers need more information about overseas qualifications and the legislation regarding the right to work for certain categories of forced migrant in order to tackle employer discrimination.

Probably the only major work that attempts to explore the views of selected employers on refugees is that commissioned by the Employability Forum and written by Hurstfield et al (2004). The research is based on a case study of employers "known to be positive" about recruiting refugees across a range of industries, in which relatively large numbers of refugees are employed, such as transport, retail and hotels and catering. Here again refugees' complaints may not be about these employers who are "known to be positive". So the importance of making comparisons on views between these sympathetic employers against the complaints by refugees may only have limited importance as the issue of refugees may lie against the unsympathetic ones that the Employability Forum research does not cover. However, it can still be relevant to briefly highlight the findings of the Employability Forum's report. Labour shortage (e.g. for city bus driving) is one reason for employers wanting to recruit refugees, while the attempt to diversify the workforce is another for a public sector employer, for instance.

One main problem employers face in relation to employing refugees is determining the type of documentation necessary for employment. It is a costly process as it may involve trawling the Internet and inviting immigration department officers into the workplace. Difficulty in paperwork because of "the quality of forgeries" is also an issue for many employers. Employers are also found to have difficulties in obtaining proper references from prospective refugee employees. Many employers require at least two years of reference cover, and this can be very difficult for refugees to obtain. It is also noted that employers are worried about the possibility of employing "illegal workers" that the media may publicise. Language is another concern raised by the selected employers, especially in answering the telephone, understanding company health and safety issues,

communicating and carrying out instructions by line managers and to be understood by customers.

To summarise, the main concerns of employers about employing refugees are: the costs involved in ensuring the right documentation, bad publicity and language difficulties. The findings of my study, however, throw into question most of these. Regarding language difficulties, our findings are that many refugees understood the importance of language difficulties and any disadvantage they refer to are in workplaces that match their skill levels. Indeed language difficulties can affect refugees who are not from an Anglophone country like Ethiopians. For refugees from Anglophone countries, the main problem is accent, which may not be quite a big problem for jobs that may not require a high command of spoken English. In relation to costs involved in checking the right documentation, this can be a problem as it may involve clashing with the law. But the cost involved – which should not always be the case - is compensated by the fact that it is "still cheaper" to employ refugees, as the Employability Forum study indicates. As some of the jobs on offer can be unsocial hour jobs (e.g., bus driving), it can cost much higher to get employees from the native workforce. To conclude, the Employability Forum's study on the views of employers sheds some light on the views of employers but its findings can be limited as it focuses only on sympathetic employers, who may not be the ones refugees have problems with. As discussed above, its findings are also questionable in light of the evidences gathered in our findings.

iv. Housing and Accommodation

Nearly half of the unemployed respondents have mentioned housing and accommodation as one of the most serious obstacles to employment. Of these, three in four have ranked it between their first and fifth problems. For nearly 10% of respondents, housing and accommodation is their number one most serious barrier. Difficulty in having a stable or/and proper accommodation is said to cause psychological instability, which the refugees and asylum seekers say has a negative influence on active job search.

Here again the problem is associated with the denial of rights linked to their being asylum seekers and refugees compared with the native population. Indeed the great majority of respondents who mention this as a problem are asylum-seekers or if they have ELR or ILR, their housing problems stem from the time they were asylum seekers. In the case where housing benefits are denied, it can result in homelessness. Those who are eligible for housing benefits also complain that rents are very high and difficult to afford with the earning from available jobs. The high cost of housing in London has also been raised by the Mayor of London as a major problem (Dumper, 2002).

The effect of not having decent housing on employment life are various. Most employers want employees to have a permanent address for correspondence. It is noted that this could be taken by employers as one measure of trustworthiness of the employee. In some cases, there can also be prejudices on the part of employers towards people living in certain areas. N is male, aged 30-34, and holds a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education in the UK) as well as B.A. in Business and Information System. N says "as a student you change addresses and there are also some post-codes that employers don't like". Problem of distance between residence and workplace is another issue for some respondents from some in London and Uxbridge (Greater London).

Unsuitability of accommodation for job search is yet another problem associated with unemployment. These include restrictions such as curfews imposed by some hostels which makes it difficult to study at night. Another is the size of their accommodations. Space shortage has also been noted to cause difficulties in starting one's own business. A case in point is a woman refugee who wants to start fostering but does not have the required amount of bedrooms. A former teacher complains she could not install a PC in her flat which would have helped with internet job search. Unsuitability is also mentioned as a problem by asylum-seekers who are provided with shared rooms. These respondents say they are made to live in shared accommodations with other asylum-seekers they do not know or who have little in common with them. It is also noted that some refugee

women live in accommodation centres which are unsuitable for personal care and their location from the workplaces causes concern for security.

Psychological instability because of lack of proper accommodation is perhaps the most commonly mentioned barrier to active job search. Almost all the respondents in this category are asylum seekers. Proper accommodation can be very difficult to find and can take many years. An asylum seeker with a child says she and her family are now living in their sixth flat since coming to the UK and claiming asylum two years ago. Z came to the UK as an asylum seeker seven years ago and now lives in North London with two children. What Z says below may exemplify this problem.

> "Accommodation was my worst problem. A landlord evicted me and Social Services said I could only live in bed and breakfast with my first child. For one year I had to live with a friend and going up and down to advisors. Finally ERAH (an Ethiopian refugee community organisation in North London, Ethiopian Refugees Association in Haringey) told me my rights and got my current accommodation with huge deposit. The Social Services offered me to choose from about seven places, all single room with no cooking possibility. Also in far away places. I was told that those were for permanent accommodation, until a decision could be given on my asylum case which could take years. They told me I could put my furniture in (council) stores. I have changed address 9 times since I came. With such a situation, how could I think about finding a job? Even my son's nursery registration time has passed. (T146)

Time taken for job search is also said to be consumed by the search for accommodation and because of that, stability is said to be extremely difficult to achieve. There is even a case where a respondent was put at risk because of unsuitable accommodation: "When I came from Cardiff (where the respondent did his Masters degree) my priority was to search for a job. They put me in a hostel and the bad condition there damaged my health and I was hospitalised for weeks in 1995 and was terribly ill for 6-months. They gave me a council flat but my health is still poor".

Recent research conducted by Marc Modley (2004) in Southampton confirms the findings of this study. Mordley's consultancy report for HACT was based on interviews across a wide range of relevant agencies and asylum seekers. Key finding of the study is

the important role accommodation plays in employment. Mordley recommends, accordingly, the need for connections to be made between housing agencies and employment providers/groups.

v. Lack of Information for Jobsearch

One-fifth of the interviewees mention lack of information for job search as one of the barriers to employment. Out of these, about 40% rank it as one of their first five main problems. This group consists of a mixture of men and women and refugees with different asylum status and lengths of stay. However these varying attributes may have an impact on the way the different refugee groups are affected.

Some refugees say they still do not have any idea where to find the jobs they want, while others recall it was the prime cause for unemployment during the first few years after arrival. A woman respondent says she realised where such jobs can be found when she started a course. "Before this course", she recalls, "I always thought refugees like me couldn't manage to get professional jobs, even volunteering". Others emphasise the importance of networking and their reliance on it, which makes it difficult to find employment when the networks weaken. One respondent in this group for instance says that after she had her children, she lost contact with many people. Our findings there fore correspond with the findings of Yucel (1987) and Gold (1992), as shown in Chapter 2 of the literature review, who both argue that ethnic networks play a crucial role in integrating into the labour market of the host country. In relation to job search assistance providers, it was mentioned that job centres are of no assistance above some levels of education – "hopeless and zero help from job centres after A-level", according to a law degree graduate woman refugee.

What is also noted in relation to information for job search is that there is a significant number of respondents who do not accept that lack of information is a problem. Especially those respondents with a good level of education and reasonable number of

length of stay in the country say they make use of various high tech facilities such as the internet where, according to a Business and Information System degree graduate respondent, "most of the professional jobs are advertised". Public libraries and job search related courses offered in colleges are also mentioned. Other mentioned sources also include professional journals that respondents say they are aware of and receive regularly from previous university. For those with undergraduate level and relatively recent arrivals job centres and voluntary organisations are mentioned as a good source for job advertisements. Bloch's study for the DWP confirms our findings on this issue although the problems are not explored as fully. Bloch's DWP study (2002) has found that some refugees lack information about sources of jobs and as a result, are much more dependent on informal contacts rather than statutory provision and advertising for job in the UK than in the country of origin. This is the case especially among those who are not fluent in English. The Greenwich borough study on Ugandan refugees has also found out that there is no great interest in participating in vocational training programmes. Clark says this is partly because of lack of information about training available and concern as to whether training will lead to a job.

vi. Restriction to training and education

About one-third of all the sample respondents have mentioned restriction to training as one of their barriers to finding jobs. Of these, thirty per cent say it constitutes one of their first five barriers. Most of the respondents in this category say that they are restricted from attending training programmes because they are denied such rights as asylum-seekers.

Many respondents claim that had it not been for the refusal of their asylum case and the subsequent denial of rights to mainstream higher education support as laid-down by the 1996 asylum bill, by now they would have been in a much better situation in the labour market. These include not only asylum-seekers but also those granted leave to remain but who were asylum-seekers for some years in the past. It also includes different levels of study. The denial of rights takes different forms varying from total denial of eligibility for

Local Education Authority (LEA) grants to inability to open bank accounts which is a requirement for such grants as well as for bank loans for specific "job-guaranteeing" training programmes. While asylum-seekers are totally denied of LEA grants, those with ELR are not also free from the restrictions. One such respondent said Halifax building society showed him a circular not to open accounts for people with ELR while another IT-skilled respondent mentions similar problem he faced in a different way. The respondent said "in 1998 I applied for a Microsoft Networking (system engineer) course, which would guarantee me a job. The training costs £10,000. The training company called *IT First* arranges loan for the trainees from the bank. But when they saw my ELR, they refused to give me a loan and I had to quit. I applied for ILR after my ELR expired seven months ago. Now I have nothing and cannot search for a job. It could be more wasted time". (T121)

The high cost of training is another problem raised by respondents in the sample population. This includes those who are denied the rights to government support but also comprises those who are granted leave to remain and thus are entitled to government free training programmes, especially for those with a good level of education. It is felt that the free training programmes like in IT are "too basic" while the ones like ORACLE software are expensive. Sponsorship problem for higher education is also mentioned. Another issue for fresh university graduates could be that they have already incurred lots of debts while at university and it is difficult to borrow for expensive training.

Exclusion from government education support schemes is another obstacle even for those with Indefinite Leave to Remain. The New Deal is said to favour those aged 21 or around and this excludes refugees who normally fall in the older age group. It is even worse for the elder refugees. A respondent above 55 says his problem is how to mix with his class-mates who are much younger than him. The findings of the Greenwich borough study (Clark, 1992) on Somali refugees are similar to our findings in relation to fees. The study does not cover the legal restrictions refugees face.

vii. Financial Difficulty for Jobsearch

About 30% of refugees and asylum-seekers have mentioned financial difficulty as one barrier to getting a job. Of these, more than one-third rank it amongst their first five main problems.

Very limited provision by government following recent asylum and immigration laws, coupled with denial of permission to work, is one of the main problems that causes financial strains, which in turn affect job search; e.g., for transport and miscellaneous expenses in application processes. The seriousness of the problem can be seen from an account of an asylum-seeker in Yorkshire. The respondent gives an example of what has happened to his asylum-seeker friend:

> Recently my friend had to go to collect his Permission to Work from Yeadon, an area very close to Leeds. He didn't have money for transport and I lent him my 'weekly-ride' ticket. It took him some distance but he had to pay more to get here. When he came back, he didn't have any money to pay up to the distance the 'weekly ride' ticket is valid. He told me he had to beg from passers-by. He had to beg from some people in pubs to make for the payment. He told me this not as one of those funny things but with bitterness and the humiliation has touched him badly. (T133)

A similar story told by a respondent in London emphasises the seriousness of the problem. The respondents mention the denial of cash (only food vouchers) and, in better cases, the very small amount of money they receive as the main problem. "I have attempted to get some financial support from some charity organisations", an unemployed medical doctor says. Some job applications are also said to have a better chance of success if one applies in person rather than by correspondence. A case in point is a professional dancer refugee. He says "that would enable my employers, most of whom are located outside London, to see my physical appearance and test me in person on my ability at performing international dances like *Samba* and *buggie chacha* and view my past videos and (reference) documents. They could change their minds if they had lied when saying there was no vacancy". (T109)

It is not just transport expense that is a difficulty encountered in relation to financial shortages. Miscellaneous expenses necessary in job application processes, which could be for tens and in some cases hundreds of applications, are also said to be expensive to meet. These include photocopying, telephone, postage and packing. Professional CV is also said to cost between £30-£120. Some professionals have also said they need some technical equipment to practice on while a non-refugee says short extra training also demands financial resources. "We are trapped by poverty", a respondent sums up. It is indicated that some refugees, especially the elder ones, have left their families behind and the fact that they are still responsible for their survival could cause additional financial strain. *This can also be the case for the youngsters in Diaspora (AFFORD, 2003:8).* The EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002) has also found that lack of money is a barrier to employment.

viii. Difficulty in Recognition of Overseas Qualification

Many writers on employment of immigrants hold the view that overseas qualification do not in general help in getting jobs. In reference to a national survey of 1454 'black adults' with overseas qualifications, some in sought after disciplines such as accountancy, Stella Dadzie highlights that between 80% and 88% of respondents with qualifications in accountancy, law and management were unemployed (1993:22). The University of Alberta's study on refugees of various countries of origin confirms our findings by concluding that the problem of recognition of overseas credentials plays a leading role, even "more than discrimination", also for the employed in terms of downward mobility (Krahn, et al, 2000). As to the case study community members, whilst this problem mainly affects those with country of origin qualifications, the way it affects them varies from individual to individual depending on the level and type of qualification the respondents have. In general, however, nearly 30% of sample respondents have raised this issue as one of their problems to get jobs, with nearly a third of them ranking them between one and five.

Those in medical professions mention that it is particularly difficult to get their qualifications recognised and conversion courses like PLAB (after IELETS), as required by the British Medical Council are expensive. Membership of professional bodies like the Royal Pharmaceutical Society for pharmacists, which are needed for professional jobs need re-training which are quite difficult in terms of commitment and financial requirement. The problem is worse for asylum-seekers who are not entitled to support from government or any other institutions as proper immigration status is one criterion for eligibility.

On the need to consider home country qualifications, a meeting by European member states project leaders and policy makers organised by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (December 1992) on the theme of vocational training, to mention one, concluded that training, qualifications or skills acquired in the country of origin should be taken into account where possible. These experienced experts also say that where there is no immediate access to a qualification, formal accreditation should be given to trainees. This does not seem to be the case for case study refugees in the UK. Thus findings of this research show that home qualifications are not taken as UK- equivalent even by colleges. Many colleges have their own entrance exams; there is also a reluctance to accept mature student. Apart from the problem with the issue of equivalence, some say employers totally disregard home or transit country, like that of Eastern Europe, qualifications. Some relatively lower-skilled ones which can even be tested, e.g., typing, are not recognised as noted in the survey.

For some respondents, the issue of difficulty of recognition of home and transit country gained qualification seems unimportant. They hold the view that the problem lies elsewhere, stating for example that some employers do not even care for UK-gained postgraduate qualifications. This seems to be consistent with the findings of Roger Zegers de Beijl (2000) which underline that in many countries, members of certain ethnic minority groups continue to be over-represented among the ranks of the unemployed compared to nationals despite having more qualifications. In the UK, an earlier finding from the Labour Force Survey also indicates that being educated overseas may not have

an effect as in the case of "most ethnic groups the unemployment rate for those who qualified in the UK is similar to that for those who qualified abroad" (Jones 1993:117). The findings of the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002) also correspond to our findings in relation to the problem of recognition of qualifications gained in Ethiopia.

ix. Length of stay as a barrier to employment

As indicated earlier on in this chapter, length of stay plays an important role in obtaining employment. Difficulties or disadvantages suffered by migrants and members of ethnic minorities may be linked to how recent their arrival in the host country is (e.g., Council of Europe, 1992). In relation to the case study community, about 36 per cent of respondents have associated their problems in getting jobs to the length of time spent in the host country. Out of these, length of stay is one of the first five most serious barriers for about 43%. Many respondents who lived in the country for a period of three years or more believe that they have not acquired sufficient knowledge of the system to compete efficiently in the labour market. It is pointed out that granting of Permission to Work is linked to the length of time one stays in the country. It is also mentioned that some of the barriers to finding jobs like housing and asylum status could be dealt with beforehand, enabling the respondents to concentrate on job search. Networking, information for job search and language command are also affected by length of stay. Importantly in relation to this, it was also pointed out that employers can grossly assume that language command and cultural awareness of the candidate is insufficient if the applicant has only recently arrived in the host country, making them reluctant to employ him/her. In this regard, our findings of the positive correlation between employment and length of stay confirms the findings of other researchers. Many writers seem to believe that length of stay also makes a difference in employability. In his study of migrants as 'vulnerable' social groups, Richard Black (1994) suggests the importance of length of stay. A Home Office research on migrants (refugees) survey has also found out that the longer respondents had been in the country, the more likely they were to be employed, although it took a long-time before there was any significant improvement (1995:30).

However, the positive correlation between refugees' employment and length of stay is not a straight forward one. Almost an equal percentage of people (to the above) believe that 'length of stay' is an important factor but in a reverse way, that is, unless one is employed in good time, the probability of getting a job will decrease as time passes by, leaving the respondents 'demoralised'. For this group, in other words, the longer a refugee stays in the country, the less successful he/she can be. This contradicts the findings of the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002) which only shows the positive relationship between length of stay and probability of being employed. Other research, however, arrived at the same findings as ours. For such surveys duration of unemployment is also another factor that may affect the rate of unemployment. In this regard, Modood's survey highlights that members of all the main minority groups, men and women, experienced a relatively much longer periods of unemployment than 'white' people. (1997: 97).

A smaller proportion do not attach importance to 'length of stay' as a factor contributing to unemployment. Such respondents think what is important is networking and competence, not the time one stays in the country. The findings of this study are consistent with that of a recent Home Office research which focuses on Home Office funded refugee projects (Peckham, et al, 2004). Based on a field survey by Market & Opinion International (MORI) of refugee organisations and their clients, the research has found that the longer a refugee stays in the country (under and over over 3 years) the better their English language skills, the more secured their tenure and the greater their involvement in their local community, or in the activities of their ethnic group. The research also finds, as my study did, that progress towards integration had not extended far, even among refugees who had lived in the UK for three years or more. They found that the people who stayed in the country for three years or more (the number of years the research uses as a dividing line) still featured levels of disadvantage well above the national average on many integration measures. As an example, average gross household income among those resident for three years or over was still only £93.40 per week – more than the average for the clients (£75) but less than a quarter of the national average.

This Home Office research may have limitations in the sense that the majority in the survey are unemployed (only 8% are employed). However, it helps to confirm my study's conclusion that the positive correlation between length of stay and integration is questionable and can be simplistic.

x. Lack of British Work Experience

Lack of British work experience is the second most serious problem affecting employment, next to asylum status. About 61% of the sample population have mentioned it as one of their main problems. Of the respondents in this category, 83% rank it as one of their first five barriers. Table 5.2 below shows a breakdown of this figure.

Table 5.2. Lack of British Work Experience as a cause for unemployment

Seriousness as a cause for unemployment	*% of sample*
The first main cause of unemployment	10
The second main cause of unemployment	8
The third main cause of unemployment	15
The fourth main cause of unemployment	8
The fifth main cause of unemployment	10
'Other' cause of unemployment	10
Sub-total of respondents who feel British W.E. is a problem	**61**
Respondents who didn't mention British W.E. as barrier	**39**
Total sample population	**100%**

It is observed that the respondents who are not linked to any specific characteristics believe that employers do not seem to care about home country experience. In the words of a Masters degree holder respondent, "they prefer a one-month British work experience than a 20 years one from there". It is also mentioned that employers are reluctant even to accept other European countries' work experiences. A respondent with many years stay and work experience in Bulgaria can be taken as a case in point and another recalls that an Italian friend of him was asked to bring references on UK, not Italian, work experience. Sometimes the experience required by employers is disproportionate to the job. A respondent with IT qualifications, for instance, says because IT jobs are competitive, today they are asking about "achievement". For one to have achievement you need to have been at work (which is the problem), he adds. The problem with most refugees and asylum seekers is that if they have work experience, it is mainly from their country of origin, which does not have the same value as work experience gained here. It has also been observed that some professions of refugees and asylum seekers do not fit into the system in the UK; e.g., teaching in the UK education system. As gathered from the survey, respondents who stayed in the UK for many years may not have British work experience because they might have come as minors and spent most of their time studying.. For others, even if they worked in the UK, their work experiences may not be up to the requirements of the labour market. For instance, a computer Science UK degree graduate woman refugee describes her work experiences as a mix of programming, PC support and technical consultant rather than in-depth knowledge of one specific area. "I have difficulties answering when they ask me how many years of experience I have in one specific area", she says.

Lack of British work experience can have far reaching consequences, making the respondents feel they are caught in a vicious circle. An electrician says it has "totally wrecked" his chance of getting a job. Another respondent in Yorkshire says he has almost given up looking for jobs or if he completes an application form, he does so in minutes (in a rush) as he believes that without work experience he can never get a job. An unemployed Masters degree holder in Journalism thinks his skills are becoming

'obsolete' as time goes by. "The media technology is growing fast and I am not catching up", he fears.

A small number of respondents attribute little value to British work experience, thinking that education and training will be of greater help.

Our findings confirm the findings of the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002) which found that lack of UK work experience is the biggest barrier to employment (although my study's survey found it comes next to immigration status). Here again, the EMBRACE-UK study is different from our analysis as it does not examine how the lack of British work experience is manifested. The findings of this study also have similarities with other studies including a European-wide research programme of RETAS undertaken by Berend Jonker (2004). Jonker's study, based on surveys of refugees from Africa, Iraq, Colombia, Chile, Sri Lanka and Russia, for instance, confirms the 'vicious circle' found out in our study: Absence of British work experience leads to unemployment and unemployment leads to lack of British work experience. The study mentions the frustration experienced by refugee doctors at not getting jobs even after re-qualifying in the UK. Similarly, the Alberta University study on refugees (of various countries of origin) and the Canadian labour market also documents that lack of Canadian work experience is one of the barriers to employment of refugees in Canada (Krahn, et al, 2000).

xi. The media

Negative portrayal of refugees by the media, another host-country factor, is believed by many to have affected public attitudes towards refugees. I will focus on its impact on my concern – employment - towards the end, but first let's attempt to assess the general picture especially since the last few decades.

The interest of the media in immigration is not a new phenomenon. As far back as 1858, during the time of Irish migration and the start of the migration of Eastern European Jewish refugees, *Times* newspaper declared: "Every civilised people on the face of the earth must be fully aware that this country is the asylum of nations, and that it would defend the asylum of nations, and that it would defend the asylum to the last drop of its blood" (*Times*, 19 January 1958, quoted in Panayi, 1993:95).

Some of the British media in recent years have played a significant role in creating a negative perception of refugees for the British public. The negative impression created in the 1980s, when British governments implemented ever tighter asylum regulations have been well documented in Ronald Kaye's (1994) work. As an example, following the arrival of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka in 1985 (which resulted in the imposition of visa requirements - "the first such action on a Commonwealth country"), *The Sun* printed the headline: "Hurd (the then Home Secretary) kicks out lying refugees", while the *Daily Star* described the Tamils as a "motley crew of malcontents... nasty little cargo load of hooks, crooks and comic singers", both in February, 1987 (Kaye, 1994).

In the 1990s the British media continued its hostility towards refugees in the UK. Research conducted by the *Runnymede Trust* confirms this. Runnymede Trust carried out a survey of the leading eleven national daily newspapers during the period 1 September to 1 December 1995 (the months preceding the February 1996 Asylum Bill, which denied social benefits to all in-country asylum applicants). It reported that there was "a formula for coverage; a simplistic recall of numbers aligned with a system of metaphors. This formula dehumanised migrants and refugees by turning them into 'waves'. These 'waves' become in turn 'tides' and 'floods' that 'swamp' Britain" (The Runnymede Trust, 1996).

The research shows that during this period a total of 261 articles appeared on the issue of migrants and asylum seekers. The Trust examined three papers in detail, all of which have "the largest circulation in their respective market segments", and therefore have some impact on the public and policy-makers. The research goes on to show that during the survey, *The Sun* in particular posted fourteen articles, eleven of which reflected

asylum seekers in negative terms, under the headlines, "The Maggers", "Closed Door" and "Smash the Immigrant Smugglers".

The Daily Telegraph printed twenty-nine articles, half of which were negative in tone, under headlines such as, "Tories Bang the Drum of Populism"; "Is It a Fair Card to Play?"; "Dutch Stem Flood of Illegal Immigrants". *The Daily Mail*, the survey revealed, carried forty-three articles, the highest of any national newspaper during this period, of which 41 reflected asylum seekers and migrants in negative terms. Their headlines included, "They Stay and You Pay"; "Show them the door"; "Speedy Exit for Bogus Refugees"; "Terror on the Dole"; "Standing Firm on Bogus Refugees"; "Why Must Britain be a Haven?"; "Not A Honey Pot"; "Such a Soft Touch!".

The Runnymede Trust's survey is not alone in revealing the British media's "unfounded" harshness against refugees in Britain. In her earlier work, entitled *Refugees: Asylum in Europe* (1992), the outspoken refugee studies writer Daniele Joly stressed the media's hostility. Joly studied Europe in general and discussed the media's role in Britain. Joly underlines that, as a result of the media's false perception, refugees are increasingly presented not as people in need of protection but as people who are a threat, "not as people who *have* a problem but as people who *are* a problem" (Joly, 1992:64). As in the survey by the Runnymede Trust, Joly highlights hard-hitting headlines and relates media articles to consequent changes in policy.

According to Joly, the media is influential not only in shaping public attitude and asylum policy, but also in impacting on the daily lives of refugees. She writes, "The attitude of the surrounding population affects most aspects of their everyday life and it can make the difference between a supportive, harmonious, friendly environment and unpleasant, hostile, prejudiced encounters" (ibid).

A more recent publication by the Refugee Council, entitled *Credit to the Nation* (1997), highlights the negative experiences of refugees in the host society. It takes an Ethiopian woman refugee's story as an example:

When I first arrived in Leicester [from Ethiopia to do a Masters degree] we had a party to get to know each other. One of two Japanese classmates asked me my name and where I came from. She seemed to be in a real shock because she said she had never seen an Ethiopian that big. I asked why and she said that she always thought that Ethiopians are really skinny, poor people with little clothes on them... Afterwards I was a bit reluctant to talk to people because when I told them I was from Ethiopia, they would say how lucky I was to be here. I lived a very good life in Ethiopia. I wish I could take these people and show them where I used to live...

"The worst experience I had was in a class at an English course. Our English teacher was asking us about our culture. One day the discussion was about food. She asked everyone else except me. I was really angry so I asked her why did she not ask me. She said she did not want to embarrass me. She apologised afterwards. She did not want to ask me because she thought there was no food there" (RC, 1997:26).

The Refugee Council's publication cites other examples mentioned by both individuals and leaders of refugee groups with experience of working with refugees and follows up national refugee issues. For instance, the publication quotes an Eritrean community worker's observation of how sections of the media work,

"The media portray refugees badly. It is not fair because people don't know the details... The media – I don't think it has *researched* to see the positive side of refugees or bad things there and we need to see the help here...My level of understanding is that the media could write to open people's eye's but it is the way they work. *As long as their education and training is like that it won't be better* [emphasis is my own] (ibid.).

Based on its findings, the Refugee Council's contention is that the media's negative portrayal of refugees as a group has a correspondingly negative effect on individual refugees. In 2003 the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK (ICAR), a national refugee sector think-tank, undertook research on London media's impact on community relations. The study found "clear evidence" of negative, unbalanced and inaccurate reporting that was likely to promote fear and tension within communities across London (ICAR, 2003). Its conclusions echo those of research conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, as highlighted above.

What are the implications of this on refugee employment? There seems to be a positive relationship between a negative portrayal of refugees and refugee unemployment. Employers are influenced by the media's characterisation of refugees as 'illegal immigrants' and fear that they might be employing someone who does not have permission to work, for which offence they can be heavily fined. Documentation is confusing for many employers and, as mentioned in earlier sections of this chapter, the process of checking the documents can be expensive. Moreover, as recent research (2004) by the Employability Forum indicates, some employers are worried about adverse publicity gained by employing refugees. Last, if not least, it influences public perception and public policy. The overall effect can then be to ostracise many refugees from the labour market totally.

xii. Other Host-Country Related Barriers

Employment barriers raised by respondents that cannot be categorised in one of the above include the following:

Profession specific barriers:- These include those that also affect other members of society cost cuts by some employers; e.g., academic institutions for those who want lecturing jobs; highly competitive labour market, such as marketing and advertisement in (private) business companies; and unsuitability of working hours for some jobs. Some skills of refugees may not also be in high demand in some areas. This confirms the findings of other research which noted that the type of occupation can also be another barrier. Based on the 1994 survey, Modood (1997) for instance, found out that some of the differences in unemployment rates may be related to occupations, since some occupations generally experience higher unemployment rates than others. To give practical examples, in Ethiopia for instance Economics is a highly demanded and respected profession, which doesn't seem to be quite the case in the UK.

Area-specific problems:- some respondents have pointed out that in areas where they live there are not many opportunities; e.g., Wales and Yorkshire. "When I go for jobs that are advertised below my level they do not take me because they think I am overqualified", a respondent says, for instance, as jobs for his level are scarce in his area of residence. As most refugees tend to prefer areas where their communities live and may geographically concentrate (e.g.; Allen, 1994:2), many could be victims of such problems. Our findings correspond to the findings of previous research on ethnic minorities, which identify geographical location as a potential barrier to employment. The Social Exclusion Unit report (1997) on poor neighbourhoods, for instance, indicates that in the last two decades, the geography of poverty has changed, with the poorest becoming more concentrated in small areas of acute need. In the early 1980s, according to the report, the 'sharpest economic differences' were often between cities and regions, in particular between the old manufacturing centres of the north and the prosperous new economy of the South East. Today, says the report, those differences have 'evened out' slightly, and many of the most acute differences lie within regions and within cities. Linking it with employment, it argues that some of the most deprived neighbourhoods now lie only a mile or two from prosperous city centres "where employers find it hard to fill vacancies". In our survey we have noted that job applications from certain roads (streets) are known to be not wanted by employers, as perceived by respondents. Indeed, a Pharmacy degree graduate respondent in Leeds says their hostel address is well known as occupied by asylum seekers and not favoured. Such beliefs can be perceptions which can possibly be true.

Employers' preference for full-time commitment :- Many respondents who want to go for part-time jobs stress that they have encountered unemployment problems because most employers prefer those who can commit full-time.

Private vs. public sectors :- It is also mentioned that relatively speaking, more opportunities are available in public sector than PLC's due to an apparently more serious observation of equal opportunity policies in the former, but jobs in the public sector are

not that attractive in terms of pay. They are also said to be not easy to find except in relative terms to PLC's. Moreover, as ECRE in its recent publication Bridges and Fences: Refugee Perceptions of Integration in the European Union says the fact that public sector jobs are not open to non nationals also works against refugees (40, see also Hudson, TENSOR, 2000:18).

5.2.3. Policy-related factors

i. Lack of Asylum Status and Legal Restrictions to Employment

The denial of asylum status is the most serious of all the problems mentioned by the sample respondents as a reason for unemployment. As can be seen in the table below, for 84% of those who link lack of asylum status to their unemployment problem, it constitutes one of the first five main problems.

Table 5.3. Lack of asylum status as a cause for unemployment

Seriousness as a cause for unemployment	*% of sample*
The first main cause of unemployment	35
The second main cause of unemployment	11
The third main cause of unemployment	4
The fourth main cause of unemployment	6
The fifth main cause of unemployment	1
'Other' cause of unemployment	11

Sub-total of respondents who feel asylum status is a problem	68
Respondents who didn't mention asylum status as barrier	32
Total sample population	**100%**

The great majority of those in this category are men and women asylum seekers, followed by those with ELR. It also includes those now granted ILR and ELR after staying for many years without any of these asylum status. The main ways its impact was manifested and felt are examined below.

Denial of asylum status affects almost all aspects of an individual's rights that are linked to employment such as, for example, employable skill training and qualification, accommodation, right to travel abroad to work, family re-union as well as psychological stability and financial support from the State. Failure to secure such rights can cause in some cases serious problems like depression and other health problems. A respondent links his diabetes problem with depression. "Diabetes is caused by either heredity or depression. I have no problem with the former. My diabetes is caused by the stressful circumstances caused by denial of my asylum status by the Home Office despite its knowledge that I had a good life and was nationally famous in my country", he claims.

Lacking Permission to Work and NI number are the direct consequences of denial of asylum status that cause unemployment as explained by respondents. It is noted that asylum status (or passport) is asked by employers and employment agencies not only for "good jobs" but also for small jobs (or where there are not proper job application forms). Employers are said to be suspicious about such things when they realise that the applicant is a refugee. It is also observed that at times it encourages illegal activities. "I applied for many jobs in places like *Boots* & High Street Kensington Perfume shop. They needed proper NI number. I used fake ones and after a few days they sacked me when they discovered it. When they know you are a refugee they are strict about NI number", a woman respondent now with ILR recalls, for instance. Apart from legal requirements,

asylum status is also said to be used by employers to judge whether an individual can be trusted. Household domestic job is mentioned as a case in point.

Moreover employers are said to require assurances that the person has no problem remaining in the country and staying in the job. Many companies like the London Underground are said to ask for clear permanent leave to remain as they want to train the new post holders and keep them. Ensuring proper documentation assures training investment is not wasted. This clear requirement presupposes that the papers are not confusing. Respondents say some employers do not have an idea of what ELR and ILR or 'Home Office Backlogs' mean and do not want to take the hassle of a prospective employee needing to queue for visas if the job involves travel abroad. It may not be very difficult to imagine employers' reaction when they see 'Liable to detention (and deportation)' in the Home Office Identification papers. Many asylum-seekers respondents say this is one of the main reasons for them to be rejected by employers. Some believe it is at least a good excuse for some employers. In this connection, even charity (voluntary) organisations are said to be reluctant to help those with such papers find jobs. Not having proper accommodation also affects employers' attitudes to those seeking employment. Whilst uncertainty in relation to right of stay is equally a problem for would-be employers, it is also observed that asylum-seekers themselves have difficulties in planning ahead, for instance in starting their own business. One negative consequence of all this is lack of confidence and motivation. Ambitions to set up business can also be dampened by the regulations.

Lacking asylum status also has serious repercussions on rights that directly affect employability. Difficulty with travel is one issue. This confirms the arguments put forward by *Migration Today*, 1990, as seen in the literature review (Chapter 2), against Blackburn and Mann's assumption of "full freedom" enjoyed by immigrants. *Migration Today* shows how travel is restricted for many immigrants to cross frontiers within Europe to find jobs. Our survey indicates lack of asylum status causes difficulties to travel to search for jobs. Inability to attend employable skill gaining training is another.

Difficulty to open bank accounts needed by some education sponsors like Local Education Authorities is yet another.

Even leisure centres are said to ban asylum seekers from their activities and courses, such as swimming. Another respondent also mentions that her only problem in starting a business is capital; she is unable to borrow money from the bank due to problems with asylum status and not having the necessary documents to open a bank account. Many asylum-seekers also mention that accommodation, which is useful for correspondence with employers (also to be trusted by them), is seriously affected by asylum status.

According to respondents, the end result of these multi-dimensional problems is that stability is hard to achieve and this in turn impacts negatively on employment. In various ways respondents explain how lacking asylum status has affected their mental ability to focus on job search. A respondent for instance says, "my asylum case has been refused and I have been pre-occupied always with appeal processes which put me under constant pressures. My mind is fully engaged in and pressurised by this and I didn't get the chance or the possibility to search for a job...". For those who have been showing the necessary effort, problems with asylum case have been claimed to be a distraction. An Eastern Europe medical science graduate says "while I was preparing for the PLAB test (to convert medical science skill to UK standard) my asylum case was refused. That shook my mental stability and focus. As I couldn't be sure of my future I decided to give it up and started to do manual jobs to try to save some money".

It is repeatedly mentioned by respondents that they feel that the years they spent without asylum status are wasted years and regret that by now they could be in a much better competitive position, in terms of their education level and success in the labour market. It is stressed that there would not be a 'gap' in their career life as they had the required qualification from their country of origin which enables them to join universities in the UK immediately, had it not been for the 1996 Asylum Bill which bans asylum seekers from Local Education grant as well as the requirement to stay in the country as asylum seekers for at least three years before being eligible for such grant. A respondent with

BTEC diploma in Business and Finance says, " By now I would have a degree. I have had my diploma with distinction and classmates I was helping in college are now graduates". While such regrettable statements are told by both asylum seekers and those refugees who have only just obtained leave to remain, those who have not yet been given asylum status are also concerned about their future. There is a feeling that they are still studying "for nothing" or that the "CV gap" will be a problem for future employment.

While no one has said asylum status is not a problem, a small number of respondents with ILR and even British citizenship seem to be unimpressed by the permanent leave to remain they have been given. The one with ILR says a British passport would be better (for her profession) as " it opens doors for civil service offices", while the one with British citizenship feels that does not protect her from the negative effects of prejudices existing in the labour market system. The findings of this study are consistent with the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002) in relation to the impact of not having asylum status. The study pays particular attention to the enormous stress, and its related health impact, caused by fear of deportation and loss of mobility. These have significant roles to play as they have destabilising effects and mobility is crucial in affecting employment chances. The EMBRACE-UK study also shows a positive relationship between asylum status and employability. However, the EMBRACE-UK study (2002) is different from our findings as it does not explore the different and complicated ways in which asylum status affects employability. Without such investigation, it is difficult to understand what refugees go through in the labour market. Moreover, it can give the impression that all those with Refugee status (Indefinite Leave to Remain) are better off than those without Refugee Status, which may not always be the case.

ii. The Psychology of Being a Refugee

About half of the unemployed sample population say that in their interaction with the labour market they are negatively affected by the psychological impacts of life as a refugee. Of these, nearly half have ranked the problem as one of their first five problems.

Whilst in the literature it is argued that past traumatic experiences in country of origin are taken to be the primary causes of the problem, the findings of this research reveal that the causes are mainly attributed to the bad experiences in the host country.

Haunting traumas have been mentioned by some respondents who went through detention or homelessness. The detention of asylum seekers is a subject that has attracted much attention including the media. For instance, *the Mirror* newspaper in its front page report of December 8, 2003, published an inside knowledge report (with one of its reporters landing a job as a security guard) of abuses in Yarl'swood detention centre, one of the biggest asylum detention centres in Bedfordshire. *The Mirror* reports how the under-cover investigation was told by some 'fellow' security guards how they beat the detainees out of sight of CCTV cameras, gave them a 'pasting', and relished rumours that they may soon be allowed to punch, kick and even head butt 'difficult' detainees. The paper reports the racist abuses the reporter has witnessed. He quotes a senior Group 4 security officer as saying "Jamaicans are drug-dealing pieces of s**t, Algerians are the slimiest bastards in the world, all terrorists, and the Chinese are evil little bastards".

The Mirror's allegations were investigated by an independent body commissioned by the Home Office and the independent body concluded that most of the things that the report said were true *(Immigration & Nationality Directorate, 30 April 2004).*

Such abuses in detention centres may or may not be a reflection of a general culture of racism, violence and abuse. What is more important, however, is the damage which might have been done to many asylum seekers who sought asylum under international and UK laws. Many of these asylum seekers might already be victims of unspeakable suffering by the authoritarian regimes they fled and the treatment may not be any better in the detention centres in the host country. Such experiences undergone in detention centres can have long lasting psychological effects which may delay their active jobsearch when they are released, as the findings of this study show.

Requirement to sign regularly and the process of dealing with Social Services were also said to have negative psychological effects which have an adverse impact on active jobsearch.

Depressions caused by family separation and homesickness are also mentioned as barriers to active job search. These are made worse by the denial of the right to travel. A woman refugee respondent recalls that following her father's death back in their country of origin three years ago, she had been depressed for two years as she could not share her bereavement with her family, highlighting the importance of networks noted in the literature review, especially chapter 2; relating the damage that this caused in her interaction with the job market she says, "because of the depression I had no contact with many friends who could help in job finding. The depression also made me not interested in searching for a job actively. I also discontinued my studies".

Forced dispersal in cities outside London far from friends and community members is another psychological problem that lead to some respondents seeking psychiatric help, as mentioned by a young woman refugee in Leeds, for instance. Lack of support in times of stress is also mentioned as a serious problem. Depression is also said to affect many aspects of life like study and even personal relationships which are important factors for active job search.. The first years as a refugee in a foreign land are also said to cause loneliness, especially for those who are singles.

For others, lack of trust in the system is mentioned as the main psychological problem. It induces the feeling that "they will never give me the job" and "being at their mercy". This group is mainly constituted of the well educated who feel they deserve professional jobs. The respondents state that these feelings and perceptions are acquired through the experience of being refugees.

Psychological problems linked to the weather and low-level jobs are also said to cause special problems for the elderly.

Being unemployed or denied of the right to work and seeing no future ahead are problems that have also been mentioned by some. A minority say that their psychological problems do not go as far as affecting job search. The effects of psychological problems on employability have also been underlined by the findings of the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002) although they are not explored in detail. It quotes for instance a young man described as being so exhausted by his struggle to live in the UK that he felt unable to work:

> I cannot say I am absolutely psychologically healthy because of life in this country. The reason is the problems I faced and the hardships I experienced had an impact on my confidence and have influenced my life. This means that in my prime time, when I am supposed to work and have a family, I am emotionally drained. I have been struggling with myself and I have lost my energy. ... I think I have burnt out. This is why I am not working here, as I wanted to work . (p.144)

In this sub-section an attempt has been made to examine the significance of psychological factors on jobsearch. Psychological problems that arise as a result of being a refugee has multi-dimensional aspects and can be caused by pre-asylum and host country circumstances. However, all of them have an adverse effect on active jobsearch.

iii. Break in Careers

Time spent fleeing home and re-settling in the new country causes a break in the career lives of refugees. It is noted from the interviews that employers prefer to employ someone who has had a job before. Respondents say the time taken to re-educate in the new country plus those years in unemployment, totally about eight years in one case, have damaging impacts. Some of the courses are taken unnecessarily. For instance, a Business and Finance professional woman respondent says "I have no confidence and knowledge of (the system in) this country so I had to start studying what I already knew and this took me more time".. "You start from Zero", another commented. The increase in age in the course of this process is also stressed by some respondents. For some it is observed that fleeing third (transit) country, like Europe, forces them to discontinue their

work experience there. Only one respondent in the sample said she had switched to a different profession and the break in career had not been an issue for her. The Greenwich borough study on refugees has noted similar barriers to our findings, especially regarding Iranians living in the borough, but from a different angle. The study notes that Iranian refugees in the London Borough of Greenwich were often only in work for short periods and then expended a lot of effort in finding further work. Often this work was combined with the continued search for work in the original field of study and training but, "as time goes by", those skills become "corroded" and people find it hard to continue the search whilst working in jobs that are physically draining (Clark, 1992). The same study on Ugandans in the borough also highlights the disruptions caused by war and persecution.

iv. Difficulty in Getting Proofs of Qualification

Whilst many respondents insist that employers generally are not interested in home country qualifications and experiences , even if it is the case that their references can be accepted, getting such papers is difficult as they are political immigrants. Fears of governments by ex-bosses in the country of origin may render it difficult to issue or send the necessary references. Difficulty of getting references from transit countries where a refugee has been working before coming to the UK is also another problem. For some, this may not be a problem because of the nature of their stay in the host country, such as those who came as a students with references and who decided to stay afterwards. Or some may have all their qualification and work experience from here. This is also a problem noted in other studies. For instance, the Greenwich borough study which focuses on Kurdish refugees in the area has found that many of them do not have documentary proof of qualifications and are "impeded" from taking certain courses as a result.

To summarise this chapter refugees encounter a number of barriers to employment. These barriers may include those faced also by the job seeking native people but may also include those that they uniquely face owing to the cultural, psychological, social, legal and others circumstances that surround them. In the labour market, refugees have to

overcome these disadvantages if they wish to be competent and successful. Consistent with the research model, the barriers to employment they face are categorised into pre-asylum, host country related and policy factors. These factors in turn generate a number of issues. In this chapter we attempted to show in as much detail as possible, and with comparisons to other studies, what features and issues refugees have in their interaction with the labour market. Given the multidimensional barriers that they have to face in the labour market, what efforts are they making to break the deadlock of unemployment, what the transition process to employment looks like, what support do they need (from the government and the voluntary sector) to get jobs, what do they aspire to and what challenges they fear will stand in their way? These shall be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

TRANSITION FROM UNEMPLOYMENT TO EMPLOYMENT

The previous chapter dealt with the barriers faced by the case study refugees and asylum seekers in getting jobs and how these factors resulted in unemployment. The next chapter will deal with the issue of the employed. Between the times of unemployment and employment there is a certain 'transition period'. Broadly speaking this time is when they make attempts (efforts) to find jobs, such as accumulating British work experience through volunteering. It can also be a period when some could do informal jobs. This section attempts to address these issues.

6.1. Informal Jobs

There is much less literature on the informal economic system and the informal labour market compared with the formal one. The fact that many refugees are believed to be working in the informal labour market is understood to be the case by many interested in the subject. However, "we don't have the evidence"[36] and it needs a survey and for refugees it is a sensitive issue[37]. In a London conference entitled *Undocumented Immigrant Workers*, held in September, 1999 (when my study was underway) attended by academics including Bill Jordan, a prominent researcher in the field, participants discussed the reasons why no research has been carried out on the subject despite the fact that newspapers and television are full of stories about 'illegal immigrants', 'economic migrants' and bogus asylum seekers'. They underlined that there are "no academic study of this topic". The proceeding argued that this was because politicians never gave it attention as they were pre-occupied with, among other things, tightening asylum control. This limitation of studies in informal jobs has been recognised from the outset of my

[36] Personal interview and e-mail communication with Dr. Khalid Koser, expert in refugee studies, UCL, London, November 2003.

[37] Personal interview and e-mail communication with Dr. Alice Bloch, expert in refugee studies, City University, London, November 2003

study, hence the focus on formal employment. However, informal jobs refugees can do are hard to ignore. Informal jobs can have direct linkages with the formal jobs refugees may take at some stage of their employment life in the UK. Usually informal jobs come before the formal ones or refugees can do both side by side for some time. Indeed my own observation of many refugees confirm that informal jobs provide good experience in understanding how the workplace code of conduct and the system in this country work. Paying attention to informal jobs can help to generate some questions, in particular the question of how policy has contributed to it. However, given the sensitivity of the issue, a slightly different methodology than the normal social science methodology of using surveys will be employed, as normal survey systems can result in no response or, if responded to, can compromise genuine and reliable findings. Moreover, as we do not have much "evidence" from the refugee literature, we need to look once again at other sources in migration literature, encouraged by scholars in the field (e.g., Emanuel Marx, 1990).

One of the best works on the informal economy and system has been undertaken by Jonathan Gershuny (1983). Gershuny defines the informal economy as not really an economy in itself, but rather the neglected part of the full economic system which includes both formal and informal production (Gershuny, 1983:32). Gershuny finds that non-registered economic activity also takes place in locations other than just the household – in communal groups, and in the 'underground' or 'black' economy.

Using the 'Circular Flow of Income' analysis, Gershuny distinguishes between the formal and informal economy. He states that each of the flows in the formal economic system is accounted for by some arm of government or by some official survey: the tax and National Insurance authorities and others can enumerate all of these flows – and this enumeration forms the basis of the national accounts. In short, he defines the informal economy system as the flows not accounted for by this system. In relation to jobs, Gershuny distinguishes different categories of activities in the sector and shows how jobs are exported from the formal economy into the informal economy. Interestingly, he outlines how the informal production activity is very close to the formal system, arguing

that it exists in the interstices of the formal economy, consisting largely of economic activities also undertaken in the formal economy, "often by the same people". He goes on to say that it is distinct from the formal production system, in principle, because those involved in it wish it to be so; it consists of economic activities which are hidden from the state authorities because of their illegality.

Gershuny's work presents a theoretical framework which is applicable to the circumstances of all kinds of people who are involved in the informal economy and informal jobs. It is also imperative to look at empirical studies undertaken around the interest of this study; i.e., refugees, by taking insights from the migration literature.

One thing emphasised by many writers in the literature is the difficulties migrants doing informal jobs face. Yucel (1987) shows how 'illegal workers' live an insecure life when in touch with the host society. The 'illegal' way they enter the host countries is believed to have contributed to the difficulties they encounter in the host societies, one of which is to be forced to work illegally. Focusing on patterns of migration in the west of Mexico, Augustine Escobar (et al, 1987) show the discriminatory treatment at work faced by Mexican migrants in the USA. These writers discuss that migrants from Western Mexico have barriers to information and communication about the labour market in the US. The writers argue that this causes the broad section of the labour force in the United States to be defined as 'secondary'. This exposes them to discriminatory treatment in the workplace. Alice Bloch shows how some refugees in the UK working in the underground labour market suffer very bad terms and conditions (Bloch 2002). Similar arguments are found in the work of Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclose (2003) in his study of the Somalis in the West. The writer relates the out-migration of the Somalis during the 1990s which coincided with a clamping down on asylum procedures across the industrialised world. Montclose writes that the difficulties caused by the asylum system in the west has forced the Somalis to come using illegal means of entry and as a result, he argues, they increasingly find themselves in a precarious situation in the host societies (see also Koser, 2003). However, for most migrants this can be a calculated short-term 'sacrifice' for the

sake of long-term increases in earning potential (Jordan, et al, 2002) and can be tolerated by migrants because it is viewed as 'temporary' (Yucel, 1987).

Janet MacGaffe is one writer concerned with the informal economy and jobs (she calls it the 'second economy') for a long-time, at least in the 1990's. MacGaffe and Bazenguissa – Ganga define the second economy in more or less the same way as Gershuny above, but add that it consists of activities that are measured, unrecorded and, which lie outside or on the margins of the law, depriving the state of revenue. Some of these activities break the law, they add, others are legitimate in themselves but are carried out in a manner that avoids taxation (2000:4). The writers, who studied the Congo second economy traders between Europe (mainly France) and Congo argue that informal jobs in the second economy is an alternative to formal jobs and help, to fight discrimination and ostracism (in the mainstream labour market system). It is viewed as a shift in the "economic power base". Moreover, there seems to be a 'cause and effect' relationship between discrimination and informal jobs in the sense that MacGaffe's and Bazenguissa Ganga's study sees discrimination as a cause of doing informal jobs while the Mexican study by Gonzalez (et al, 1987) sees it as the effect.

As MacGaffe and Bazenguissa-Ganga argue, involvement in the informal economy can be seen as the effect of a failing system. This is a view shared by Keith Hart in his study of the *Frafras* in Nima, a slum in Accra, where the legal system is very weak, and Kuhlman's study of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in the Sudan (1994). In the UK failure of the asylum system is viewed by critiques of the system as a cause for driving people into informal jobs, especially when asylum seekers are stripped of their right to work and remain unemployed for years. However, informal jobs can also be done by those refugees who may have asylum status and the right to work. So to what extent is policy responsible? This is again a difficult question as informal jobs are difficult to record in terms of the incomes earned or the number of hours or types of jobs being done.

Coming to our case study refugees an attempt was made to examine two fundamental questions. These are the relationship between informal and formal jobs on the one hand

and the relationship between informal jobs and asylum status on the other. The main method employed to undertake this task is to make use of recorded information from key informants (from Ethiopia) who have more than 10 years experience in the UK labour market. My personal observations are also included.

6.1.1. Relationships Between Informal and Formal Jobs

Whether informal jobs can help to access formal jobs is a controversial issue as it depends on the exact nature of jobs being done in each category and how legal or illegal, the informal job can be[38]. If it is done in an illegal manner, the benefit it offers to access formal jobs is limited. This is because it has limited use in obtaining references from previous employers. References are given special attention in some areas. For instance, during my visit in Aberdeen, Northern Scotland, to collect data, I was informed how references from previous employers is probably the single most important issue for employers. Informal jobs by their nature cannot be disclosed to new prospective employers and thus they may not help to access formal jobs. Moreover, as income earned in informal jobs are not recorded by the Inland Revenue, there is not much evidence in the form of P45/P46 forms.

The role of informal jobs in formal employment can also be limited from another dimension. The causes of informal jobs could be the need to obtain money for the purposes of remitting to families abroad or to pay for education in the UK. Such a refugee could be doing any kind of job to meet these needs. A refugee with a background in Economics could be doing unlicensed taxi driving to pay for his studies. As many refugees want to go back to their pre-asylum professional fields after re-qualification, they cannot transfer the experience they gained from informal jobs to formal jobs in their field (teaching Economics, or development work, in the example). This limits the use of informal jobs in accessing formal employment.

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[38] Note from the definition given by MacGaffe and Bazenguissa-Ganga that informal jobs can be done within the legal employment system.

Whilst the above issues show how limited informal jobs are in helping to access formal jobs, there are also cases where they can be useful. This is especially the case where there is a continuity in terms of the trade or the job. If a refugee has been doing an informal small job in some area in a 'structured organisation', for example as a cashier, the experience gained can be used in job interviews if the individual wants to formalise their job as a cashier. Then they can continue to do formal cashier jobs in bigger companies after gaining some experience. Informal jobs can also be used to access formal jobs in another way. Being from different backgrounds refugees can use their informal job workplaces to learn what the codes of conduct and 'unwritten laws' are in the UK workplaces regarding, for example, sexism or racism, as defined in the UK workplace context. Informal jobs can also help to learn appropriate 'work languages', develop communication skills and build confidence, which will help to integrate into formal jobs later. Such experience will be quite useful when they formalise their jobs. In addition to the above, informal jobs can also help to formalise jobs because they provide an interim income and the time to spend some hours of the week on volunteering which may help to access formal jobs one day.

The other question that has to be raised is whether both formal and informal jobs can be done at the same time. This issue is dependent on the circumstances of the individuals and the kinds of jobs they do. If income earned from the formal jobs is not enough to live on, it is possible that the individual can opt for doing an informal job side by side with a formal job. It is also possible that the individual could declare to the authorities to be working for less hours than what they actually are therefore avoiding to pay the right amount of tax. Personal factors such as religious values, can stop refugees from breaking the law by lying to the authorities in this manner. Even if there are those who could do both informal and formal jobs side by side, the likelihood is that many will not. This is because once they can do a formal job, they can do other formal jobs as part-timers to top-up their incomes (although they have to pay higher tax rates for the second job). Therefore they do not have to do informal jobs and risk clashing with the law. It is also noted that they do not want to live in fear of their bosses in the formal jobs. It can also be

embarrassing and harmful to the main profession. To go back to the example of a refugee with a background in Economics who has to do unlicensed mini-cabing, he may not want to continue doing this job if he obtains a job teaching Economics.

Therefore, when we look at the relationships between informal and formal jobs, the conclusion is that on the whole informal jobs can help to access formal jobs, but there are certain conditions that limit this.

6.1.2. Relationships Between Asylum Status and Informal Jobs

Processes of formalising residence can be parallel with formalising work, but the issues are not free from complications. Informal jobs can be done by the native British population as well. Similarly refugees granted asylum status and those that are not could be doing informal jobs for various reasons. It is possible and more probable that those granted asylum status feel more settled and want to do formal jobs. However, our findings show that some refugees are likely to take on formal jobs before being granted refugee status and to continue doing so after being granted status. A key informant says, for instance, that what is more important is not just refugee status but how 'job-ready' the individual is in terms of skills and experience. It is possible that a refugee granted refugee status may not be 'job-ready' whereas another without refugee status could have skills and experience employers are looking for.

The mixed picture portrayed above does not exist anymore in the UK as recent legislations ban asylum seekers from working formal jobs until they obtain permission to remain. This means that unlike in the past, there is no option now for an asylum seeker to be doing formal jobs, however 'job-ready' they may be, as they have no permission to work which they can show prospective employers. So they may feel that the only option they have is to do informal jobs for a while. Any process of formalising these jobs will have to wait until residence is formalised. There is, therefore, a parallel between formalising jobs and formalising residence.

To conclude, Gershuny's definition of informal economy and jobs, as well as those of MacGaffe and Bazenguissa-Ganga are used to define the nature of informal jobs for case study refugees. There are important relationships between informal jobs and formal jobs. In general, the former help to access the latter but this is not a straight forward process as there are conditions that limit it. There is also an important relationship between informal jobs and residence status. As asylum seekers are not allowed to work following recent legislations, the parallel relationship between formalising jobs and formalising residence is clearly evident. In this regard, policy and a failing system are responsible, as MacGaffe and Bazenguissa Ganga argue. But the way system failure is responsible is not in the same way demonstrated by Keith Hart in his studies of the *Frafra*'s in Nima, Ghana. Hart shows the weakness of the legal system which left the *Frafra* diaspora unprotected and vulnerable. In the UK, system failure can be blamed especially in relation to the length of time an asylum seeker is made to wait before being granted (or otherwise) asylum status and the financial difficulties these asylum seekers face in the process. The circumstances of Ethiopian refugees may not be different from the circumstances of Somalis as observed by Khalid Koser and Montclose, or those of Mexicans in the US as observed by Gonzalez and Escobal above. Therefore, some refugees could be exposed to informal jobs and experience the difficulties associated with the nature of such jobs, as noted by Ersan Yucel among his fellow Turkish migrants in the former FRG.

6.2. Volunteering

In their analysis of developments in the Dutch labour market and social policies during the last two decades, Van Berkel, Coenen and Dekker discuss the role of unpaid work in their observation of participation in the labour market. They recognise the usefulness of unpaid employment and with a 'structural surplus' on the labour market being a reality they query whether other routes are feasible. 'For some groups' at least participation in voluntary work might match their ambitions and capacities more than would labour market participation (Van Berkel, Coenen and Dekker, 1999). In the UK too volunteering

is believed to be “a way into employment and integration” (ECRE 1999:45). Where are refugees in this area of participation, i.e., unpaid work?

In the sample about 36% of the unemployed have done some kind of volunteering for some time. The majority of respondents tend to volunteer in areas where they are qualified or/and experienced, indicating that they aspire to remain within their original profession. The great majority of respondents in the ‘yes I have volunteered’ category have been educated to degree level or above. Both men and women of various age levels were included in this category.

In some instances voluntary work has not yet facilitated paid employment for respondents for various reasons. These reasons are observed below.

For some the period of volunteering was not long enough. Individuals faced difficulties in gaining extensions due to tax implications for the company, or the agreed time was over and respondents could not find another volunteering opportunity. A respondent in this group also thought that the organisation did not want to keep her as colleagues saw her as a threat to their job.

A lack of interest in the type of volunteering is another reason mentioned. This can be because the prospects of getting a job after volunteering was bleak for some asylum seekers because of their lack of refugee status, i.e., the knowledge that without refugee status there is no hope of getting a job and in one case the hoped-for job involved travelling which is impossible without refugee status. Experience gained through volunteering can be at too basic a level and therefore not necessarily helpful in finding appropriate employment. When volunteering is started with the hope that the company would give them a job, but when the probability of this happening is too small they could decide to stop volunteering. Racism and sexism are also mentioned as reasons for leaving voluntary positions.

Difficulty with English language was also mentioned as discouraging volunteering in private sector businesses, where English language is necessary for communication with customers.

Giving priorities to other things in life is also another reason. For instance, some respondents who volunteered while doing courses in universities mentioned that they gave priority to their studies and left their voluntary employment to do so. Some others also left to do small paid jobs. These are mainly married refugees with children.

A few respondents also said that they had been volunteering, had finished recently and are now trying to include the voluntary work in job application forms. It was also mentioned that volunteering helped to get a job in the past but now personal circumstances and positions have changed for the individuals. In another case the difficulty in identifying a related job was encountered.

The majority, who constitute above 60% of respondents, mentioned that they have not volunteered. Refugees and asylum seekers with varying personal attributes are embraced in this category. Almost all respondents mentioned that they were aware of the importance of volunteering in equipping them with work experience and for moral satisfaction as where volunteering is not solely undertaken for work experience (e.g., church service). However they were unable to volunteer for varying reasons. The reasons for not volunteering can be categorised into the following.

For those asylum seekers who are not granted status, both paid and unpaid employment are prohibited, and despite their interest they can not volunteer. Psychological instability due to an unresolved asylum problem is a related issue causing difficulties in volunteering.

Language difficulties proved an obstacle to volunteering, as some level of language ability is necessary for communication.

Childcare has also been mentioned as another factor. The problem with childcare is not just from the side of the mothers but it was also said that some organisations offering volunteering opportunities may be reluctant to take up women with children.

Another cause is financial. Uncertainty over the length of time that they may stay in the UK (due to pending or appealed asylum claims) encourages working in the black economy to save some money for any possible emergency. Such jobs are cited as long hours and tiring, which makes it difficult to volunteer as well. It was also thought that being in an impoverished situation had discouraged volunteering. A woman asylum seeker who associated volunteering for charity organisations with this issue said that:

> I believe that I am with the worst life and if I go to charities to volunteer I will be there to volunteer for an organisation that helps people better than myself and that is psychologically scary. (T103)

It was mentioned by many that despite their efforts it had been difficult for them to find a volunteer placement.. They recall that they have been turned back or could not get addresses to contact, while others said that they are waiting for responses or are contacting agencies which would help in getting one.

Many respondents mention that they were not previously aware of the importance of volunteering in finding work, and some were still unaware. This group also includes those who do not have clear visions about volunteering, those who never thought that volunteering is possible in their profession such as, for example, sales assistant and teaching, or who thought that a high level of education is necessary to be accepted as volunteer. Courses are said to inform about the possibility, availability and importance of volunteering. One interesting point in this regard could be that lacking awareness of the benefits of courses in this regard is a problem faced by refugees and asylum seekers regardless of length of stay and qualification level.

Yet for others a variety of 'other' reasons are mentioned which include having other commitments such as study; poor health; personal problems like bereavement; no intention to work in the UK; being in new career after switching from an old one.

A small portion of the sample (just above 5%) say they are aware of the importance of volunteering but do not want "to work for free". Jonker's study on refugees of various nationalities has similarities with our findings as he indicates that some refugees believe that paid work is what they were after, given that they are on Job Seeker's Allowance (Jonker, 2004). Reasons mentioned are that 'prejudiced' attitudes of employers discourage volunteering or in one special case of an elderly person above 60 years of age volunteering in order to gain work experience would not be appropriate.

Volunteering in relation to refugees is an under-explored area. A study by Susan Stopforth (2001) for the RETAS World University Service is one of the rare research on this topic. Stopforth documents a few relevant studies (but not necessarily refugee-specific) around volunteering and refugees. The available literature shows that refugees tend to volunteer for the voluntary sector and some of the key personal benefits are identified to be enjoyment, satisfaction of seeing results, meeting people and sense of personal achievement. Stopforth's study indicates that volunteering is useful, often essential, for gaining references, work experience, opportunities to use and improve communication in English and in rebuilding confidence. Volunteering opportunities that make good use of skills are seen as the most effective in terms of job search strategy. There is a similarity between these studies and mine in so far as they both emphasise the importance of volunteering as a worthwhile effort towards employability. Stopforth's study attempts to argue that overall the majority in her survey who are doing a paid job had volunteered before they got the paid jobs. However, it is not clear from her study to what extent volunteering contributed to obtaining employment compared with other factors. My study examines the role volunteering has in obtaining employment. Our findings indicate that there are a number of barriers that refugees face before they can volunteer in the first place. There is a lack of knowledge regarding the importance of volunteering as they come from countries with different labour market characteristics.

Then there are other problems such as lack of information about volunteering opportunities; transferable experience (how volunteering to paid employment); language difficulties. There is the additional problem of lack of proper asylum status which also discourages refugees from volunteering due to the uncertainty it creates. Therefore, many refugees have problems that hinder them from volunteering despite their ambitious jobsearch activities. The EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002) has touched on the issue of volunteering very briefly and has shown that only a small proportion of its sample population has volunteered. The study mentions volunteering in passing and, unlike our findings, does not explore what limited their participation in voluntary work.

Other efforts during the transition between unemployment and employment include trying to set up own business. With particular reference to women refugees, recent research undertaken by the Industrial Society indicates that as a consequence of the various barriers that refugees face to find jobs, self-employment (which also has start up capital hurdles) is one of the options that refugees take in their effort to be employed (Sargeant, Damachi, Long, 1999). More on the literature on self-employment shall be the focus of Chapter 8. It may be enough to say here that many wanted to start self-business but they report to have faced to face difficulties to pursue it.

Yet more efforts have also been noted to have been made by the case studies refugees to get jobs. A Labour Force Survey some years ago analysed by Jones indicates that in an effort to find work the three main methods of jobseeking (in order of priority) are jobcentres, reading the situations vacant sections and word of mouth (Jones, 1993). Do refugees tend to use these channels in their efforts to get work? In addition to the volunteering and self-employment options observed above, a sample of unemployed respondents have also used various other ways to find jobs. These include following up job advertisements in papers, visiting websites and jobcentres, registering with employment agencies, word of mouth and responding to vacancies that would require relocation (moving away from area of residence). Distributing CV's to different employers is another means of jobseeking used. Additionally some respondents arranged

work experience as a 'sandwich' component of their study, in order to maximise potential for finding employment post-study.

Others spend time pursuing activities that might open up employment opportunities in the future. The main example of this is taking various courses to increase employability, not only in colleges and universities but also other skills such as taking driving lessons. This seems to be consistent with the findings of the Labour Force Survey that young ethnic minority people are keen to continue their education after leaving school. Backing his argument with earlier research, Trevor Jones also tells us that young ethnic minority people are at least as positive about school as young white people (Ibid). Manual work is often undertaken in tandem with these courses. When a course has been completed, preparation for volunteering has been mentioned as means of finding work. Our findings in general show how refugees make a variety of efforts to be working and get out of the benefit system. This seems to disprove some of the media's claim, assessed in previous chapter, that refugees are here to be burdens of the benefit system.

6.3. Effects of Unemployment

The *ippr* working paper produced by Alice Bloch (2004) underlines that the longer refugees are excluded from the labour market, the more likely they are to lose self-esteem and struggle to participate in the longer term, which has negative consequences for both the individual and society as a whole. Staying unemployed has caused serious financial difficulties for case study refugees and asylum-seekers in all the diverse categories of gender, age, qualification and length of stay. The effects in general include economic and emotional (including depression) ones.

Being a refugee itself can be stressful. A recent study in the United States, based on 293 separate studies of almost 19,000 participants is reported to have found that of the three "worst stresses", one is being a refugee from a war zone; the others are being disabled and caring for someone with dementia (*Metro,* 5 July 2004, p. 6). Ethiopia has been a war

zone for most of the last few decades, the most recent being with Eritrea at the end of the 1990's, which claimed several tens of thousands of lives. This must have implications for many Ethiopian refugees in the UK, whose families are back in home. When this is added to other problems, refugees can be emotionally down. Added to financial problems caused by unemployment are various emotional issues.

Other effects include deteriorating self-confidence, insecurity, frustration and exposure to addictions, self-condemnation. Many see no future in the UK and are looking for alternatives like travelling abroad. Another effect is related to negative effects on attitudes towards the system and blaming it.; special effects on women to enter into unwanted marriages.

To summarise, unemployment, as detailed, has affected the unemployed not only economically but also emotionally, causing depression, deterioration of self-confidence, guilt, pessimism, insecurity, frustration and addiction. It was also found that unemployment shapes negative attitudes towards the system. For women unemployment may cause the above problems and also raises the prospect of marriages of convenience which, in turn, could expose them to domestic violence. Multidirectional barriers to employment are discussed in the last chapter and the case study community's experience of exclusion in the host society is discussed below. Our findings correspond to the findings of the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002). Indeed the main focus of the EMBRACE-UK study is how refugees' health can be affected by the different experiences they go through in a new environment in the UK. In its brief discussion on employment, the study draws a link between the different barriers to employment and its impact on health. One Ethiopian respondent of the EMBRACE-UK study is quoted to have said that "there are a lot of refugee people who can contribute to this country if given the chance. Lack of this opportunity makes people feel some sort of incompleteness. This is a good cause of stress. As a refugee, I cannot begin and end the reasons for stress. Being a refugee by itself is a source of stress". The study explores the various sources of stress refugees encounter, including downward social mobility, which have a direct effect on their health conditions. It concludes that unemployed migrants are

more likely to suffer mental and physical ill health, thus putting a burden on health services.

6.4. Feeling Of Being Ostracised By The System

About 68% of the unemployed respondents believe that the system has excluded them[39]. While being unemployed is the most common characteristic of this group regardless of, say, qualification or gender, it was observed that asylum seekers or those who had only recently received their refugee status dominate this category. Thus they comment that despite their qualifications, skills and experience and the efforts they make to find work, their difficulty in finding work, even low-skilled positions, is caused by circumstances that surround them as refugees and asylum seekers, discussed in the 'Barrier Factors' section. The lack of permission to work and difficulties in finding accommodation are caused, according to respondents, by the fact that they are refugees/asylum seekers and 'outsiders'. Not only this, as a result of being unemployed many believe that they are further excluded from the system. A woman refugee, for instance, said, " yes I feel I am lonely and rejected. I have no communication with schools and schoolmates, no communication with the work place and workers of the host society". On a similar issue, another respondent living in Yorkshire added, "The fact that we are concentrated in hostels damages our integration with the society as we always live with asylum-seekers from different countries". As a result of this many may have difficulties in improving their language skills. Feeling excluded was also mentioned by a woman respondent married to a white man from the region (Ireland).

The way the respondents think they are excluded was mentioned in terms of the negative portrayal of refugees by important 'players' in the system. An unemployed respondent with a Masters degree from a UK university and with many years of professional work experience in his country of origin commented:

[39] Exclusion (ostracism) has been defined as per the literature review to mean to be cut off the labour market; being not part of the system; or marginalized compared to the indigenous people owing to being an alien to the system, in this case a refugee.

> Yes I am given only vouchers after extensive education and years of work experience. The fact that the press, politicians and recently even pensioners took me (us) as a big issue and the way they talk about me makes me think they see me as an outsider. I have mentioned this in a London *Radio Life* interview I had recently. (T116)

In another case, difficulties in supporting their family when unemployed was noted as a way of perceiving exclusion. A lone father says, "difficulties in finding work and being incapable of paying for my child's holiday to go out with his friends makes me think that I am completely rejected, in addition to the other economic and social problems associated with it". Another factor causing feelings of exclusion is being incapable of contributing or "expected to contribute" to the society. Being treated as an 'outsider' also seems to erode any sense of belonging. A respondent who has lived in the country for more than five years as an asylum-seeker until he was granted ELR recently said:

> Whenever I think of the denial of my rights (to work) as an asylum seeker I feel excluded and never part of the system to the extent that, for example, in international football games I don't support England as I feel I have been pushed aside. (T160)

The level of exclusion is expressed in different ways depending on the education level and other characteristics of the individual. Only a few from the more educated group said that they felt excluded from a certain part of the labour market, such as 'good jobs' or 'PLC's, not in the public sector'. In other cases respondents felt that they were completely outside the system. A woman refugee who has lived in the country for some years and is attending a diploma course for instance said, 'I don't know the system', while a man above 60 said 'there is no place in the labour market for a man of my age and identity'.

A few unemployed respondents who are in the well-educated category link exclusion to their being black. One of them, a UK Ph.D. degree holder, pairs colour with being a refugee while a woman UK Law degree graduate, who has had ILR for many years, singles out colour as the prime reason for exclusion: "Yes I believe I am excluded because I am black ... any white woman, even a refugee with a poor command of the

English language is more accepted than me". However another respondent dismissed the argument that colour is the main problem apart from being a refugee.

Whilst the majority said that they feel outsiders and are excluded there are some who did not agree that they are excluded. None of the sample respondents who hold this view are asylum seekers, indicating that unemployed asylum-seekers suffer the worst feelings of exclusion. Otherwise they seem to represent diverse characteristics in terms of area of residence, gender, age, education level, length of stay in the UK and so on.

The reasoning behind not feeling excluded, however, seems to be worth taking note of. For some it is more out of defiance and hope than feeling included. One of those in this category, a woman refugee with a degree in computer science, for instance, refused to believe that she is excluded: "No, you have to stand up and fight your challenges" while others insisted they feel they need to keep trying and hope that there are chances so that 'one day' they will manage to get the jobs to which they aspire. Feelings of exclusion are cited as discouraging active jobseeking and this could be one reason for not accepting them. "If I thought this way, I wouldn't have shown any effort to get a job", a respondent says. The availability of free training was mentioned as another reason for not feeling excluded. Free training on employability skills for the UK market is something that most asylum seekers lack and arguably this is another reason to believe asylum-seekers are the worst victims of exclusion.

A small minority percentage said that they are unemployed because of various reasons causing temporary unemployment, such as raising a family or personal problems such as poor health. It was noted that the positions that these individuals held before being temporarily unemployed were not necessarily of a high level and were mainly manual jobs in factories. It should be noted that it is possible for foreigners to feel completely included in UK society. In one case a refugee who arrived in the UK as a teenager said that she has grown up with the culture here and feels that she is not excluded as she feels she does 'fit into the native ethnic minorities'.

Others were not sure whether they are excluded or not. The main reasons for this are that they have not been actively looking for work or were only looking for part-time work and could not judge if they have been excluded or not. This category is comprised of university students or those who had recently graduated. A couple of respondents in this category said that 'they are not bothered' as they were not jobseeking at present due to childcare difficulties and bad health.

The findings of this work are then that more than two thirds of the unemployed population within the sample case study community feel excluded according to the given definition of exclusion. The above section investigates why they may or may not feel excluded. The findings of this study are consistent with those of the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002) which highlights that it can be difficult for many refugees to feel integrated (due to cultural and language barriers), despite being in the host country for many years.

6.5. Support Needed From Government

Alice Bloch documents the recognition in policy-making at the UK and European levels, of the importance of assisting the access of refugees to the labour market in order to ensure their long-term integration (Bloch, 2004). To what extent are existing government and policy support helpful to refugees? Given the multitude of factors that are mentioned as barriers to employment, and with the resulting effects of unemployment and exclusion, respondents were asked what they thought they needed from government in terms of support to help them get jobs. Many respondents mentioned more than one means of possible support.

Thirty-five percent of respondents wanted the government to grant them refugee status and permission to work. Respondents stressed that this is the key to solving their most pressing problems, as it directly affects accommodation and training of different types and levels. The majority of respondents in this category were asylum-seekers. A few had

been recently granted ELR a wait of five or more years. These respondents felt that they should have been granted status much earlier as they could then have avoided their current unemployment, which they saw as linked to a denial of their experience, education and other employment-related rights. This is also noted in *ippr*'s working document which states that the early experiences of asylum seekers are likely to have a profound impact on their preparedness as refugees to integrate into the UK economy. The paper then recommends that early interventions may well be required, regardless of average claim processing times (Bloch, 2004). It was also suggested that the permission to work documentation should be US green-card style, which would not confuse employers. Stressing the need for refugee status, a woman refugee with two children who has been in the UK for more than five years said "anything less than that cannot help me enough".

The second largest group of respondents (25%) identify support with training and accommodation as a major area for government intervention. This group is dominated by women and those who are educated to below degree level. It was suggested that government should provide training and accommodation regardless of asylum applications and restrictions imposed on asylum seekers. Special support 'facilities' and 'schemes' for asylum-seekers (refugees) were recommended. The quality of courses currently available was questioned: those leading to 'immediate' employment would be most helpful. 'There is no point in taking courses (unless they help to give employment)', a high school graduate woman refugee commented. Financial support to post graduate courses was also mentioned as an area in which the government should intervene. Support for re-training a refugee who is educated to degree and above is another area suggested for intervention. It was also recommended that government arrange volunteering and work placements, offering job schemes that will help in getting jobs.

'Influencing employers' is another area that the government needs to support refugees. Included in this group are mainly the educated and those who have been in the UK for several years. This can be linked to the discriminatory practices of employers that were explained in detail in the last chapter as a main barrier to employment. Outlawing

technical and invisible discriminatory practices against refugees by employers (better transparency) was felt very strongly to be the government's responsibility and duty. A "fair recruitment policy matched by practice is what is needed. Policy alone is useless", a post-graduate respondent remarked. Many in this category wanted to see the adoption of American style, 'not the British one', mandatory ethnic minority representation to be imposed on organisations and extended for refugees too. Whilst there is a view that this should be extended to support the 'fit', favourable treatment by employers for refugees with less experience was also suggested as a way forward for unemployed refugees. One way linked to this would be 'making job ads more flexible and looking at them from the students' viewpoint'. It was noted that government's support so far is good but limited. A case in point is the New Deal where the government covers 60% salary. While such support was appreciated, it was also stressed that this is limited to small companies and doesn't cover the bigger ones if refugees want to go to them, thereby narrowing their chances. Providing interview practice for refugees and giving more information was another recommendation, perhaps mainly for the public sector. The rationale given for this is that they understand refugees better and give refugee interviewees confidence as in the words of a respondent 'we feel they are close to us'.

It is also stressed that government should give more financial support to refugee community organisations to create employment-yielding cultural projects, especially for those who have mainly culture-specific skills. The need for this was stressed even by those whose skills are not culture-specific. A respondent with a UK engineering degree and IT skills said: "They are the ones who are capable of changing our lives and could help bring us to the level of the indigenous workforce but as I know them at a close range they have huge problems of funding. Government should help in this". The consequences of not extending such support will affect future generations: "If I am affected my children will also be affected", said a respondent.

The next category constitutes those who would like the government to provide financial resources to start self-employment. This category mainly consists of those who would like to start a business rather than enter standard employment, mainly because they have

a lower level of education. The need for financial support in the form of grant or loan, preferably with low interest, was highly stressed. Relaxed or low tax requirements; provision for advice and guidance to successful business types are other means of support requested by the respondents. A woman refugee recalled her failed attempt to become self-employed and said "if the government supported me by now I would be economically self-dependent".

Support with childcare is another area where help is needed as stressed by mothers and one single father. Respondents reported that childcare expenses are too high to both cover and get some extra income for their household and would like the government to help in making available free or cheaper, affordable facilities, which assure the safe care of their children. The support currently available was considered to be inadequate. For instance, one family mentioned that the Working Family Tax Credit aimed to help parents in some percentage amount of childcare (after some calculations) is not encouraging. "For my family we get nothing under the scheme".

There are also those who insisted that the first step for the government to support us would be for it to stop being a 'problem' itself. "It is the government and politicians – although I much prefer this government to the Tories who create problems. It has to stop being the problem as a start. Then it has to treat us like any citizen in policy...", an asylum-seeker remarked. This group is predominantly comprised of those who are educated to a very high level (Masters degree and above). Another respondent in this category said,

> The politicians' comments, geared to gain votes at the expense of asylum-seekers, not only influence the public to be prejudiced against us *but also kills our confidence to interact with the public actively.* (T130)

Respondents emphasised that there must be a social change to start with, although this is a long-term issue. Government should work towards changing the attitude of the public towards us by dropping terms like 'bogus refugees', etc.. "It shouldn't allow the 'refugee'

label to marginalise us", emphasised a woman refugee. More partnership engagement of government with trade unions and NGO's was also recommended: "Government should listen to the research findings of highly qualified (skilled) manpower in the refugee community and act on it", says a respondent.

In addition to the above, other areas of support were suggested by respondents in relation to their particular circumstances and experiences. A woman refugee in her 50's, for instance, ascribed her main barrier to work as poor health and would like the government to help in areas that are linked to the improvement of her health. She would like government to provide support in getting free or affordable heating in her house; good GP's and interpreters would play a significant role to improve her health and find work. An adult-education teacher in London claimed that the dispersal of new arrivals outside London has affected her job. She would like the government to keep them in London for training until a decision is made on their application. The benefit system was also criticised as it is not encouraging to take up low-paid jobs. A journalism professional who did his Masters degree in the UK said, "I did an ironing job in a textile factory for 8-months. The pay was too small to survive on even if they paid for my flat rent. I appealed for support but was told I couldn't get support if I worked for more than 16 hrs/week. I had to leave the job". Helping towards security through more financial and emotional support was another area suggested for government intervention, such as travelling support for jobsearch.

Contrary to the many recommended areas of support observed above there are also those who do not feel the government needs to help. One main reason is that their main barrier to working was linked to asylum status and that has been sorted out. They felt that they have gone through the "suffering" already. For some, having status seems to end problems with the government, though a feeling of regret for the 'lost years' due to problems with their asylum application was noted. "Even if the government now gives me a British passport it can't make up for the many years I spent unemployed", a UK Chemical engineering graduate commented. For few others government support is not required because they do not want to work. This can be due to approaching retirement

age or a different aim of staying in the UK, while for some they are "not sure" or "never thought about" what government can help with.

The importance of policy intervention is undoubtedly clear as our findings indicate and other studies confirm. In her recent work, Alice Bloch (2004) highlights necessary areas of policy intervention which are similar to the findings of this study. Bloch insists on the need for policy to ensure that there is better information collection and sharing; recognition of diversity within refugee groups [in terms of age, qualifications, length of stay, language proficiency, etc...]. Bloch's study also stresses the need for policy to ensure better recognition of overseas qualifications and training provision including ESOL. Government recognises that more is needed to support refugees through employment policies. For instance, in a recent (November 2004) speech to the Employability Forum, an independent organisation which promotes the skills of refugees, Jane Kennedy, the Minister for Work has admitted that the government is only helping around half of those it should be helping and outlined the government's plans to integrate refugees[40]. Therefore, the belief by writers indicated in the literature, highlighted especially in Chapter 3, that governments in Europe want to integrate marginalised communities into their systems is still at its start stage for refugees. As our sample shows the majority of refugees want the government to grant them permanent leave to remain as a step forward towards integration or/and they outline the different integration schemes the government has yet to provide. Following the government refugee integration strategy being implemented after 1999 there seem to be some positive developments. However, the government has made it clear that any support it extends to promote integration is confined to those who have been granted permanent leave to remain, not asylum seekers, indicating the limited role it plays in solving the problems mentioned by our respondents.

[40] In addition to being the founding member of the Employability Forum, my job in the refugee sector enables me to work with the Home Office very closely (indeed my post is funded by the Home Office). I am also a member of a Refugee Employment Strategy Group in a national refugee organisation, for which I produced a working paper on refugees' employment in late 2004. These have enabled me to understand the fact that it is one of the Home Office's top agenda items to integrate recognised refugees into the UK society. Employment plays a key role in this process.

6.6. Support Needed From Voluntary Organisations

Mestheneos and Ioannidi argue that the role of self-help refugee community organisations in the integration of refugees constitutes a difference in EU national contexts. The writers indicate that the UK and Netherlands encourage and have an established tradition of fostering and promoting community organisations to provide services to other refugees, thus involving refugees actively in their own integration (Mestheneos and Ioannidi, 2002:307). The findings of this study show that support in training and advice of varying types as well as referrals that will help find work is an area that most respondents would like to see more of. The respondents in this category have different backgrounds and attributes which makes association with any particular group difficult. Accurate and suitable advice that will take personal circumstances into account was mentioned as an area for more development. This is due to individuals being away from the labour market for some time. Other support areas include helping professionals to switch to other professions in the UK; helping refugees to familiarise with the host country's social and economic environment; training in proper employable, 'not basic', skills that will help someone find work rapidly, such as technical, vocational, accounting, IT as well as language; follow up; orientation about jobsearch and preparation for the labour market, such as updating our skills, computer assistance in CV writing; work placement.

A specific role for community organisations, as they know country of origin culture and language, would be to teach new arrivals about the culture here and about their rights; e.g., being able to enquire about potential vacancies in shops (not usually a common practice in their country of origin); advice about where to make and set up business, for example, where community members are concentrated to start up a community based business. It is recognised that these organisations have limitations regarding resources. Only one respondent answered that such advice can be obtained from community members who arrived earlier in the UK, rather than organisations.

The second highest number of sample respondents' interest for voluntary sector intervention is in opening up job-creating projects. Most, if not all, in this category are those whose inclinations, skills and experiences are mainly more suitable to their communities than the wider host country institutions. These respondents said that they wanted their community organisations to raise funds, and (with support from bigger voluntary organisations) to start cultural projects for example in traditional music or education and for training centres to enable teaching; to involve refugees in small business development, setting up employment agencies that will give priority to deserving community members; to enable individuals to volunteer and then keep them as their employees afterwards or send them to organisations that can find them work.

Disseminating information that will help for getting jobs is another important area that many respondents thought that voluntary organisations should help with. The starting point could be to publicise their activities, what they do and where they are and be first contact (for jobsearch). Information about their services was thought to help refugees 'integrate' with the system. Creating platforms where refugees can sit together and exchange experience could help to avoid loneliness and in extreme cases its consequences, i.e. suicide. Provision of information on vacancies and sources of further information about jobs and cheap facilities, for instance, childcare, was also recommended.

Serving as a bridge between refugees and employers was yet another area that many refugees would like to see voluntary organisations involvement. In relation to making connections with employers, advocacy and linking with employers is one of the key activities needing development; designing plans for networking with various organisations and contact employers and notifying about vacancies is another. As to the government relations there was a belief that agencies (especially the larger ones like the Refugee Council) would be listened to, so they should communicate with the Home Office regarding personal problems such as those related with asylum, which is a key factor in employability. Community organisations may not be listened to as much as such organisations in some government institutions. However, the government is encouraging

community organisations to participate in integrating refugees into the labour market (Kennedy, November 2004). Not much is known about whether this is backed by resource support to community groups, most of whom are struggling to survive. Lobbying for fairer recruitment policy is another suggested activity; "to voice refugees' concerns and complaints on our behalf to the right authorities". Whilst many refugee women with children showed a keen desire to get help from voluntary and/or community organisations with free or cheap childcare, it was also recommended that such organisations campaign and lobby government about making further facilities available.

Research is another area mentioned for voluntary organisations. The type of research recommended concerned the specific problems of refugees (in relation to employment) and concentrating on resolving these issues to make it easier to find work. Another area of research suggested was that of the different types of employment to be found within the community, such as small business development and country of origin-UK import-export businesses.

Outreach work was highlighted as one area where voluntary organisations including community organisations can be actively involved. For instance, a woman refugee who has experience working for Ethiopian community organisations in the past said that better and concerted communication with community organisations/groups is needed. She mentioned churches and restaurants as some of these outlets. Others, mainly women refugees including a mother with children, said that house to house outreach work is important to provide job-related information, especially for the most vulnerable refugees like the depressed and the elderly. There are also those who thought that outreach work was unnecessary.

Specific financial support is another area of help some asylum-seekers would like to see set aside for specific purposes, including accommodation and financial support for training. A Pharmacist degree graduate in Yorkshire says, for one, "I want voluntary organisations to give me what government would have given me if I had leave to remain,

such as financial aid for my study. Advice is not good enough without material help or if it doesn't lead to financial assistance".

Other suggestions were made about what voluntary organisations should do. These include the need for international NGO's like Oxfam, Save the Children and Christian Aid to help domestically. Expanding the training provision by the big refugee-support organisations and for them to ensure that the training leads to jobs through follow-up was another. It was held that refugee support (community) organisations are more aware of the rights of refugees than the individual and are in a better position to be able to communicate with authorities. Respondents would like to have a service whereby they could call on someone to accompany them when needing to keep appointments with authorities. It was also noted that there should be good interpreters in refugee support organisations. Other suggestions made include for these organisations to visit and support refugees residing outside London and focus service on areas other than immigration.

As well as the different needs and recommendations by refugees and asylum-seekers observed above, there are also those who are not sure or think nothing about what these organisations can do to help them find employment. Indeed most of the respondents asked with what areas they think these organisations should help belong to this category. Almost all the asylum seekers in this category said that their problems of status, permission to work or other employment and education rights, which are the main barriers for employment, should be sorted out by the government, not by the refugee support (community) organisations: "None of them have power except to tell you what the rules are", a woman refugee says, for instance. Not only asylum seekers but also those with British passports or who have lived in the UK for some time do not think that they can be helped by these organisations. It was also felt that these organisations do not have the necessary resources to help all refugees and that their focus is mainly on the newly arrived. Some are not totally aware of what these organisations do, nor have they tried to look into what the organisations can do for them. In a few cases their importance is not needed. This is a case where, for instance, the individual in question was working before being interrupted by childcare (but not proper maternity leave), and could be re-instated

after a while, or where the individual has an education level higher than that these organisations can usually help with. In just one case it was stated that community organisations are too politicised and are discouraging.

6.7. Special Support For Refugee Women

Women refugees were also asked if they think there is a need for special support for women in relation to employment from government and voluntary organisations. The majority said they do need special support. The main reason given for that is that women coming from countries like Ethiopia have cultural problems that adversely affect them in their success rate in entering the labour market. Even if they are capable, their cultural background makes them appear shy. Lacking experience in socialising and communication are additional problems for many refugee women. Such factors are linked to little awareness of their rights and where and how to seek help. Feeling lonely and giving up hope "quickly and easily" was cited as worse for women refugees than their male counterparts. Such factors are said to disadvantage many women with regards to entering the labour market. Hence there is an indication that some prefer to work for Ethiopian employers, for example in Ethiopian restaurants, thereby narrowing their opportunities. A law professional who previously worked for organisations advising refugees recommended employing women advisors to overcome issues of shyness and low confidence resulting from their cultural background. There is a feeling that job offers should take these issues into account as a "positive action".

Employment opportunities are fewer for women especially in the area of manual labour as they could be seen or could see themselves, rightly or wrongly, physically less strong than men to do some 'hard jobs' which may involve heavy lifting that many young males would be more able to do. Security is an issue and often means that certain forms of employment, such as driving a mini-cab, are ruled out for women. In a related issue of security they have also mentioned that women refugees may have more difficulties to move from house to house than their male counterparts as they need suitable

accommodation not only for personal care and dignity but also for security, which is an important factor for jobsearch as observed earlier on.

Problems associated with childcare was anther area necessitating special support for women refugees. A mother of two respondent who was an asylum-seeker for many years said that, compared to other mothers she was disadvantaged, as she had no permission to work with which to try to cover some of the costs. Childcare also causes difficulties for refugee mothers in studying and working

Factors related to country of origin, such as a lower level of education than men, greater problems with English language and a lack of confidence regarding their command and knowledge of the system were also mentioned.

For the reasons noted above it is believed that refugee women need special support from refugee support (community) organisations as well as from the government. "Removing prejudice against women as if they can't do jobs that men can do" is one area specified, while financial and emotional support to work and study is another. Creating opportunities where women refugees can meet and exchange ideas and experience has been suggested to be a supportive role that can be played by government and voluntary organisations, which will go some way to resolve issues of loneliness and low social interaction.

A few respondents said special support is needed only for single mothers with childcare problems or that refugee women do not need special support 'as women are more active than men'. These respondents might have associated a need for support with weakness, which they disapprove of.

6.8. Voluntary Organisations And Their Practical Importance

Have case study refugees and asylum seekers ever approached voluntary (community) organisations for advice and support in relation to jobs? If yes, what was their experience? About 44% of the unemployed respondents say they have visited voluntary organisations for something that is directly or indirectly linked to employment. Their impressions are different. More than 54% of these say they found them helpful. Respondents who say they have been helped are comprised of diverse attributes in terms of gender, asylum status, qualification level and length of stay in the UK. Most of the respondents who approached their community organisations said that they had been helped in sorting out their immigration problems (such as advice and referrals); were given work placement and volunteering opportunities; had been directed to appropriate training providers who also cover transport expenses; provided interpreters for NHS services; contacted hotels and other accommodation centres; provided advice and interview skills and training and follow up through outreach; made aware of rights in housing; given financial support to continue education; offered computer facilities for practising and writing job applications and CV's. It was highlighted that the organisations were co-operative and helped as far as they were able. An asylum seeker said she did not ask them much as her main problem was asylum for which she had to rely on the Home Office.

About 35% of those who approached these organisations said they had not found them helpful. Here again respondents represent a diverse range of attributes, and are not associated with any in particular. According to these respondents the advice obtained was common knowledge and they were not referred. The individuals could not get financial assistance to start up their own business or for education. Respondents also complained of the buearocracy, giving repeated appointments and not supplying with required information; and it was stated that they only gave work placements to those on their programmes.

It has also been noted that an individual may see the different Ethiopian community organisations in different ways. Whilst some are valued, others are condemned for having

a discouraging office system; not taking a client seriously; seeing a client as a threat and thereby 'killing motivation'.

Some respondents had not approached voluntary organisations regarding employment support. Different reasons were given, depending on the circumstances of the individuals in question. A high percentage of respondents, all of whom asylum-seekers, said that their problems were linked to not having some kind of status and they therefore could not be helped by these organisations but only by the government. Repeated attempts and failures to get help will cause asylum seekers to give up hope, lack confidence and be 'fed-up' with approaching organisations. Lacking confidence their own ability due to a low level of skills, lacking capital for self-employment and child-minder problems are mentioned as the other reasons for not visiting these organisations. Otherwise there are indications that individuals would be interested in attending in the future if circumstances were improved.

A remarkable group of unemployed respondents said that they had never thought these organisations would make a difference either to their particular professional careers or jobsearch at all. These respondents have either leave to remain or permission to work. In fact many of those in this category say they do not know what these organisations do or where they are. Some blamed the organisations for not publicising their activities and whereabouts, for example, some NGO's such as Save the Children. Those who had heard about them thought these organisations were there only to help in advising on immigration issues, not even for accommodation, let alone on employment. Some residing outside London thought that there were no refugee-support organisations.

A few others said they did not need help because they thought the organisations could not meet their needs. Respondents in this category were well educated (degree or above). A respondent in Wales said such refugee-support organisations do not have highly qualified staff who could help. Others said that they know they can get work in the manufacturing sector when they are ready, so do not need their help.

Lastly there are a few who said that they are 'put-off' visiting their community organisations as they see the staff as 'politicised' - an impact of their experience with the politics of their country of origin. Where employment help has been sought, the non-community refugee support organisations have been preferred.

The overall trend seems that community support groups have the potential and willingness to support their community members, and help in 'ethnic solidarity' as Gold (1992) holds, noted in Chapter 2 of the literature review. However, with regard to the arguments presented in the literature review on their role in promoting integration our findings indicate that it is not that impressive. This is mainly because of the limitations of power the community groups have to solve the problem of lack of asylum status, which is the main hindrance to finding jobs.

To summarise this chapter it is noted that the respondent refugees have shown various efforts to find jobs. In addition to the obvious 'look out' for jobs these efforts include volunteering and attempting to set-up own businesses. Indeed many do not give up and aspire to be successful through education and jobs. However, they encounter a range of difficulties that have to do with pre-asylum, host country and policy issues, to be successful in their efforts, hence remain unemployed. Unemployment is also seen as a cause for a number of economic, social and psychological problems that they are claiming to have been passing through. It is also noted that there is a feeling of lack of government support and, indeed, deliberate exclusionary policies by the government and negative attitudes by politicians. There exists the need to see these barriers be dealt with and get support from both the government and voluntary organisations. Despite the successive failures they still have aspirations and ambitions and many 'struggle' to achieve their ambitions. The findings of this study corresponds to that of Christine Robinson Finnan (1981) on refugee communities of Vietnam, Cuba and Hungary in the United States, which uncovered that in most cases refugees realise that they must look to the future not the past. There is also a similarity with the recent Home Office research which assesses the impacts of Home Office funded refugee projects in the UK on refugees. The study, which includes a majority of unemployed refugees, found that many

of those who are getting employment help feel confident about getting a job (Peckham, et al, 2004).

The Greenwich Borough study on refugees of different countries of origin, mainly Vietnamese, Somalis, Tamils and Iranians has similar findings to our study, namely that all Somalis interviewed wish to progress towards employment where possible. The study highlights that there is a great deal of potential interest in establishing businesses, including individual enterprises and community businesses. The study notes that the respondents know that this requires a period of education, vocational training or re-training, and language development. The majority are already engaged in trying to do this. However, opportunities are restricted and constrained by a number of factors such as childcare, language support, fees, insufficient provision and DSS regulations (Clark, 1992). The Greenwich study was conducted a few years ago, before the tightening of asylum laws. This could be the reason why the findings of our study are different to it in so far as they identify the lack of proper asylum status and rights it as the main challenge rather than those mentioned by the Somali refugees in Greenwich.

While we attempted to see the issues refugees go through in transition from unemployment, in the next chapter we attempt to see what then are the issues once they get through the transition phase and embark on the world of jobs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE EMPLOYED

7.1. MAIN FEATURES AND ISSUES OF JOBS

This chapter presents, to begin with, an observation of the main features of both the employed respondents and their jobs. Then it goes into more details of the various issues that they encounter in the workplace as members of the workforce in general and as refugees in particular.

7.1.1. Sector and Types of Jobs

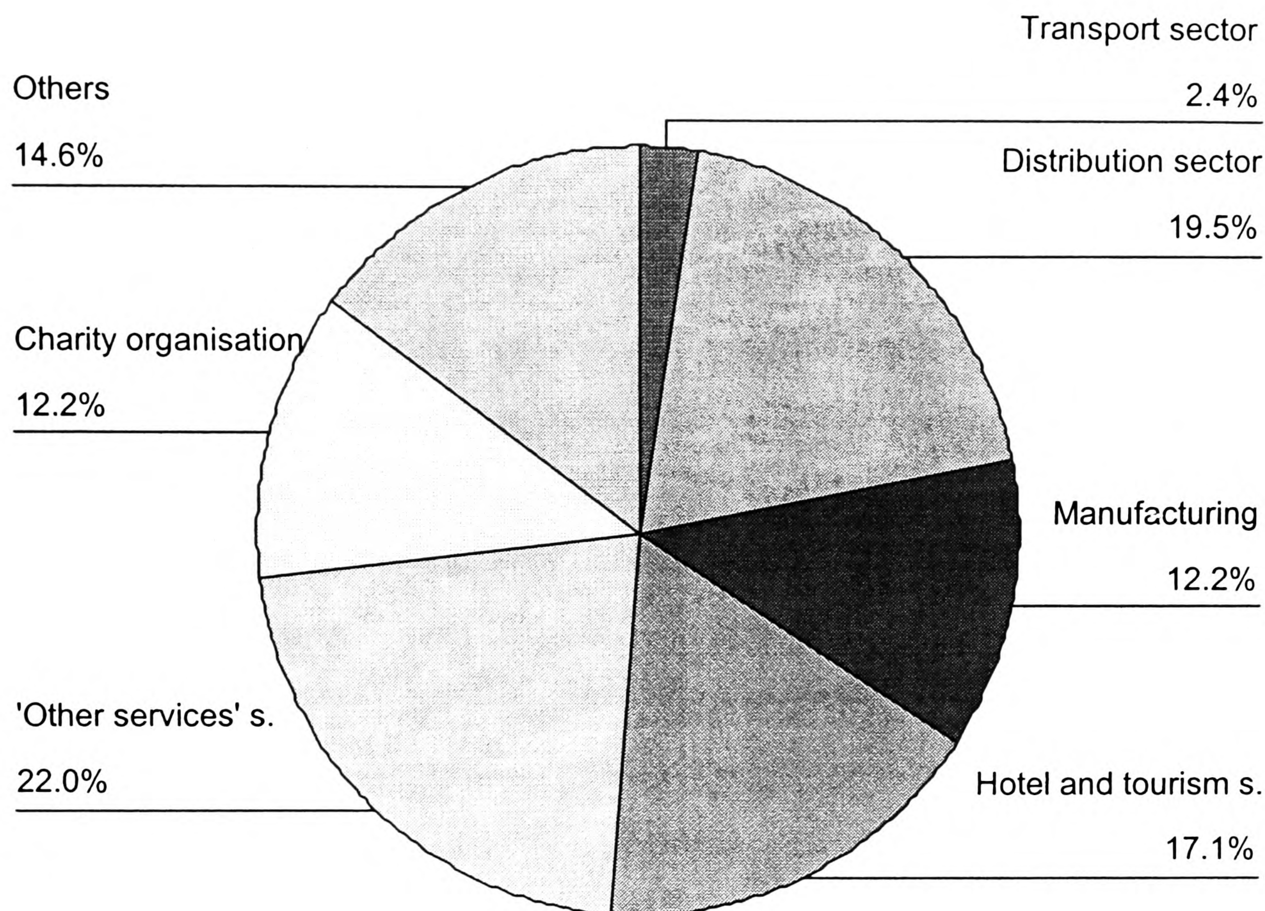
The African Educational Trust (AET, 1998) in London found that the type of work refugees are engaged in varies from community to community. The AET study indicates that some of these refugees (doing small, menial jobs) are highly qualified people with university degrees and notes that "refugees accept it (underemployment) as a reality and use it as a strategy to reach their full potential. Thus it is not uncommon to find highly qualified graduates unemployed or in unskilled menial jobs" (1998:32). AET also remarks that job satisfaction is very low. In some cases, it was suggested that 90% of the refugee population were dissatisfied with their employment (Ibid.; see also Shuttle, 1996).

An earlier research study by Alice Bloch (1996) on the employment and training situations of refugees in East London (Newham) reveals that out of the 180 data population only 25 were working. The type of work undertaken by respondents in the UK was very different from positions that they had held in their home countries, most of which was professional (1996:46). Bloch states that those in her sample who were

working were employed as security workers, shop work/ cashier, including petrol stations, factory: packing/machine operators, administration and 'others' (sorting at the post office, civil engineer, self-employed printer, self employed English language teacher and community work) (1996:47; see also Pile, 1997).

Our survey findings have some similarities with the above. However, there are also differences of methodologies and aims of these studies and mine. The studies by both the African Educational Trust on refugees in London (1998) and that of Alice Bloch (1996) in Newham pay serious attention on the problems of refugees unemployment and its causes. My study has explored this problem in much more detail (in terms of both dimension and depth) in a previous chapter. In addition, however, my study is also interested in exploring workplace issues for refugees in an area very much under-explored in refugee studies. For us to be able to look into workplace issues the different types of jobs refugees do need to be represented including high level skilled jobs, such as managerial and academic jobs. Indeed research shows disadvantages and discriminations of immigrants (refugees included) face are better noticed in high skilled jobs. Therefore, our sample of employed people includes jobs refugees do in different sectors and the types of jobs vary from unskilled manual jobs to well paid highly skilled jobs. Unlike *Dualists,* discussed in Chapter 2 of the literature review, whose main focus is on the primary and secondary sectors of the labour market, our focus is on what is going on within the workplace. Accordingly, the sectors case study respondents are working have been categorised into seven types. These are transport, distribution, manufacturing, hotel and tourism, other service, charity organisations and 'others'. Chart 7.1 below shows the percentage of respondents working within each of these sectors. Data is also split to show the types of jobs that respondents are doing in each sector and also the gender composition of the types/industries of the job.

Chart 7.1 - Sectoral Distribution of Jobs



i.) Transport Sector

The transport sector has employed under 5% of respondents in this sample. Bus driving in the London Bus Company is included in this. No management responsibility is involved.

ii.) Distribution Sector

The distribution sector comprises retail and wholesale distribution of goods and services such as convenience shops, superstores/supermarkets, warehouse distributors, music record distributors and internet shops. About 20% of the respondents work in this sector. The types of jobs include retail manager, sales person/assistant, superstore supervisor,

packing and customer service assistant, fork lifting. In the main the jobs are semi-skilled and involve both managerial and non-managerial functions.

iii.) Manufacturing Sector

About 12% of respondents in the sample group work in the manufacturing sector. Companies employing respondents in this sector are polymer, rubber and automotive, semi conductor industries, printing and telecommunication connecting companies. Jobs in this sector include non-managerial skilled positions including development chemist, senior software engineer, print designer and production line supervisor and unskilled packing.

iv.) Services Sector

a.) Hotel and Tourism Services Sector

This sector employs about 17% of respondents in the sample. Organisations include international holiday villas letting company, large international hotels and restaurants such as those with five star ratings as well as small local ones & Thames River Cruise touring company. The types of jobs include day and night receptionist, hotel reservation staff, accountancy, waitress, chef and porter. The jobs performed in this sector are a mixture of non-managerial and skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled ones.

b.) 'Other Services' Sector

The 'other services' sector includes companies and organisations engaged in provision of public services like education, NHS (including administrative office and hospital jobs), housing and social security, jobcentres, immigration and courts ; entertainment; health

and fitness club; interpretation. Twenty-two per cent of respondents in the sample work in this sector. The types of jobs include housing officer, social benefit assessing officer, manager head therapist, administrative officer, translation, high school laboratory techinician, college lecturer, hospital sterile service technician and accountancy. The jobs are predominantly non-managerial but demand a certain degree of skill.

v.) Charity Organisations (The Voluntary Sector)

About 12% of respondents in the sample work in this sector such as in development charity organisation, academic society, health research institute and refugee support organisations. Jobs occupied by respondents in this sector include secretarial, accountancy, computing course manager, IT-lecturer, development education and project co-ordinators. The jobs are skilled and mainly non-managerial.

vi.) Others

Occupations categorised under 'others' are those which may not be conveniently placed in any of the above and include construction, IT companies, media networks, cleaning companies, private firms and households. About 15% of respondents in the sample are employed in this category. The types of jobs are mainly non-managerial and a mixture of skilled such as IT desktop support technician, accountancy, ground technician and semi-skilled like painting, company cleaning and domestic child-minding (household care).

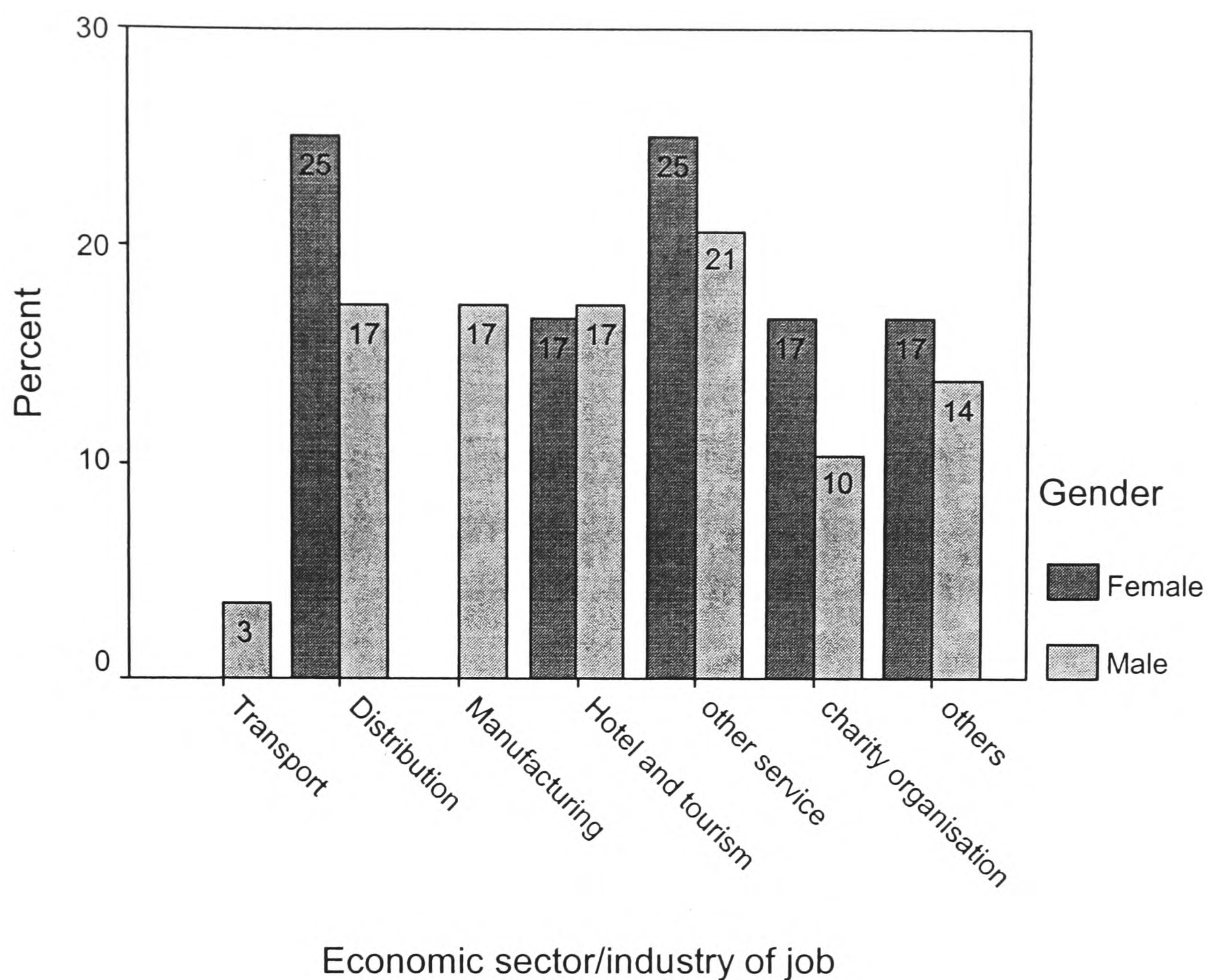
The approach Bloch's DWP recent study (2002) and mine followed are different in terms of the sectoral composition of jobs. My study followed economic sectors like manufacturing, transport, etc. whereas Bloch, a sociologist by profession, categorised them as public, private and voluntary sector. Bloch's 'voluntary sector' category has similarities with my 'charity organisations' category and her public sector category has similarities in the fact that with my other services. However there are similarities in the

fact that many refugees work in the service industry as waiters, fast food chefs, shop assistants and in administration, although there are also refugees who do highly professional jobs. The sector of employment differs between refugees and ethnic minorities generally, with a larger proportion of refugees working in the voluntary sector and fewer working in the public sector than their ethnic minority counterparts (Bloch, 2002).

vii.) Gender and types/industry of jobs

As graph 7.1. below illustrates, about half of the female employees in the sample work in the distribution and 'other services' sector, each having a quarter of the sample. Hotel and tourism, charity organisations and others employ an equal percentage of about 17% of women in the sample.

Graph 7.1. - Gender and Industrial distribution of jobs



Men are most concentrated in the 'other services' sector followed by an equal share within distribution, manufacturing and hotel and tourism, which employ about 17% each. The 'others' and 'charity organisations (voluntary) sector also employ a remarkable percentage of male respondents. In general, men and women are more or less evenly represented across all sectors except transport, which does not include women. This reasonably even distribution helps to form unbiased conclusions.

7.1.2. Characteristic Features of the Jobs

i.) *Full time and Part time Jobs*

Lind and Moller observe that the type and content of work in Western Europe have changed significantly with the increasing importance of private and public service industries as growing employment areas (Lind & Moller, 1999). In the case of Britain Rosemary Crompton, who examines the broad outline of recent British employment trends, argues that these trends have been accompanied by increasing social exclusion and polarisation – the widening of the gap between the poorest and the better-off members of society (Crompton, 1999). Crompton holds that developments have been accompanied by the growth of 'non-standard' – that is, not full time and/or permanent - employment.

In our survey, 68% of respondents are in full time employment, working the standard 35 hours per week. This is almost exactly the same proportion as that of Bloch's DWP (2002) study. Unlike Bloch's DWP study, however, my study breaks down part-time employment into different sub-categories depending on the length of hours. No respondent has mentioned that they work longer than 35 hrs. Of the rest, who are working part-time,[41] about 10% work 25-32 hours per week and a similar figure of sample the population work 17-24 hours per week. Therefore about 78% work more than 25 hours and about 88% work above 17 hours. per week. A smaller number, just above 7% work between 10 and 16 hours, while just under 5% work under 10 hours. Nearly 90% of the employed respondents have only one job while the rest, just above 10%, have additional jobs.

[41] Including part-time workers with a reasonable representation is believed to be consistent with the literature's indication that recent decades have witnessed an increase in part-time and other non-full time type jobs at the expense of full-time, regular employment (e.g., Deakin and Wilkinson, 1989; see also TUC, 1999). According to Harald Bielenski, the number of part-time workers in the United Kingdom rose from 3.4 million in the beginning of the 1970s to 5.6 million in the beginning of the 1990's (Bielenski, 1999:18).

About 7% do additional part-time jobs on top of a full time while just above 3% work part-time on top of main jobs of 27-32 hours. Of the 10% of respondents who have two jobs, their main job is considered throughout this work. Generally there is no professional linkage between their two jobs. They are, just as an example, a community development officer working additionally as a superstore supervisor; or a head therapist manager working as a Pizza Express waitress after hours. In general the part-time jobs tend to be those demanding little or no skills such as cleaning, factory packing, salesperson in a small retail shop or customer assistant. If there are some higher professional part-time workers they work at average more than 25 hrs. per week. Those doing the low skilled part-time jobs tend to be obliged to do so by their personal circumstances; e.g., university students unable to work more than a few hours a week. These respondents consider their jobs as transitional until they finish their studies and pursue careers with their qualifications. Those who have skilled jobs such as laboratory technician and IT course manager are obliged either to work less than they would like until they are offered more or to find additional jobs elsewhere. The Labour Force Survey reported in Bloch's DWP study (2002) shows that compared with refugees a much smaller proportion of ethnic minorities work part-time because they could not find a full-time job.

ii.) Length of time in Job

About 12% of respondents have worked for only six months, 10% have worked between 6-months and one year and almost 25% have worked between one year and a year and half. While those in the job for 1 ½ - 2 years are about 10% of the sample group, those who have had their current job for more than two years constitute about 40% of the sample population. Putting together the figures above, about 78% of respondents have been in their current jobs for more than a year. Many respondents have also been in their current employment for more than four years with a mixture of jobs at differing professional levels. Furthermore over three quarters of employees have been in their current jobs for over a year, many of the respondents have also worked elsewhere in the UK gaining their current jobs, not counting their work experience before they came to the

UK. It is assumed that the respondents in the sample are in their jobs for a reasonably long time and are believed to be generally well aware of the issues raised in this research in relation to their jobs.

iii.) Permanent and Temporary Jobs

Just above 80% of employees are in permanent jobs while the rest are employed on a contractual basis, including one sessional interpreter. Of those with fixed-term contracts jobs just above a quarter say their contracts are renewed every or within six months with a similar figure for those whose contracts renewed every year. The rest reported that their contract is either renewed every one and a half years or that they were not certain renewal depended on the need for an employee. This is longer in terms of length of contract compared with Bloch's DWP study sample data, where many of the temporary jobs were quite short in duration (many under three months or between 3-6 months). Although these jobs are mainly lower skilled, there are also those with professional jobs on a contract. Women tend to be slightly more represented although there is no specific reasoning for that. As these respondents' contracts are renewed at regular intervals many respondents have been in their jobs for some years. This, added to the fact that the great majority of four-fifth are in permanent jobs, is believed to put the sample in a strong position for analysis. The proportion of permanent and temporary work is more or less similar to Alice Bloch's DWP study (2002), which shows that one-quarter of refugees working at the time of the survey were employed in temporary posts. Unlike my study, Bloch's work does not see the gender aspect of the proportion between permanent and temporary jobs. However, on the reasons why many took temporary jobs, Bloch's study finds out that the majority of those who had taken a temporary job, took that type of employment because they could not find a permanent job.

Comparisons with the ethnic minority sample in the LFS show that their work profile differs from that of refugees (Bloch, 2002). On average, eleven per cent of ethnic minority people were employed in temporary work and less than one third (31 per cent)

took a temporary job because they could not find a permanent job. Of those in temporary work, most were in temporary work because they had a contract – 43 per cent – followed by work for an agency (26 per cent), casual (17 per cent) and seasonal (three per cent). Thus, refugees were much more likely to be working in a temporary job because they could not find a permanent job than ethnic minorities generally. Moreover, they were more likely to have a casual job than a contract (ibid).

iv.) Working Hours

Nearly 50% of the employed respondents work between 9:00a.m. and 5:00p.m. This has similarities with Bloch's DWP study (2002) sample data, although my study looks closely at working patterns (fixed working hours or not) as well as how respondents feel about them. In my study, those who are working between 9:00a.m. and 5:00p.m. are almost all professional, working in offices. Others working during such times tend to be those working part-time. The second largest group are categorised under 'other' which includes those working in different shifts, starting early in the morning and finishing before 5:00p.m., working weekends or at night, as well as those who are able to choose their working hours; e.g., household care (childminding at home). The next highest group, about 17% of respondents, said that their working hours are not fixed. These respondents include those who work flexi-time. It also includes sessional work, the working time of which is not quite fixed *per se* as it depends on the demands of the job. The last two groups also include professional office workers although they are dominated by professionally lower level jobs. An equal proportion of about 2.5% work night-time or between 8:00a.m. and 8:00p.m.

Just above 70% of respondents say that they are required by their employers to work weekends and/or evenings. Many professional office workers are included in this. This may not necessarily mean that they have to be at work during these times on a regular basis but is allowed for in their employment contracts, and respondents could therefore be liable for disciplinary action if they refused. It is noted that respondents may or may not

be recompensed for the time they have to spend at work on weekends and/or evenings. Thus the majority, nearly 35%, said they only receive their normal pay. These include those who already agreed to work weekends on a regular basis, as their jobs are done on those days regularly or occasionally. A fifth of the sample respondents say that they are not paid extra but are entitled to take 'time off in lieu (TOIL)'. This group is dominated by professional workers. About 17% said they get extra pay. These are those may be asked them to work extra hours on weekends and evenings in busy times and are paid overtime for this.

Then, it was attempted to see how happy respondents are with their working hours. This is shown in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1 - Feeling about working hours

Working hours of respondents	Feeling about working hours (percentage)	
	I am happy	Not happy but I have no alternative
9:00a.m. – 5:00p.m.	41.5	7.3
8:00a.m. – 8:00p.m.		2.4
10:30p.m. – 7:30a.m.		2.4
Others	12.2	17
Not fixed	17.1	
Total	**70.8**	**29.1**

As the table shows just above 70% are happy with their working hours. Of these well above half work between 9:00a.m. and 5:00p.m. followed by those whose working hours

are flexible or are in the 'other' category. The rest (nearly 30%) said that they are not happy with their working hours but do not have any alternatives.

Female employees were asked whether they faced gender-specific problems to working evenings and weekends. About 50% said that they were concerned about their security (especially working in the evening) while a very small number say being away from their children in these hours is a problem.

v.) Shift Work

Roger Zegers de Beijl (1990) writes that one of the common characteristics of the industries and services in which migrants are concentrated is shift work. Our findings indicate that this is not the case. The reasons can be various including the possibility that refugees could not find such opportunities. Accordingly, eighty-five per cent of employees do not work shifts. While the rest work in shifts, shift patterns are varied, sometimes every two days (representing 5%). Weekly shift changes are the norm for under 5% of the sample group. The same percentage occurs for those whose shifts change every four days. Shifts can change hours within the day or can change from day to night shift. The majority of jobs involving shift work are those which demand lower skills than the professional jobs. There are also some who work in one shift without a regular change either because they choose to or can not change to another; e.g., fork-lifting or warehouse distributor.

7.2. Employment Rights and Job Security

Bloch's DWP study (2002) assesses employment rights in relation to paid holidays and finds out that nearly less than half of refugees her project interviewed were entitled to paid holidays (holiday pay), Bloch shows that is much fewer than the 92 per cent of people from ethnic minority groups who were entitled to holiday pay. It is difficult to make comparisons between Bloch's and my study because in relation to employment

rights, I investigated other issues apart from paid holidays, like sick leave, maternity/paternity leave, medical insurance for injury at work and fringe benefits like bonuses at Christmas. The findings show that for 12% the only right they are entitled to is annual leave with pay. Just under 5% say they are entitled only to medical insurance in case of injury at work, if sent to employer by employment agency while a sessional worker is not entitled to these rights. The great majority, about 80%, say they enjoy the basic employment rights such as annual leave, sick leave, maternity/paternity leave and in some cases occasional bonuses; e.g., at Christmas. Burkitt stresses that there are many people who do not challenge their employer despite unfair or illegal treatment because they do not realise they can, or are afraid to (Burkitt, 2001:5). Given the high unemployment probability they may risk or lack of knowledge of their rights, refugees may prefer not to challenge their employers even if their rights are breached by employers.

According to Felstead and Green (1998) there are two different elements of (job) insecurity: the chances of losing the current job, and the anticipated difficulty in obtaining another (see also Brown and McIntosh, 1998; Locke, 1976; Steel and Ovalle, 1984). In the literature it is also shown that whilst the situation of migrants in the labour market is characterised by high unemployment, when they are employed they tend to be doing poorly paid and insecure jobs that the national population prefers not to do (e.g., Beijl, 2000). The Alberta University study on refugees of various countries in Canada shows how refugees are much more likely than the Canadian workforce as a whole to be employed in less secured jobs (Krahn, et al ,2000). This differs from the findings of our study which reveals that once refugees enter the job market, there is a good likelihood of them obtaining secure posts. Our findings also do not necessarily reflect the observations of Gregory, et al (2000) who note that alongside the well-paid new jobs that are being generated, the fastest growth has been jobs often offering little in the way of security and continuity.

In this section we will look at the first measure defined by Felstead; i.e., the chances of losing the current job. Accordingly, more than two-thirds of respondents have said that

their jobs are secure in the sense that their jobs are tied up with employment contracts. Although "there is no job for life", as a respondent mentioned, these respondents are fairly secure in their jobs and cannot be sacked unfairly owing to the legally bound employment contract. Just fewer than 20% say their jobs are not secure as they do not have formal employment contracts. These respondents either are working on renewable contractual agreements or are sent by employment agencies, or are on probation period awaiting confirmation of their appointment. The group mainly includes those who are not doing professional skilled jobs although there are such workers whose jobs are contract bound. The rest about 12% say the probability that their jobs are secure is about 50% (half-half) as it depends on the renewal of contracts by their company from another company or authority which sub-contracts the jobs. If their company's contract is renewed, then they have a chance of keeping their job. Otherwise, their jobs will also go with the company; for example a City Cruise company may take a contract from city administration authorities. This group also includes those whose job depends on availability once they finish some task; e.g., translation and construction site work. In sum, within the specific definitions of Felstead and Green (1998) and others referred to above, employed refugees can be doing jobs which are secured. This can probably be consistent with the observation of a recent study by Middlesex University on employment-related issues of immigrants across Europe (including the UK). The study indicates that some of the immigrants have managed to penetrate state employment and become public civil workers of various kinds (Smith & Wistrich, 1998:14). Such jobs that many refugees in our survey work for provide a relative security.

7.3. Harassment and discrimination at Work

About one-eighth of respondents say they have faced racial harassment in the work place. Almost half are women and the jobs vary from the semi-skilled sales assistant job to professional ones like accountancy, college lecturer and housing officer post. Their work places are not just in London, but include others like Oxfordshire, Greater Manchester and Wales. Racial abuse is perpetrated not just by employers but also clients. This

depends on the nature of the job, especially whether it involves worker-customer relationships. In relation to complaints against bosses, it is said that racism can take different forms. These include issues linked to unproportional staff composition. A college lecturer says in the part of London he teaches the college students are about 95% from black and Asian ethnic minorities while the teaching staff is composed of "almost 100% whites". Discriminatory treatment compared to other white staff members, for instance, in awarding sick leave, is another example of racial harassment. For instance, the same respondent says:

> ...When my line manager and I were evaluated I got 2 and she got 5, out of 5 (5 being the worst rating). The students also liked me. Once I was contemplating to leave the job and the students were crying for me to stay at least until they finish their A – levels. But she had a racist attitude towards me. She always picks on my mistakes and never appreciated the positive sides. When the other (white) staff members are late for work by half an hour she wouldn't say a word but if I am accidentally late by 5 minutes she would give me a hard time. If we are in the same room she hated to speak to me. She would either leave me a note or e-mail me rather....(T161)

Discriminatory treatment has also been mentioned in (semi-skilled) jobs. Typically a sales assistant working for a supermarket in Oxfordshire says:

> The lady customer service manager is very racist. She would tell Asian staff members not to wear their Turbans when they are at work. Most black and Asian people leave the job. I tolerated it. If she was the one who interviewed me at the recruitment stage I would not have got the job. (T148)

Racism has also been noted in relation to promotion. " Inequality is observable...You need to work more than *them* – should be a step ahead of them", says a woman accountant living and working in Wales. Whilst the above 'racial harassment' examples are linked to colour discrimination, it is also observed that harassment in the work place can affect refugees. The respondent from Oxfordshire quoted above also says that "There is also discrimination as a refugee. I have seen the manager disregard an application form outright when she saw from the Equal Opportunities form the applicant was black African (refugee). Although she is the worst, there are other staff members who hold similar views".

Whilst the above issues of racial harassment are perpetrated by employers, client-perpetrated racism has also been reported, regardless of the type of job. A housing officer in Greater Manchester, for instance, says, "some people simply resent to see someone like me there".

It is observed from the interviews that respondents try to partly understand, if not justify, the causes of such discriminatory practices. They say it is a reflection of the existing stereotyping or that language command and cultural differences could contribute to these perceptions. There is a case where a respondent chose not to talk about details of the racial discrimination and harassment he went through at work, (because of his religious principles of tolerance).

Harassment can also take forms not necessarily linked to colour or being a refugee. It is linked simply to being a foreigner, "something that could happen to a (white) Frenchman", says one in this category. About 5% of respondents have complained of such problems. A senior software engineer in Scotland, for instance, says: "there is sarcasm, not upfront, in office politics related to promotion. It happens in a calculated way. In social conversations they keep quiet when I intervene". Disagreements with colleagues at work are also noted to cause harassment of a unique nature, exploiting the vulnerability of individuals as refugees/asylum seekers.

Other forms of discrimination reported by a small proportion of respondents are linked to multidimensional forms of discrimination. Sexual harassment, which is also documented as a big issue in the literature (e.g. Segrave, 1994; Reinhart, 1999), is one. In the case of this study these include sexist comments ('unpleasant jokes') and cruel country of origin related remarks, for instance, echoing media reports of famine. This seems to be consistent with Hepple's argument that in Britain 'national origin' and not 'nationality' is a ground for unlawful discrimination (Hepple, 1968: 31). Ageism is also reported to be a problem. For instance a project worker says: "I am the youngest and despite my qualifications and experience, they think I don't know much until I proved myself

repeatedly. Even after proving, it is an issue. (Additionally) they think I am from this country and hear them making critical comments against refugees/immigrants".

Summing up, harassment linked to race, gender and age at work are common place for about one-eighth of respondent refugees and asylum seekers living and working in many parts of the UK. This proportion may or may not reflect the actual figure for the broader refugee community. What is more important, however, is that harassment at work is an issue for many refugees. Men and women doing professional and low-skilled jobs have been victimised almost equally, although there seems to exist a tendency for the more skilled to be worst affected by it. In addition, refugees can be victims of harassment by bosses, colleagues and customers.

7.4. Internal Promotion

In this section an attempt is made to look at the main features and experiences the respondents go through in internal promotions. Rather than attempting to assess internal promotion in comparison with the native workforce, which is quite diversified, this work attempts to look at what likely common features are observed in the area of refugees' internal promotions. Moreover, it is attempted to see unique issues that can make refugees vulnerable to be discriminated against in internal promotions. Around 40% of respondents have been promoted at work, women accounting for nearly a quarter of those. Of those who got promoted, about 35% were promoted 6 months after taking up the job; about 18% just after one year, whereas about 12% and 6% were promoted just after 18-months and two years respectively. The remaining 12% were promoted either too soon (2-3 months) or a bit too late (3-5 years) compared to the above. Almost all these respondents have been promoted only once. In relation to employment sectors, 23.5% are in the distribution sector. Hotel and tourism, charity organisations and 'other services' (which include the public services) account for 18% each, while manufacturing and those in 'other' sectors together account for the balance.

In terms of types of jobs, the highest percentage, about 35%, are doing professional jobs like accountancy, IT lecturer, medical and secretarial professions. The types of promotions range from account assistant (junior accountant) to full-fledged accountant or to a level of making decisions; from course lecturer to course manager; from one grade of medical and secretarial profession to the next higher or better position. Two-third of those in this category are men compared to one-third for women. In terms of job types, the semi-professional job shares an equal level of benefit in internal promotion. Such jobs include painting, hotel reservation staff, convenient food store manager, manufacturing production line supervisor, head therapist and superstore supervisor. The types of promotions range from manager of small convenient shop branch to a higher one; from line worker in a manufacturing firm to a line supervisor; from beauty therapist to head beauty therapist. Others rate their promotion in terms of better working conditions and access to company's resources. Here again women represent only one-third of the total beneficiaries in this group. The third group is that of the dominantly blue collar and least skilled jobs. This group has benefited from internal promotion slightly less than the professional and semi-professional ones seen above, accounting for about 30% of total internal promotion beneficiaries. These jobs include packing, night hotel receptionist, warehouse distributor, fork lifting and window cleaner. The types of promotions range from loader to checker (packing); from outdoor to indoor fork lifting; from cleaning team member to additional responsibility of supervising, and a transition from temporary to permanent staff has also been mentioned in a rare case as promotion.

An attempt was made to find out why 60% of respondents had never been promoted. About 10% of those believe that the main reason is that they are relatively new at their jobs, less than a year for most of them. The types of jobs include both professional ones like project worker, IT-technician and administrative officer as well as non-professional ones like salesperson. Men and women are represented equally in this category. Only about 7% ascribe their lack of promotion to racism by employers. This shows that many refugees can be reasonable about their judgement on racism and are cautious about making racist claims unless they have solid evidence. Similar findings have been noted in the study by the University of Alberta in Canada which shows that refugees do not

necessarily accuse employers of racism when they are overlooked by employers. They are more likely to mention other factors like negative comments, lack of respect, and feelings of ostracism they had experienced in the Canadian workplace (Krahn, et al, 2000). Indeed many in this study believe that the problem with recognition of qualification is more relevant than racism. These employees have been in their current jobs between 1 ½ and 3 ½ years. Two-thirds of them are women. Respondents in this category say they have witnessed racist practices in awarding promotions. A woman degree graduate customer services assistant working for a super market in Oxfordshire says, for instance:

> I applied for cash office accounting job and FMC (File Managing Control) about 7-8 months ago. I enclosed evidence of my qualifications and work experiences (but) I am still waiting, the vacancy being still there. There were white workers who joined the shop well after me in the same field with no experience elsewhere but who have got promotion. The only explanation I was given was my application is still under consideration. (T148)

Another male respondent with a Masters degree and working as a print designer in Leicestershire says:

> I applied for a senior technician post. I was told I wasn't successful. I asked for feedback from my line manager and the explanation was not satisfactory to me. He told me, for example, that I did not have enough experience but there were others who passed with less experience than me. I also had an excellent reference from previous line managers. (T166)

Those who do not link the absence of promotion to either racism or recent employment in the company constitute the great majority, with men accounting for two-thirds in this category. These respondents give various reasons which include, in addition to length of employment, failure to attend in-house training; stratified job structure (not many opportunities for promotion), e.g. council benefit assessment officer, housing officer, senior engineer, lecturer, hotel receptionist, interpretation/translation, laboratory technician domestic household care; limited opportunities for part-time workers; nepotism and favouritism as opposed to racism. There are also those who said they are hoping they would be promoted soon or promotion is under discussion with employers.

As can be seen from the above, this group is composed of a remarkable number of professional job holders and in the main they seem to be more understanding than critical of their employers' attitudes.

One of the reasons why refugees are prime targets for discrimination, apart from racism, could be the lack of bargaining power and powerlessness owing to their positions as refugees/asylum-seekers. A factory production line supervisor, for instance, recalls what he went through as a victim of harassment linked to his immigration status:

> Yes (I am vulnerable to discrimination for promotion). Because my asylum status is not good and my Permission to Work has been taken away from me, I could be taken advantage of. Recently a new organisational structure was put in place with salary scales. Others got (promotions) but I am getting a salary scale which is even below the minimum. (T181)

Vulnerability due to lack of bargaining power can also occur in terms of, for instance, number and organisation. "Out of 17,only two of us are black and we do not have any power to challenge *them* if we are discriminated against", says a painter working for a construction company, for instance. "I am the only black person and I cannot rule out the possibility of being discriminated against", adds another professional employee.

To sum up, the respondents may not be necessarily working in what the Dualists call as the 'primary' sector, as discussed in the literature review, which is a highly skilled, high wage and highly unionised sector where vacancies are filled by promotion "from within"; however, about 40% of the employed respondents have been promoted in their current companies (organisations) mainly after serving between 6 months and 2 years. Almost all have been promoted only once (i.e., to the next higher position of their jobs). Rate of promotion tends to be almost equal between the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. The majority of respondents, about 60%, have never been promoted. The main reasons have been found to be recent employment, racism, nepotism, favouritism and various others. Both our findings and those of Roger Zegers de Beijl's work (1990) show that the chances of job promotion are markedly lower than the nationals; employers are reluctant to promote migrants to supervisory positions in which they would be responsible for

national workers (also cited in Blackburn and Mann, 1981). These 'other' reasons include lack of interest in attending programmes run by companies that will increase the chance of promotion, the nature of the job; limited opportunities for part time. Regarding the future, only 5% do not believe they are likely to be discriminated against because they are confident that the rules of promotions in their companies are reliably transparent and fair. The great majority, 60%, including both those who have been promoted and those who have not believe they are prime targets for discrimination when it comes to promotions, either because of their own experiences of those of other ethnic minority colleagues in the same work place. Racial discrimination (both as blacks and Africans), powerlessness as refugees, white staff domination in the management, lack of bargaining power, exclusion from some posts because of being refugees or foreigners, possibility of preference by employees for low-ranking posts where there is more job security, are the main factors that hamper future promotion. Respondents have also said that as a result of racially motivated discriminatory practices in promotion they have either tried to leave their jobs or would like to.

7.5. Earning

Ninety-eight percent of respondents were willing to answer the question of their gross annual income. Two percent were unable probably because it was difficult to work out their accurate annual income. There is a difference in approach difference between Bloch's and my study in relation to analysis of earning. Bloch's approach was to collect and analyse information on weekly earnings and this was, according to Bloch, an indication that many of the refugees do casual jobs. In my case, data were collected to provide information about their annual incomes, to make them feel comfortable as it is less detailed than weekly income. This is because revealing income is considered a private and sensitive issue for many respondents and can affect response. Probably this could be the reason why the response rate is very high (98 per cent) in my case whereas it is 70 per cent in Bloch's case. The high rate of response was **also** probably due to the fact that respondents were not asked to disclose their exact income level, although some did without being asked. Rather they were asked to indicate the income group where they

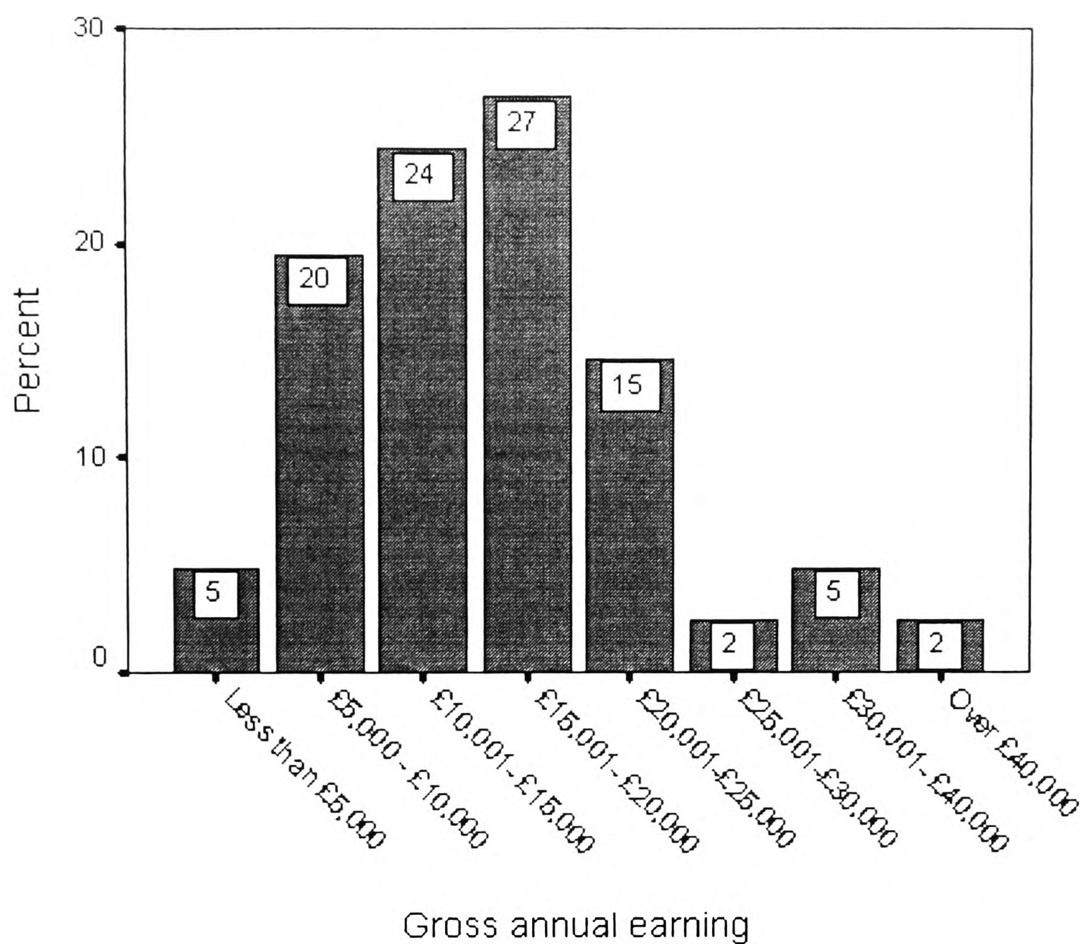
belong which was fixed at a range of £5,000. As such a method doesn't require too exact figure of income level, which many may not be happy enough to genuinely disclose, it is also believed that fixing ranges could be the best way to get as accurate information as possible. Below, earning level is analysed in terms of gender, age, number of hours of work, area of residence and sector/industry.

As Graph 7.1 below indicates, the highest percentage of respondents' gross annual earning, 27%, is between £15,001 and £20,000. This is higher than average earnings of refugees as found in Alice Bloch's DWP study (2002) which was £244 per week, or just above £12,500 per year. It seems to be the same level as the average earnings of ethnic minorities at about the same time, which was £335 per week or about £17,500 (ibid). It is complicated and even misleading to make comparisons with the national average as other variables like part-time work and calculations on hourly basis come into the equation. But one can safely conclude that this is much smaller than the national average income.

A recent study by Lindley (2002) of the University of Nottingham makes a comparison between the earning levels of immigrants from refugee sending countries and non-refugee countries. The study finds that immigrants from refugee sending countries exhibit larger 'earning penalties' than immigrants from non-refugee countries. Ethiopia, although not a major refugee sending country to the UK, belongs to the former category. Therefore, the findings of Lindley's study may lead one to believe that on average Ethiopians are at lower earning levels than economic migrants. A look at the types of jobs this group does shows that they are mainly of a professional nature, almost all having a degree or above, although not necessarily at a level equivalent to their qualification level. This association of income level with type of job could be indicative of a positive relationship between qualification and earning. The findings of Bloch's DWP (2002) study makes a similar conclusion. The second highest group is composed of those who earn annually a gross salary between £10,001 and £15,000. This group is mainly made of those who do semi-professional jobs like painter, bus driver, fork-lifting etc. If there are professional jobs, they are not of high level or the job holders do not have many years experience, despite their high level of qualification. Administrative job is a case in point.

Following this are those earning between £5,001 - £10,000. The next highest group is composed of those with a gross annual earning of between £20,001 and £25,000. The minimum qualification level of these respondents is first degree but the majority in the group are Masters degree holders. These respondents do professional jobs in accountancy, IT, engineering and development projects. The rest are those who earn more than £25,000 who are again holding jobs requiring high professional standards and many years of experience. The group represents 7% of total respondents. Like my study, Bloch's DWP study (2002) looks at the relationship between levels of pay and qualifications. It has arrived at a similar conclusion, namely that levels of pay were affected by qualifications. Earning disparities between those with high qualifications and those without any qualifications are much greater among ethnic minorities than refugees (Bloch, 2002). Moreover, Bloch shows that while the pattern of earning among ethnic minorities is linear, i.e., the higher the qualification, the higher the rate of pay, among refugees there is a much smaller difference in pay between the most highly educated and those without qualifications. The finding of Bloch's DWP study is not necessarily supported by the evidence I gathered, which shows that there is a consistent and noticeable difference between the earning levels of the well educated and the unskilled.

Graph 7.1 Gross annual earning of sample population

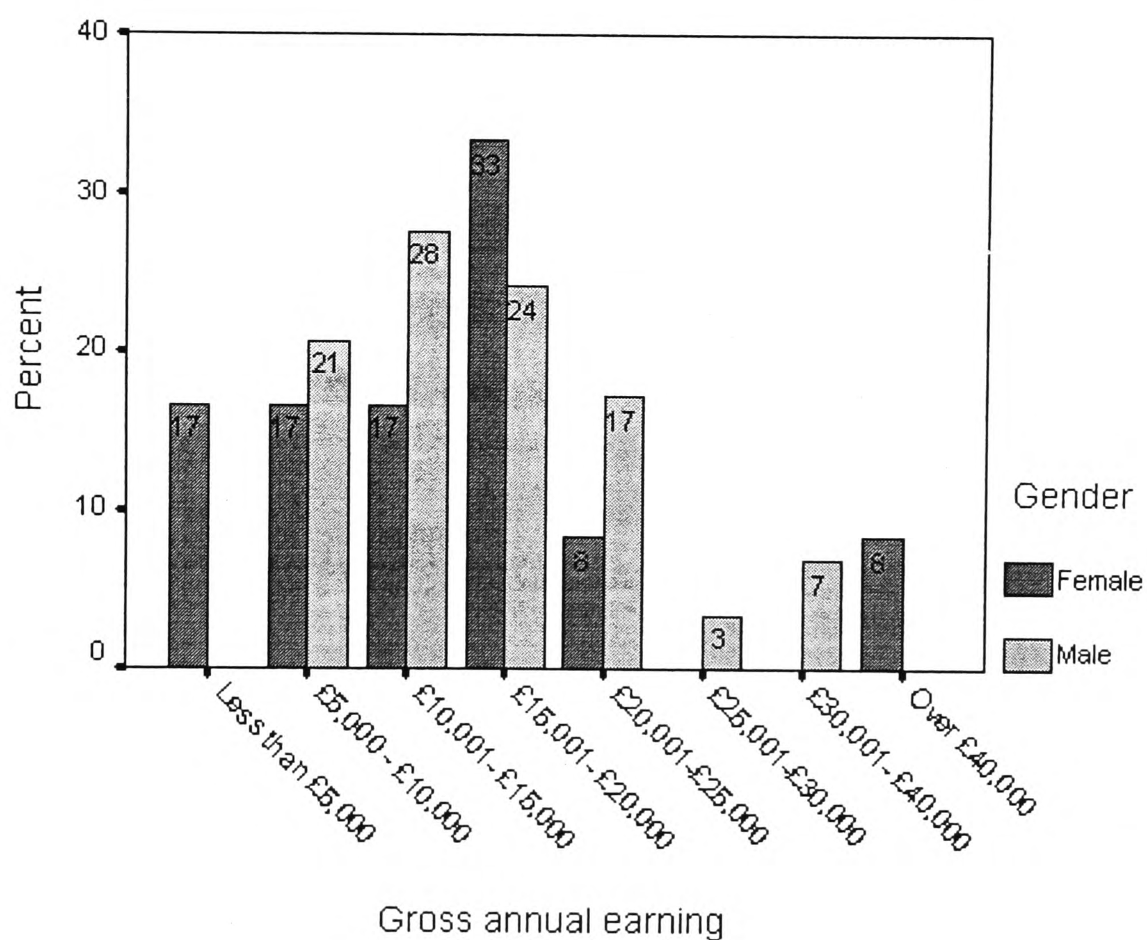


Unlike Bloch's DWP study (2002) my study analyses the relationships between earning level and gender[42]. Graph 7.3 below shows annual earning in relation to gender. The highest percentage of women employees in the sample (33%) earn between £15,001 and £20,000, followed by those who earn £5,001 - £10,000 and £10,001 - £15,000, which represent 17% each. What can be observed from the graph is that women represent all those who earn under £5,000 a year. They have low representation above £20,001 and are not represented at all in the income group beyond £25,000. This is despite the availability of women in the sample with a high level of education and work experience as their male counterparts. Documented research even in the western world indicate that regardless of level of education, coloured women could be at a disadvantage in relation to earning compared with both white and black males (e.g., Gregory, 2003; Bradley, 1999:81). An attempt was made to find out whether women refugees thought they suffered discrimination in relation to pay because of their gender. A woman accountant in Wales says that is an issue. "If I was white male, I would be in a better position". This is

[42] Bloch presents a table with a gender component from the LFS source (p.97). But it is on ethnic minorities, rather than refugees, and the gender aspect is not followed up by explanation.

consistent with the conclusion of Lissenburgh (2000) that gender discrimination lies behind low pay for women as shown in the previous chapter. Apart from this respondent others do not think gender has a role to play in pay differentials. This attitude could be caused by the apparent not-much-better circumstances of male counterparts. It could also be because it is hard to prove if gender is the real cause for the lower income women earn.

Graph 7.3 Gross Annual Earning by Gender



In addition to gender issue, my study also examines the impacts of other important variables on earning level, which are not analysed by Bloch's DWP study. These variables include age, area of residence and number of hours work per week.

In relation to age, the relationship with earning is indicated in Table 7.1 below. The youngest age group, 20-24, is represented in the lowest income groups, that is, in income

groups of less than £5,000 and £5,000 - £10,000. But all are part-time workers. Other age groups are also dispersed in the different income groups. Most refugees and asylum seekers come to the UK at a younger age and what the literature in the UK shows, that is, a tendency for the younger age group to earn a lower income, could be the case for all respondents in the sample. Probably what is more important are other factors such the number of years spent in the country which have a direct effect on acquiring UK qualifications and work experience. In other words a refugee in a younger age group could be in a better income group than that in an older age group if he/she lived in the UK longer and got UK qualifications and work experience.

Table 7.1- Gross Annual Earning by Age and Gender[43]

Gross annual earning		Age						
		(20-24)	(25-29)	(30-34)	(35-39)	(40-44)	(45-49)	(50-59)
Less than £5,000	Female	2.5	2.5					
	Total	2.5	2.5					
£5,000 - £10,000	Female		2.5			2.5		
	Male	2.5	5	2.5	5			
	Total	2.5	7.5	2.5	5	2.5		
£10,001- £15,000	Female		2.5				2.5	
	Male		10	5	2.5		2.5	
	Total		12.5	5	2.5		5	
£15,001- £20,000	Female	2.5	5	2.5				
	Male			2.5	12	2.5		
	Total	2.5	5	5	12	2.5		
£20,001-£25,000	Female				2.5			
	Male		2.5	2.5	5	2.5		
	Total		2.5	2.5	7.5	2.5		
£25,001-£30,000	Male				2.5			
	Total				2.5			
£30,001- £40,000	Male			2.5	2.5			

[43] Number of sample population presented in percentage rounded off to the nearest number or 0.5

	Total			2.5	2.5			
NA	Female							2.5
	Total							2.5

Variation in earning level is also linked to number of hours of work as shown in Table 7.3. below. Almost all part-timers earn less than £10,000. About 5% are recorded to be earning between £10,000 and £15,000, working between 25 and 32 hours. One in this category is a Ph.D. degree graduate from a UK university. Only 2.5% earn above £20,000. This is linked to the number of working hours, between 17 and 24 hours, and the fact that it is a highly professional IT job.

Table 7.3. Gross earning by number of hours work per week[44]

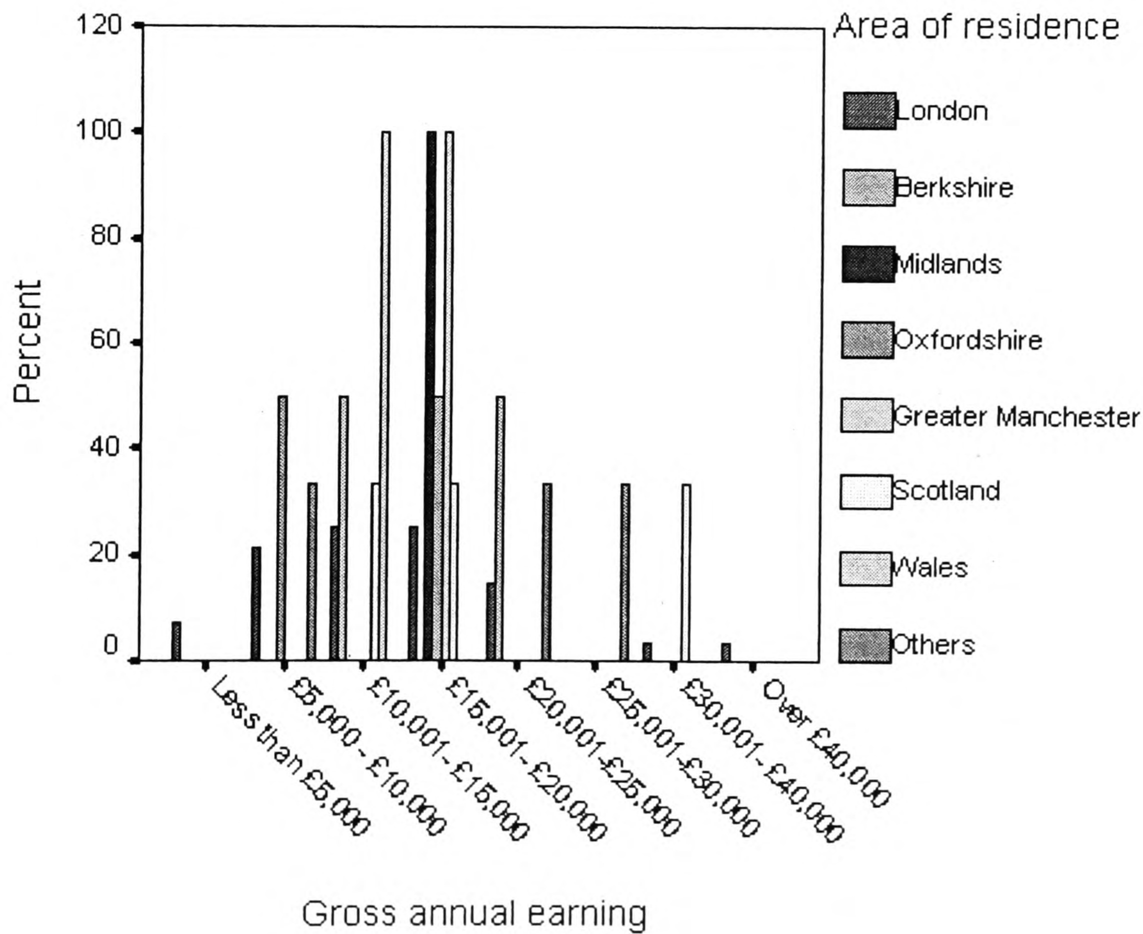
Gross annual earning		Number of hours per week						Total
		Full time - (35 hrs/w)	Under 10 hrs/w	10-16 hrs/w	17-24 hrs/w	25-32 hrs/w	NA	
Less than £5,000	Female		2.5	2.5				5
	Total		2.5	2.5				5
£5,000 - £10,000	Female	2.5			2.5			5
	Male			5	5	5		14.5
	Total	2.5		5	7.5	5		19.5
£10,001- £15,000	Female	5						5
	Male	14.5				5		19.5
	Total	19.5				5		24.5
£15,001- £20,000	Female	10						10
	Male	17						17
	Total	27						27
£20,001-£25,000	Female	2.5						2.5
	Male	10			2.5			12
	Total	12.5			2.5			14.5
£25,001-£30,000	Male	2.5						2.5
	Total	2.5						2.5

[44] Number of sample population presented in percentage rounded off to the nearest number or 0.5

£30,001- £40,000	Male	5						5
	Total	5						5
NA	Female						2.5	2.5
	Total						2.5	2.5

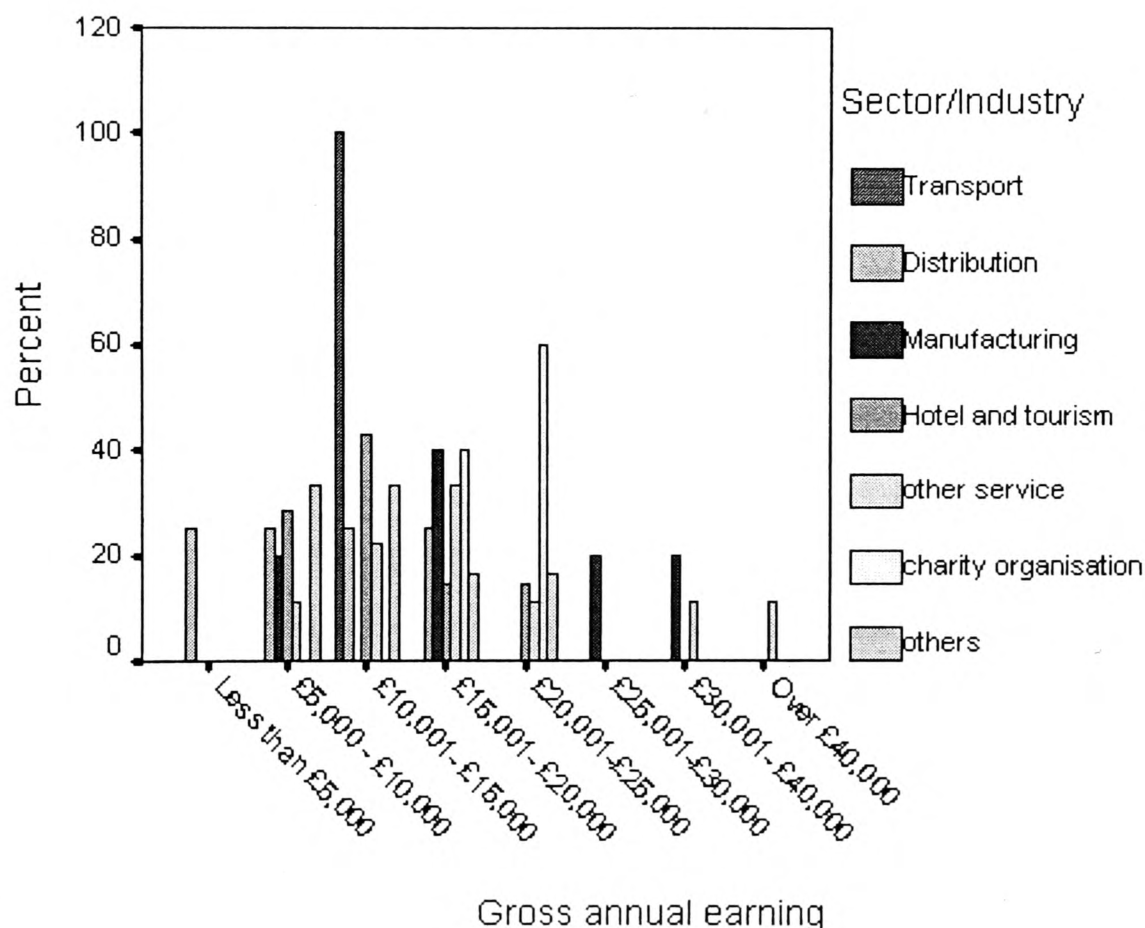
In terms of area of residence and earning , as shown in Graph 7.4 below respondents from London seem to be represented in each earning category though 50% earn between £10,000 and £20,000. The highest earners seem to be respondents in Scotland and the lowest in Oxfordshire. However a closer look at these figures shows that regional difference may not have as an influential role to play as the other factors affecting employability and type of employment.

Graph 7.4 Earning and area of residence



A look at earning and sectoral distribution of jobs (see Graph 7.5 below) indicates that jobs in different sectors are represented in a given earning bracket. In other words, respondents could be working in the same sector but could earn different incomes. For instance, out of those who work in the manufacturing sector 20% earn £5,000-£10,000; 40% earn between £15,001 and £20,000 whereas another 20% each earn £25,001-£30,000 and £30,001-£40,000. What this shows is that what determines level of income is more the type of job within a sector than the type of sector they work in.

Graph 7.5 Earning and Sectoral Distribution of Jobs



Summing up, a very high degree of response was observed in the disclosure of earning levels. The earning levels of respondents have been analysed vis-à-vis many variables such as gender, age, number of hours/per week worked, area of residence as well as sectors. All these factors could have a role to play in relation to earning variations as observed, but the type of job is probably the most important determining factor. This

study does not intend to go into comparing earning levels of the sample population with ethnic minorities and the white population. This is mainly because as Labour Force Surveys show these groups have very diversified sub-groups which are hard to compare with a sample refugee community and get an accurate conclusion. Rather the study intends to show the kinds of jobs many refugees could be doing and the earning levels associated with them. Accordingly, as observed above the indications are that most do the kinds of jobs that do not earn much income. Indeed it has been seen above that 50% of the sample population earn less than the national average per capita income. This is consistent with the findings of earlier research in the field. Basch and Learner treat one of the 'myths' of migration to be "immigrants take away the bread and jobs of workers in host societies" and they counter- argue that immigrant workers often work for lower wages, it is in occupational areas rejected by nationals of the host society and in employment situations which could often not continue without the low-wage structures migrants accept (Basch and Learner, 1985, see also Yannopoulos, 1974:5; Anthias, 1992).

7.6. Workplace Code of Conduct

The great majority of respondents have said that there is a difference between the code of conduct in their country and the one in the UK. One of the main areas of difference is the worker-boss relationship. Almost all the interviewees feel that the worker-boss relationship here is much less vertical (more horizontal), more friendly, more relaxed, more open than what they knew in their country. Bosses are said to be "more accessible here, not through many secretaries" according to an IT expert, for instance. An architect by profession describes this relationship in the country of origin as between 'king and servant'. These respondents include people from a wide range of professions and with work experience acquired both abroad and here, although the types of jobs they did there are different from what they are doing here. They also work in various sectors here. They believe that the communication channel is 'formal' and 'clearly outlined', the system is different here and there is no room for much vertical relationship. Bosses in home country are generally said to be expecting too much respect, which is described by one as

'long-lived culture' while here effectively 'the boss is the job', although it is known that 'a boss is a boss' and the job may demand that at times; i.e., a 'reasonable respect' to the boss. All of these respondents prefer the nature of relationship here than there.

The other area in which respondents claim to have faced differences is with regard to responsibility sharing among work mates. Respondents believe that here a worker is [generally] more seriously accountable for his/her job, though in some work places help in ideas with some job aspects is possible, whereas in their country of origin responsibility and accountability are more shared. In other words, here one is 'entirely' and 'solely' responsible for one's own work whereas in their country of origin colleagues can cover up jobs. "We depend less on team work here", says one respondent for instance. Though this is the case with the majority, there are some kinds of jobs where covering up is possible. Such jobs tend to be less professional, e.g., chef and warehouse distributors. As in the previous ones, respondents in this category too were doing different types of jobs in their home country than here.

Some ways of communication with colleagues, especially of different sex and race are also said to be linked to the law enforcement which may not be the case quite visibly in their country of origin. Some respondents also think that some rules such as those in relation to time-keeping and punishment are said to be tougher, though fairer, here. It is also noted that sense of humour is different from the cultural context of the country of origin. So are some social topics of discussion. "Football and pub life are most common issues", according to a respondent in Bath, South England, which may not be the case in many work places in the country of origin. Apart from these many respondents have mentioned different issues they faced in their work places which are at variance with the code of conduct in their country of origin. These are left out here as they seem to be company-specific, and may not represent the general picture. There are some respondents who said they had experienced differences in the code of conduct in the jobs they did before the ones held at the time of interview and said the harsh situations contributed to their decision to leave them in favour of the current jobs.

A small minority of respondents say they did not encounter differences because they had been working with Europeans (including British citizens) back in their country or in a transit country they came through.

An attempt was made to find out the levels of difficulty experienced by respondents in adapting to the new work environment's codes of conduct. The majority tend to say they have used many ways to fit in. These include trying to apply what they learnt from social life outside work. Although not easy, some have also used their numerous years of experience in their home country. A respondent from Greater Manchester says: "Because I worked back at home for 20 years it is kind of ok for me (to fit in) but generally it is difficult to say it is easy. For instance you have to know when to say 'thank you' and such ones". A superstore supervisor in Scotland also says: " 'Thank you' and 'sorry' are necessary. In my work place, smile is important – many customers ask me to smile". Another respondent who seemed to have had no difficulties says: "I have worked for many years in this country, starting in a workplace where there was a very clear guidance about code of conduct", and adds that:

> Code of conduct is almost the same everywhere but the culture of the country in which they live makes a difference. It is culturally conditioned. But many people do not seem to care. (T170)

"If there is a difficulty in code of conduct", according to another respondent who supports this view, "then it is a case that existed there as well". As highlighted above others have said that they have used outside work experiences to fit in the code of conduct at work. The respondent from Scotland quoted above says:

> Understanding and fitting in the workplace code of conduct is not a problem as such. You learn most of them from social and family life. Even my 3 years old son asks me always if I am happy when I don't smile. We also have our own way of politeness (in country of origin) and know how to be careful about sexist and racist remarks in the work place. (T140)

University life, watching helpful and relevant TV programs and participating in workplace activities are also said to help in fitting into the workplace code of conduct. A

remarkable number of other respondents say that because generally the code of conduct is more relaxed and 'fairer' here, they did not have problems adapting. The great majority of those who said they did not have problems are those doing professional jobs.

Whereas the majority tend to believe that they did not have problems adopting the code of conduct of the workplace, some say they did. The degree of difficulty, however, varied from one person to another. Most in this category said they faced difficulties at the start, not now. Lack of confidence, being unaware of rights at work, not knowing what level of respect to give to the boss, working with difficult and bullying colleagues and doing an entirely different job from what they did back at home were some of the problems they remember facing. It must be said that some of these respondents had never worked in their home country.

There are some, though, who claimed to have faced problems they could not cope with, causing them to leave as a result. These reasons include feeling of being isolated in the work place and being rejected by staff members. An accountant recalls his experience in a previous job:

> ...In the job I had before this one I was working with Asians' firm and it was difficult for me to understand the work place; e.g., need for too much respect for boss. No encouragement for utilisation of my full potential. They used to isolate me. They weren't prepared to accept any change I wanted to introduce to the way I was doing my job. These caused serious problems in our relationships... It made me contemplate to leave the job even if that would mean I would be unemployed. I found it difficult to accept that kind of working environment. (T102)

Segregated staff structure and the effects of it are also said to be quite difficult to cope with. A Masters degree holder who used to work in a large superstore says:

> ...The relationship between workers of different departments was highly shocking to see. Our cafes were differentiated. Even our uniforms were different and uniform of some type feel that they can order (instruct) others in a different uniform. It was an ugly work environment...It was very stressful and difficult to cope with and it was one reason for me to leave it. (T107)

Other issues that made life in the work place difficult include being shouted at or verbally abused, difficulty to understand the culture of colleagues and being instructed by anyone in the work place. Respondents in this category are a mixture of professionals and semi-professionals.

The last issue we looked at was whether these employed respondents thought refugees and asylum seekers who are unemployed must know these codes of conduct in order to find work. More than three-quarters of the respondents say they do not need to know them to be job-ready. Some, however, agree with this in a qualified way. They stress that it should not be a 'must' but it would be an advantage if they know them in advance, 'at least psychologically', or other basic issues like the nature of the employing office, so that they do not face difficulties which could eventually make them decide to leave the jobs, especially if they face harsh bosses. Personal effort, self-confidence, awareness of their rights and preparedness to learn and good attitudes will also be needed to fit in the workplace quickly once getting the job. Most of these attributes can be acquired through social interactions and television, says an IT expert working for an IT company in Scotland. Otherwise it is noted that especially in cases where respondents have worked in their home countries in the past, workplace codes of conduct are transferable skills that can be picked up in a relatively short space of time. Additional factors like employment contracts, office/staff handbook/guidelines, induction days and even information contained in the application forms can all help in collating knowledge about the workplace. Some give as evidence that because they coped, many refugees stayed in the job, even if they faced things they did not expect, and it is also said that refugees tend to be more tolerant towards harsh bosses (than the natives) A respondent says it is not a 'must' but she thinks training centres should help refugees know about work place issues, while another respondent says job centres already help in that. Respondents in these categories work in a variety of workplaces and professional capacity ranging from porter, salesperson, domestic household carer/childminder to accountant, Benefit assessment officer and IT-lecturer. All professional levels and public, private and voluntary sectors of the sample are represented and many of them have worked in the UK for several years.

Less than a quarter of the sample population say that it is a 'must' for a refugee to know the work place code of conduct; a look at the reasons shows it has more to do with the damage it could cause to the refugee or asylum seeker, than the employer. It is said that they have to make an effort to fit in, especially mix socially. Or they could be labeled as ignorant, suffer mistreatment or eventually lose the job. Some respondents in this category have also mentioned that education and outside work discussions with colleagues can help in this. Just two respondents, one a sessional interpreter and the other, an experienced development worker believe that a refugee must be aware of codes of conduct to be job-ready. The latter says, "Yes they need to know at least the basic codes of conduct, such as the right to ask, training opportunities, probation period (rights during and after that) and other employment rights, otherwise this could cost the organisation". The respondent did not mention the role that induction and office guidelines can play.

To sum up this section, the great majority of refugees and asylum seekers in the data have noticed differences in the code of conduct between workplaces in their country of origin and the UK. While more details have been seen, the main areas of differences are in boss-employee relationships, teamwork and, put very broadly, communications between staff members. These are additional challenges refugees and asylum seekers uniquely encounter. Various coping mechanisms have been used to tackle these problems including trying to apply knowledge of culture learnt from outside the work place and drawing on numerous years of work experience in the country of origin, some working with Europeans (including UK citizens). It is stressed that these have relevance and helped a lot, according to the majority. There are, however, those who say they have found adapting to these new challenges difficult, causing them to leave their jobs. Even if these respondents say they could not cope, the work environment, rather than themselves, would seem responsible from the evidence gathered.

The majority of respondents, more than three-quarter, also do not believe that it is a 'must' for refugees and asylum seekers to know the codes of conduct in order to find work. They believe they have already gained the knowledge from various other sources

such as social life and media, which equip them with transferable skills that can be used in the workplace. Office guidelines, staff handbooks and inductions are also believed to play a mitigating role. Refugees are also said to be more tolerant to harsh bosses.

The rest less than 25% believe it is a 'must' for refugees to know the codes of conduct in workplaces to be job-ready. The indications seem to be that even if they believe in its importance, the negative consequence of not knowing them can mainly, if not solely, be borne by refugees - who could face bad treatments themselves - rather than the employers. This group does not also seem to believe that refugees show an effort to cope, using social life and other outside work experiences.

What one can assess on the divergent views on differences in codes of conduct is that on top of the fact that the differences exist between home country and host country, they could also depend on the types of jobs they held in the two countries. Those working in the UK public and voluntary sectors tend to be at ease with the codes of conduct of the new workplace. It should, however, be noted that this is what they just believe; i.e., it could be the case that in the eyes of their native work colleagues they might not have learnt the codes of conduct well enough. Another possible assessment is that the length of time they have been in employment both in their home countries and in the UK could also have a bearing on their perception of differences in workplace codes of conduct. Those in employment in their home countries for long years in general do not seem to have much difficulties to fit in as they are experienced enough in developing coping mechanisms in the short-run. It seems also to be the case that those in the UK for longer years, even without employment, seem to be in a better position to know more about 'acceptable' workplace codes of conduct. This is because workplace code of conduct has many similarities with codes of conduct in the wider context; i.e., outside work place. Those staying in the country for longer have more chances to learn about the natives' cultures, values and ways of thinking through social life, the media and other opportunities created by intermingling.

7.7. Job Satisfaction

Paul Spector defines job satisfaction as "the degree to which people like their jobs" (Spector, 1997:1). Writers argue that job satisfaction is of interest for a range of reasons including that as a measure of people's feelings about their working lives it provides an important indicator of individual well being (e.g., Cully, Woodland, O'Reilley and Dix, 1999:181; see also Clark, 1996). In this study we will try to explore various factors that make workers satisfied or dissatisfied with their jobs. Bloch's DWP study (2002) looks at the issue of satisfaction with current job but does not do more than highlighting refugees' general (overall) feelings about their jobs. My study assesses the overall satisfaction rate but, in addition, also explores the different work-related factors against which job satisfaction is measured. These measures are working condition, match with skills of jobs done, pay and satisfaction measured by other parameters like life as a refugee. These are attempted to be assessed in detail below together with the findings.

i.) Working condition

More than two-thirds of respondents say they are satisfied with their working conditions; they are those respondents in full time professional jobs (working between 9am to 5pm). Men and women are represented in equal proportion in the sample structure. Below an attempt is made to examine the factors that contribute to good working conditions.

The fact that they are not expected to work outside of the 9am to 5pm schedule, except in rare cases; what they are asked to do is part of the job description; the managers are good, approachable and respectful are some of the issues raised. In addition to these, there are other factors that respondents mentioned to be important for satisfying working conditions; they include trust (in relation to money or clients); decision-making and development of new ideas; involvement in management with native workers.

Good workplace atmosphere or working environment is another satisfying factor mentioned by many respondents. This is said to include relaxed work environment facilities and enjoyment and break 'laugh times' with friendly, and 'family-like' colleagues who are understanding and not isolating and being in a professional atmosphere. "I see my work place as a hiding place to escape to when I row with my wife", says one respondent. Respondents in this category work for various organisations not only as professionals but also as unskilled or semi-skilled. Both men and women respondents, part-time and full-time workers, London and outside London respondents are also embraced in this group.

Good rules of the employing organisation and rights of workers are the other issues mentioned in relation to satisfying conditions of work. Included in this is the ability to speak one's mind in teamwork as well as voicing concerns and rules that are 'not too controlling'. A bus driver says, "if I see elderly or disabled people waiting for my bus, I can stop the bus to let them in even if it is not necessarily exactly at the bus stop point". Company rules which allow staff members to buy its products at a cheaper than market price is another good thing mentioned in this connection. Some have expressed satisfaction with working condition in relation to the flexibility of their working hours. This is mainly for university students who work part-time and are allowed to work flexibly. A respondent who does another job also says he is happy with the fact that his two jobs are suitably arranged in terms of time but also that they are complementary. Another says he is happy with the working condition as they helped him to be off on Sundays for his church service.

Though lesser in number, there are those who expressed dissatisfaction in job in relation to working conditions. These factors include unsocial working hours (night or early morning starting jobs); routine jobs; working under the stress of shortage of staff and having to do menial tasks such as photocopying, filing, sending letters, answering phones; remote working places (10 miles from city in one case) without provision of transport facilities; very long and tiring hours; bad management system; discrimination as a black person and as a refugee; lack of challenges. These respondents are on the most

part doing unskilled jobs, such as porter, night hotel reception and retail shop sales assistant.

Other dissatisfying reasons are said to be linked to working environment, including colleagues and clients. These respondents say that there are some colleagues who are not prepared to accept new improved methods of work and some are unfriendly to work with. Harassment and too many complaints by customers is another factor of dissatisfaction mentioned by those whose job involves direct contact with customers. "The job is stressful as it is about dealing with someone's life", says a Benefits Officer, who mentions this as a dissatisfying factor of the job. The types of jobs these respondents are doing are various in terms of types and levels which include IT-expert, sales assistant, chef, public services officer, manufacturing operator, hospital worker, factory packing worker, designer. These respondents work full-time and part-time and include both men and women although there are more men than women.

There are also respondents who say that some of the working rules in their workplaces are inconvenient and contribute to their dissatisfaction with their jobs. Workers at various professional levels feel the same, albeit the reasons. Rigid timetable and expectation to work more than agreed initially is an example. A college lecturer says, for instance, that:

> I am expected to do more than I was supposed to do as agreed initially. For instance, only 10 hours out of the total 35 hours are allocated for marking, lesson plan preparation, upgrading skills. But these things require more than such time...I also don't like the rigidity with the timetable. If I finish teaching at 3:00p.m. I could do more productive work if I come (and work from) home. But we are required to stay (at work place) until 5:00p.m. (T161)

Some jobs' time arrangements are also said to leave no spare time for family such as to look after children. Some team practices are also raised as dissatisfying factors of job.

Vague organisational structure is mentioned as another dissatisfying factor in relation to this, especially the issue of who is placed where. Rules which deprive of trade union protection and other employment rights when in probation time and/or when brought to

the company via employment agencies are also said to be unhelpful in relation to racial discrimination at work. Another rule causing dissatisfaction is said to be improper budgeting for work-related expenses. A construction firm worker for example says that their jobs involve traveling from site to site and says transport expenses are not paid for such journeys. Men and women of various professional level jobs are included in this category.

ii.) *Match with Qualification and Career Prospect*

As a study of refugees from former Yugoslavia, Middle East, central America, Africa, and South East Asia conducted by the University of Alberta argues, re-establishing one's life in the host country does not necessarily include returning to one's former occupation (Krahn, et al, 2000). The study shows that newcomers to Canada, both immigrants and refugees, often experience downward occupational mobility. Our findings on Ethiopian refugees in the UK also confirms that many undergo downward mobility. In addition, the question of whether the jobs they do match their qualifications is an important element in job satisfaction. Many respondents say one of the most satisfactory aspects of their jobs is being able to do jobs that match their qualifications. Almost all respondents in this category are doing professional jobs although different types and levels for similar or varying qualifications. Exception could be a household carer/childminder who is happy with her job as she is not educated at all. Though respondents in this category are in professional jobs, some of them are working in professions not necessarily linked to the discipline in which they qualified but after taking (short-term) courses, switched to another profession. " I am not unhappy to do so as this is the nature of the job market", says a mathematician turned accountant, for instance.

The majority of respondents, however, say they are dissatisfied with the types of jobs they are doing in relation to their qualifications. This group is dominated by those who are educated to degree level or above but do unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. But there are also those who are not educated to this level but still feel that they are over-qualified for the jobs they are doing. At the same time there are some who are doing white-collar jobs

but still think that what they do is either below their qualification level or 'irrelevant' to the type of discipline they studied. Some examples include a degree graduate in Economics or Business Management degree graduate working as an interpreter or a Masters degree holder in Development Economics working as a Housing Officer. There could be cases where refugees have convinced themselves that they cannot find jobs related to their profession in the UK. One possible example is a UK Masters degree holder respondent who says it is difficult to find a job with his qualification, Agricultural Economics. There are also those who express their dissatisfaction with their jobs in relation to this factor owing to the fact that their jobs do not yield any good prospect for their professional careers. A UK Masters degree graduate in Communications who works as a reservation staff in a large hotel says there is no prospect of her getting a career of her level and type "at any stage of promotion" in the hotel.

iii.) Pay

The majority say they are satisfied with their jobs in relation to pay. However satisfaction is not the sole result of regular good payment *per se*. Rather it is also strongly linked to the prospect of pay increment as these respondents seem to recognize that given how recent their employment , they feel that they are fine at the moment but also believe (or know) that they have a good prospect of pay rise. Others say they are happy because they can get tips or can work overtime to top up their regular earnings. A respondent living outside London has also mentioned that he is happy given the cheaper living expenses where he lives and an accountant says she is happy with the payment given that she works in the public sector (where she thinks working environment is good). Respondents in this category are dominantly those doing professional jobs, though there are a few who do semi-skilled jobs like forklifting or hotel reservation staff. There are also part-time or sessional workers. The majority are men.

A third of respondents say that they are unhappy with what they are paid. The indication is that these low incomes are caused by the types of jobs they do which are low skilled. It

is also mentioned that being paid less than other colleagues while doing jobs with a high degree of responsibility is another cause of discontent. In the main, it is those who are educated to degree or above level who make up this category, although there are few others who are not educated to that level but express dissatisfaction. A remarkable proportion are also working part-time and women are well represented.

iv.) Satisfaction gained from being in employment as a refugee

Many respondents feel that they are satisfied with their jobs for the simple reason that they are employed within the given constraints of life as a refugee. It seems interesting to note that it is not just those who do well-paid professional jobs but also those who are doing low-skilled jobs like waiter and cleaning jobs who stress this. It is said that "from day one" it is accepted that life would not be easy given their home country backgrounds and being a refugee, especially as an asylum seeker with restricted or no right to gain the needed skills or even be allowed to work. Being in a good job as a black person is also said to be a source of satisfaction. A senior software engineer in Scotland, for instance, says: "To be where I am within a short period makes me satisfied. ...nowadays I am even forgetting the fact that I am black as I am not paranoid and the environment does not allow it".

v.) Satisfaction with other measurements

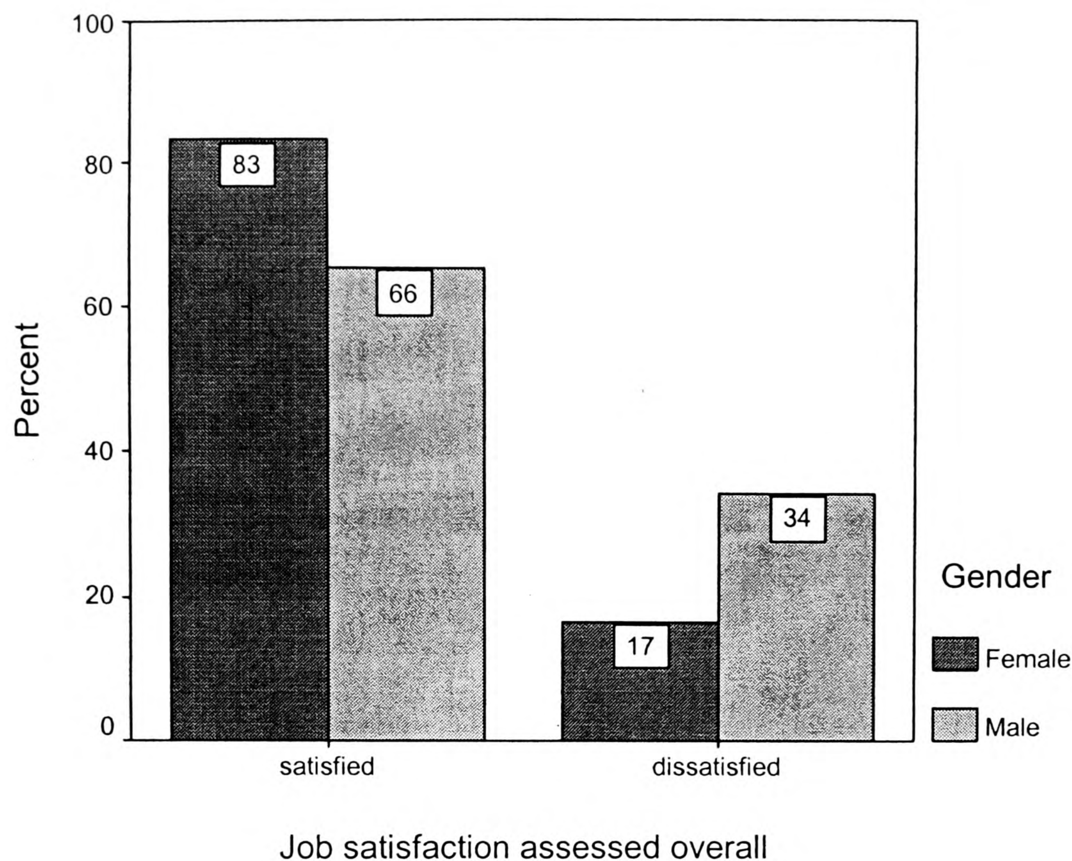
Apart from the above measurements respondents have also mentioned other issues which make them satisfied or dissatisfied with the jobs they are doing. 'Enjoying' the jobs they do is one of these. Different factors contribute to job enjoyment. These include "using the best of my knowledge"; "doing what I like" (e.g., teaching and other skilled and non-skilled jobs); "getting satisfaction in helping others with professional knowledge". On the other hand, not enjoying a job is a major cause of dissatisfaction; e.g., a post-graduate asylum seeker working as small hotel receptionist. Another way job satisfaction is

measured is in terms of the experience a job helps to gain. "The job gave me the chance to know new things like the CD and video market", says a respondent working in such an industry, for instance, when asked about job-satisfying factors. Being able to do a professional job without work experience is also said to be one of the best satisfying factors mentioned. A Masters degree holder doing a professional job in East Anglia can be taken as a case in point. The security a job provides is another measure of job satisfaction. In other extremes there are those who said they are 'not satisfied at all' in the job they are doing by any measurement (about 15% of the sample) while a number of other respondents say there is 'no dissatisfying' factor at all. Those in the latter category are educated employees who do professional jobs or those who with the social position they are in (e.g. as an asylum-seeker) they feel grateful for the jobs they are doing. In the former category we find predominantly those who are skilled and educated but who are doing low paid and semi or unskilled jobs.

vi.) Overall Satisfaction

What was noticed in relation to job satisfaction is that in addition to the basic measurements like pay & working conditions, there are many other additional factors that respondents take into account in measuring job-satisfaction. These have been analyzed above. We also found out that one and the same respondent can have different issues that he/she mentions which can be either satisfying or dissatisfying or both. This has been presented in the form of a balance sheet – 'overall satisfaction'. The outcome is shown in Graph 7.6. below.

Graph 7.6. - Job satisfaction measured overall



As the graph shows, 83% of women respondents are generally satisfied with their jobs while 17% are not. The figure for men is 66% and 34% respectively. The great majority of those who are satisfied are those doing professional jobs, although not necessarily in their qualification areas. There are also those who say they are satisfied for doing jobs so long as it matches their qualification levels, even when it is semi-skilled and skilled; and those in employment as an asylum-seeker with very restricted employment rights; e.g. cleaner, waiter, domestic household carer/childminder. With regard to those who said they are dissatisfied, they are mainly those who are well educated, degree or above, but doing jobs which are semi or unskilled ones. Interestingly, there are those doing professional jobs such as college lecturing or laboratory technician but who expressed overall dissatisfaction with their jobs, either because of the way the management treats them or because of low pay or because the job is below their qualification level (e.g., a Ph.D. holder working as a high-school laboratory technician). This group is also dominated by part-time workers. Women and men are apparently represented in both with the varying associated characteristics.

To sum up this section, measuring job satisfaction is a task far from easy as it differs from one individual to another or from one job type to another or both. The various ways in which job satisfaction was measured by employees have been divided in five categories followed by a 'balance sheet' overall satisfaction. These categories are working condition, match with qualification/career prospect, pay, being in employment as a refugee and 'other' measurements.

In relation to the first; i.e., working condition, working hours, working environment, company employment-related, company rules and management are some of the main issues raised by which satisfaction/dissatisfaction is measured. By these measurements the majority have expressed satisfaction although those who are dissatisfied are also significant in number.

The issue of qualifications and matching job is another measurement over which the majority are dissatisfied. This feeling is expressed not just by those educated respondents who are doing blue-collar jobs but also by some who are doing professional jobs as they believe the job level is below their qualifications.

In terms of pay most are satisfied but it is not just the existing regular pay level that is taken into account. Rather, employees have also taken into account prospect of pay rise and possibility of working overtime and in some case to top up regular pay. There are, though, significant number of respondents who are unhappy with their pay level especially compared to the responsibility the jobs carry and pay of native colleagues doing similar jobs.

There are also many respondents who have expressed satisfaction in terms of the fact that they are employed given their background as refugees as well as blacks. Other measurements used include issues like enjoying the jobs they do and getting jobs without work experience.

Overall, 83% of women and 66% of men respondents have expressed satisfaction with their jobs, whereas 17% of women and 34% of men are unsatisfied. Bloch's DWP study does not examine the gender aspect but its findings that the majority are job satisfied is consistent with the evidence I gathered. The majority of those who are job dissatisfied are the well educated doing semi or unskilled jobs, even at times skilled jobs. Our findings are also consistent with the findings of the Home Office and Salford University study (Carey-Wood, et al, 1995) which reports that three quarters (73%) of those employed in their survey said they were satisfied with their present jobs, although, unlike our study does not go in details on measurements of job satisfaction.

7.8. Equal Opportunities

i. Awareness of the Rules and Challenging Organisations

The ILO's Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) defines discrimination as "...any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation" Furthermore discrimination on the grounds of nationality is already laid down in the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949, No.97 (Quoted in Bovenkerk, 2000). The Equal Opportunity policy in the UK endeavours to deal with discrimination in the UK. As aliens to the system, level of awareness of the existence of the equal opportunities policy and its real meaning is an issue. In this work, nearly three-quarters of respondents are aware of what rights equal opportunities award employees. They have mentioned in the main that these rules make it illegal to discriminate against anyone at work in relation to gender, race, colour, culture, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation or any other attributes other than merit. It is mentioned that training and access to resources at work is included in such rights. Not all respondents have mentioned the different variables listed above on the basis of which

discrimination is taken as unlawful. Many who know that discrimination is unlawful simply say 'equal treatment for everyone' and had to be prompted (and reminded) about these variables. The ways the rules have been known to them seem also to be different. These include through learning in university courses, jobsearch (completing many application forms and attending interviews) and at work, once a job is taken up. In a rare case the 'Employment Book' in the employing company has also been mentioned as a source of knowledge of what is right or wrong. Many respondents who have been working for public and voluntary sectors are in the best position to know about the rules. "It is the pillar of the council jobs", says a council employee in London and "for someone working in community development it is easy to know", says another in Scotland, just to take two examples. There is also a tendency for the well educated (degree or above) to be dominant in this category.

The remaining 25% are unaware of the rules. This group is basically dominated by respondents who do low-level jobs such as sales assistant, cleaner, domestic household carer/childminder, waitress, though there are also those doing professional jobs, like accountancy and secretary. Length of stay in the country as well as in the job also seem to be playing important roles as some in this category have been in the country or in employment for just a few years or months and time could be important to develop experience and 'interest' about equal opportunities. In terms of gender and area of work, there seems to be a fair representation in and outside of London in both categories.

With regard to the organisations which exist to challenge trespassing employers, two-third of those who are aware of what the rules say (or a quarter of the whole sample) know what the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) or Equal Opportunities Commission do. Almost all those respondents are working in the public or voluntary sector or have been working or were engaged in intensive job search in the past. They also tend to be in employment for many years. There is only one respondent who does a low-skilled job as a night shift hotel receptionist but is a Masters degree holder. Twenty-per cent of those in this group are women. About 23% of those who are aware of the rules (or 17% of the whole sample) are aware of CRE or Equal Opportunities

Commission but not as clearly as the former group. These respondents first mentioned trade unions (including teacher's unions), Citizen Advice Bureaus (CAB's), (visiting websites) on the internet. It is also said that they are known through means like hearsay. With the exception of one respondent who has a first degree, all respondents in this category have Masters and Ph.D. degrees, and are almost all doing professional jobs. Their employment history does not stretch back to many years and they work dominantly in the private sector. About 20% of those who are aware of the rules (and 15% of the total sample) have never been aware of CRE or the Equal Opportunities Commission. Despite prompting questions (even after being asked about CRE) they mention only management and internal disciplinary body in the office, trade (labour) unions, industrial tribunals, CAB's, solicitors. Almost all respondents in this category dominantly do unskilled jobs (e.g., small hotel receptionist) or semi-skilled (e.g., fork-lifting), some part-time. There are also those who do managerial jobs but at a lower level; e.g., manager of small retail shop. Their education level is mixed and includes high school graduate, diploma, university degree student and Masters degree level. Their employment history is again fairly recent and almost all of them work in the private sector. The final about 23% of those who are aware of what equal opportunities rules say (and about 17% of the whole sample) are totally unaware of CRE and even never mentioned what the others mentioned in the previous group. These respondents say they have never thought about it or will deal with it like any other issue that requires resorting to the law if it happens, that is, talking to solicitors. These respondents include those who do jobs as a transition (mainly as part-time) to a career they are working towards; e.g. university students; or those doing sessional job or those recently employed and living outside London. The group also includes a good deal of well educated (degree or above) employees as well as women and almost all work for the private sector.

ii. Industrial Tribunals and Refugees

A total of more than 60% of respondents do not want to go to industrial tribunals if their rights, as covered by equal opportunities policies, are violated by their employers. Lots

of reasons have been given. There is no clue how it works for 2% of respondents. About 5%, which include respondents with and without proper immigration status (leave to remain) fear financial expenses and it is believed that the government may not cover these individual legal rights expenses. Just above 7% fear for their future career as a main reason although cost and not knowing the procedures are additional reasons. Lack of reference which may come as a consequence and the not-so-good history associated with legal disputes which could damage future employability are the main issues here. "They will screw you up. No one will give you a job", says a senior software engineer in Scotland. What is also mentioned is that going to an industrial tribunal can carry the risk of loosing one's job. A woman project coordinator in a development charity organization recalls what she witnessed in her organisation:

> "I know a case where a lady with 16 years work experience was turned down by my organization as she was involved in such a case with previous employer, although she succeeded there in her legal battle" (T177).

Respondents in this category are well educated (degree or above) and are doing professional jobs. The majority have also lived in the country for nearly a decade and have leave to remain in the country. About 20% fear going to industrial tribunals mainly, if not solely, for reasons that have to do with the fact that they are foreigners and refugees; e.g., for fear of not jeopardizing their asylum cases. "...it could reach the Home Office" says a bus driver, even if he is given Permission to Work. "I know my limits", says another in Northern Scotland. Religion, not having a proper employment contract and reluctance at confrontation are also mentioned as reasons not to settle disputes legally. It is noted that for some respondents other things like financial problem and future career are not matters of concern as they can be sorted out by trade unions. The majority of respondents in this category and those who fear possibility of jeopardy to asylum cases are asylum seekers. Men and women are almost equally represented. In terms of length of stay, they tend to be in the country for an average of above five years. Qualification ranges from 'illiterate' to Masters degree holders and the group is inclined towards the well educated. Types of jobs are also mixed as they include those doing unskilled and professional jobs, with some others in between.

About 30% more respondents mention more than one of the above reasons in equal importance; i.e., jeopardy of asylum case and being a foreigner; career prospect and financial expenses and lack of knowledge of the procedures Here again, dominantly being a refugee, a foreigner and black are well emphasized as a reason to fear, including a respondent married to a white British woman. These respondents who fear for their immigration status are not just asylum seekers but also many with ELR and ILR. Here again the possibility that the issue could reach the Home Office is a worrying factor. A woman asylum seeker says, for instance:

> Yes my asylum case could make me fear to involve myself in legal disputes with employers in case the Home Office finds out. Even not having a valid train ticket makes me fear. (T114)

Another asylum seeker, who was not sure what an industrial tribunal is, also says she fears as the courts could ask her about her life story and inform the Home Office about the dispute. "How do I know where the case could go to?" asks yet another respondent, who has leave to remain.

Lacking confidence in the system which many respondents see as discriminatory towards people of their background is another related big issue: "I do not have the confidence as I am a refugee", says an ILR holder in Cambridgeshire for instance. In addition to being a refugee, lack of confidence is also linked to color. Another respondent in Oxfordshire who complains about racial discrimination at work says for instance, that "even if I take her (the boss) to industrial tribunal I believe they will listen to her (believe her), not me". Prejudice against nationality is another factor. Fear of losing their jobs is another issue which has been emphasized, especially by those who had to work extremely hard (in one case applying for hundreds of jobs) to get their current jobs: "I do not want to be unemployed again say an IT course manager and another college lecturer for instance. Fearing the legal complications (and not well understanding the legal jargons) is another consideration for some not to go to industrial tribunals if mistreated. "I would rather leave the job than seek controversy", says a warehouse worker, to mention one. It is also

mentioned that the way the law works, it is sometimes difficult to prove that mistreatment has occurred. A respondent who mentioned at length how he has been racially discriminated against by a line manager says he has tried but the law asks for "concrete evidence", which is difficult to provide in such cases, as they are done 'systematically'. The issue of reference for a new job can be looked at in two ways. In one case if the job is taken as a 'transitional job'; i.e., until what is thought to be deserved and aspired is found, it may not be so important as the employee is not interested in staying in the job. In another case if the employee thinks he/she is doing the type of job they deserve and aspire to, then reference could be vital. A chef, for instance, says taking an employer to an industrial tribunal is so worrying as reference is crucial for the type of job he does. Finance is another issue as it is feared that as an employed person, legal costs could be expected to be covered by the individual, not by the state. In general respondents in this category have diverse personal characteristics in terms of qualifications, length of stay, types of jobs they are doing and asylum status.

The remaining, under 40%, say nothing stops them from going to industrial tribunals if there is a need for that. They think that they have a fair idea of how it works, some from personal experiences, or they can get legal advice and support; trade union will take up the case; career prospect is not a matter of concern as another job can easily be found with the profession (e.g., IT); personal principles dictate that they should not tolerate anything that strips them of their rights; being granted a legal immigration status; belief that they would not be damaging their future career are the reasons they give. Some respondents say they have got an idea of how it works from first hand personal experience with industrial tribunals. One professional worker, for instance, says

> I have gone through a very complicated and depressing case with my previous employers in which I succeeded. If a problem arises again (with my new employers or in the future) I am prepared to repeat it but after exhausting internal procedures. I don't think I should compromise my basic rights. (T170)

A highly educated woman respondent says:

> I have had the knowledge on how they work as I had to take on an office colleague (Ethiopian) in a previous workplace for verbal abuse and threatening behavior. Before that I did not have any knowledge of what to do even if I knew the system exists; but I did not find it difficult to contact them although I had to show an effort and they were helpful and they were unhappy when I withdrew the claim in concession to intermediaries. No fear of expense either. After my experience I realised it is not even expensive when you are a member. For the future it is worth to be a member. It is an association that is open to any employee. (T117)

In some cases, respondents have no qualms about resorting to industrial tribunals to settle disputes. A married woman with ILR says she never fears anything and adds, "indeed I know I can even get a lot of compensation if mistreated and that is encouraging". Excepting two, all respondents in this category have leave to remain in the UK, with British passport holders included. On average they have lived in the country for more than five years with many of them living for more than a decade. Majority do professional jobs and are highly qualified with degree and above levels. Public and voluntary sector workers and women are well represented. In this section it is attempted to look at the opinions of the respondents in relation to 'standing up' for their rights using the legal process. The fears and concerns they have could be shared by ethnic minorities in general. However, as a matter of interest of this work we have seen what additional unique factors make them reluctant not to go for industrial tribunals in cases where they may be convinced to be maltreated by employers.

iii. Effectiveness of Equal Opportunities Rules to Refugees

It is unlawful for an employer to discriminate on *racial grounds* by arranging the recruitment policy in such a way that particular *ethnic groups* are likely to be excluded (s.4(1) (a))[45]

(taken from Gordon, Wright and Hewitt, 1982:18)

[45] Emphases my own to indicate that refugees are grossly categorised under ethnic groups only, and not as special groups with special disadvantages and needs.

The ECRE task force project Good Practice Guide on employment which has been carrying out a European project aimed at improving the integration of refugees in the 15 Member States of the European Union believes that methods of achieving equality of opportunity and rectifying disadvantage can include changing attitudes, changing behaviour, positive action, culturally-or specifically refugee-sensitive service provision (e.g. in the public sector employment services), ethnic monitoring and within the theme of employment stressing the 'business advantage' of diversity (1999:53). The Guide indicates that in Europe among the refugees with which it has been discussed, ethnic monitoring and equal opportunities are contentious issues. There are political differences too, according to the Guide, varying at one extreme from the view that this is all about political correctness to the other extreme that it is a cosmetic exercise that hides continuing inequalities which will inevitably continue 'because people are not equal (Ibid.; see also Sargeant, Damachi and Long, 1999).

How do the sample population in this research perceive the effectiveness of equal opportunities to refugees' employability? Just about 22% of respondents believe that equal opportunity rules are of effective benefit to refugees. The reasons given include among others that it is a law refugees can benefit from, especially if they know what the policy says and if they stand up for their rights and follow it up. The equal opportunity form is also said to be a reminder for employers to include at least some workers from the refugees' category. According to Bovenkerk (2000) Neoclassical economic reasoning predicts less discrimination in the private sector because employers who discriminate suffer from a comparative disadvantage when they restrict their choices in hiring personnel. The reverse proposition is that there is less discrimination in this sector, since government institutions abide strictly by anti-discrimination legislation. In the survey it is also said from experience that refugees are not discriminated against for public sector jobs, notably council jobs. Individual effort to try to travel outside London to find jobs and trying to intermingle with the host society is also apparently believed to be complemented by the rules. A respondent from Northern Ireland says due to the feeling of being discriminated against by some sections of the society, in Northern Ireland equal opportunities are taken seriously and immigrants also benefit from that. It is added that

refugees should not see their being refugees as a liability as this is undermining and causes unnecessarily loss of rights. Yet another respondent says "It is better than nothing. But it needs to be improved, even if I am not sure how". On the whole, these respondents have leave to remain and have been staying in the country for more than 5 years. In the main they have been in employment for a few years. The types of jobs they do tend to be professional and almost all of them are college and university graduates working in various sectors, including public sectors. Women represent just under half of the respondents.

The rest, nearly 80% of respondents, say equal opportunity policies are either not of effective benefit to refugees or they are unsure about it. Thus just above 60% say they do not believe equal opportunities rules are of any effective benefits to refugees in the labour market. This group is dominated by men and women refugees who are well educated and doing various professional jobs in different sectors. Respondents have described it as 'paper policy', 'a public relations thing' and 'policy only on the wall'. According to one respondent "It is like fiction. You cannot say it is ineffective as you could be held responsible for not being able to prove why. You can't either say it is effective as there is no proof".

The reasons given for not believing in the effectiveness of equal opportunities law are expressed in various ways as shown below.

The main reason that almost all respondents in this category give is that equal opportunities may deal with visible forms of discrimination but mistreatment and discrimination cannot and do not happen visibly both in the selection process and once already in the job. "The law deals with major 'concrete' racial discrimination. But there are many invisible racial abuses which are equally depressing", says a professional employee (T161). "It is a public relations thing. They could deal with the 'obvious' ones (but not the hidden ones). No mechanism to prove. But I think things are getting better than a few decades ago", says a respondent in Greater Manchester, though he does not elaborate on the last statement.

While the 'obvious' ones can yield evidence, many respondents say that it is unlikely that any evidence can be found. Just to take one example, a part-time sales assistant says:

> If the boss doesn't like me for reasons of race, religion, gender, etc he/she can sack me. They don't need to explain that the reason is linked to one or more of these. They can fabricate other reasons. I know a case when the boss doesn't like one of our colleagues. He doesn't sack him but always pushes him (in the way he treats him) so that he leaves the job to get out of the hard time he is being given. (T114)

"Protected violation", as a professional respondent in Wales has named it is said to be commonplace. It is also believed that the system is reluctant to protect the rights of refugees and equal opportunities policy is in a way linked to this. Asked if he thinks the policy is of effective benefit to refugees in the labour market, a London Transport worker for instance says:

> Absolutely not. I believe in the UK they accept refugees only because they are obliged by the UN 1951 Convention and to get the bad jobs done. The Equal Opportunities rule is there but it is loose in practice for refugees due to these reasons; e.g., you can't prove if you are being discriminated against as a refugee. (T137)

On the issue of lacking evidence or proofs, it is emphasised that the problem also occurs in recruitment stages. Personal experience is also said to make believe that some organisations advertise jobs just for formality while already the selection is already done through the backdoor. There is no screening body or watchdog of implementation. An IT course manager says, for instance:

> In job interviews, you have the right to ask but not effectively to change their decision because you have no right to access the other competitors' details. For a refugee if they do not select the person out of prejudice, this procedural problem is in effect unchallengeable by equal opportunities law. You need, for instance, video-recording of all the interviews and access to all that. This is from my experience when I was looking for a job. There were times I opened champagne believing I would get the job. (T108)

In addition, it is also believed that the rule is not strong enough to tackle problems of employer's ignorance or prejudice against refugees. An educated hotel receptionist, for instance says, "authorities (that have to do with employment) may be biased towards the Western culture; i.e., they could think the person's problem could be due to cultural gap, i.e., being ignorant of the system. Equal opportunities policy doesn't help much in this". As could be the case generally in almost all workplaces, the managers at the top are also believed to hear only their colleagues (line managers), not the complainer. It is also believed that the policy is not quite influential in balancing the obligations of employers and employees. "The equal opportunities rights are not clearly detailed in the contract. Out of the 30 pages, only about two pages are devoted to the college's responsibility. The rest is about yours", says a lecturer of his employment contract.

Also with special focus on the circumstances of refugees, it is believed that it is not helpful at all in relation to the lack of awareness of rights or experience in challenging authorities. A respondent who stayed in the country and married a white British says:

> Most refugees, or even people like me from the Third World or non-English speaking countries, are not generally confident enough to present their cases to the authorities as they fear losing their cases and jobs and risk unemployment. The majority also may not know about their rights. They prefer to keep silent, I imagine. (T161)

Another respondent says on the same issue that:

> ...From what I know in my and my friends' experience, refugees are seen by some employers as poor, with no self-confidence, needing assistance and unreliable. Equal opportunities do not help in effect of such attitudes in the workplace. When they want to sack you they don't behave in direct contravention of the equal opportunity policy. They give you unbearable pressure so that you leave the job yourself. So equal opportunities rule doesn't help. (T107)

Its activities are also believed not to be widely publicised and equal opportunity forms are said to be not adequate for this purpose while a respondent working in a council for less than a year says from what she hears in the media she does not believe it is really of any effective benefit.

Indeed there are many who say, some from personal experience, that equal opportunity forms tell about the refugees' backgrounds, (like showing names and ethnicity) which could be used to target them by prejudiced employers, a phenomenon believed to be commonly observed.

The remaining respondents, around 20% say they have no idea if equal opportunities policy is of any benefit to refugees. They are mainly those who do lower or semi-skilled jobs and those who do not have any idea of what the policy is about. The EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians does not investigate the issue of equal opportunities, unlike my study. However it briefly touches on it and highlights the fact that equal opportunities are not believed to be effective in obtaining employment. For instance, it quotes a respondent as saying, "...You assume that there is an equal opportunity but practically there is none. How can I explain it to you? This is usually done indirectly and hardly noticed. The reasons that you usually get [for not getting the job] are not convincing" (p.143).

iv. Women Refugees and Equal Opportunities

Nearly half of women respondents believe that equal opportunities policy should be more favourable to women refugees than their male counterparts. Many gender-specific factors are mentioned by these respondents as a justification. One is that there could be cultural barriers including sexism connected to their country of origin, making it a 'double burden', which may have very negative consequences on their interaction with the labour market here. Secondly women are also affected in the labour market as mothers and carers of their children. Special needs in the job market should be catered for by the law. What is believed is that equal opportunities rules are not doing that. A mother of one highly qualified refugee says:

> What exists is maternity leave, but not much after delivery although this is important. I filled in 3-4 application forms questions like 'do you have children (how many?)' which made me stuck. Even if it is intended for good causes, I suspected it could go against me. Even 'single'?

> 'married'?, country of origin? – I can't see why they need that. Indeed most of the time I don't send the equal opportunities form. If they feel some (social) groups are under-represented why shouldn't they simply say this group is encouraged to apply. Especially questions about country of origin frustrate me. (T117)

Whilst according to research, child care can affect women employees to the extent of leaving their jobs for full-time childcaring, especially if the child needs special care (e.g., Irwin and Lero, 1997:73), more support could be needed for lone parents. NCOPF, for instance, points out that employees who become lone parents will usually go through some kind of crisis in their private lives and may need some support and understanding at work (NCOPF, 1997:5). It may not be uncommon for many refugees to be lone parents as a result of legal difficulties for family (spouse) re-union.

Apart from the recruitment process, there exists perhaps as a general problem, a feeling that employers prefer women without children and equal opportunities policy is expected to help by protecting women from such 'hidden bad treatments'.

Thirdly - and this is probably linked to domination of the male labour force- there is a tendency to prefer men in managerial positions. Another aspect of the problem is the need to strike a balance between the need for support by the policy and the need for refugee-women to 'stand up' for their rights. A manager head therapist says: "My partner at the start was surprised when I told him I was doing a professional male massage job. But I managed to convince him eventually, convinced to accept me as a professional may be because he is educated, other refugee women should do the same". Respondents in this category tend to be well educated but doing both professional and unskilled jobs. The majority are without children.

The remaining half are not sure how equal opportunities should provide favourable support mechanisms for refugee women. Almost all the refugees in this category have been in employment for a short time compared to the ones above and do not do professional jobs. Just one respondent, an accounting professional, says no special support is needed except the requirements of the job.

In summary the majority, nearly three-quarters of respondents are aware of equal opportunities policies although the level of clarity is not uniform. Courses, experience of jobsearch and knowledge gained once at work are some of the main means through which the law is known to them. Public and voluntary sector employees, especially professionals tend to be more conscious of the rules. Length of stay in the country also tend to contribute to more awareness. About 75% of the sample either do not know or have clear understanding of Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) or Equal Opportunities Commission as national organisation challenging violations of equal opportunities. Awareness of this tends to be influenced by the sector in which an employee works (public and voluntary sectors' employees having better awareness), how intensively employees engaged themselves in job search and for how many years they have been in employment. Other associated attributes have also been observed in more detail.

In relation to cases where equal opportunities are felt violated, the majority of sample respondents have said they fear approaching industrial tribunals either because they have no idea how they work or fear court disputes could jeopardise their asylum cases or do not trust the procedures to be fair to them as they are black foreigners or worry it could affect their future career. Fear of financial demands have also been mentioned although respondents have opposing views about the possibility of financial support by government and trade unions.

A minority says they would consider going to an industrial tribunal or had some personal experiences in the past which they feel will stand them in good stead. With regard to the effectiveness of equal opportunities policies in safeguarding refugees' rights in employment, about 80% believe either it is not or are unsure, with 60% and 20% representation respectively. The main reasons given are that the way the law works does not help as such because it requires 'concrete' evidence which is hard to produce. It is easy for an employer to violate it in a serious but hidden way.

Indeed it is another aspect of the national policy reluctance to accept and resettle refugees. It is also believed that the rule is not strong enough to tackle the problem of some employers' ignorance and prejudice against refugees in the labour market. Indeed the equal opportunities form enclosed with job application forms is thought to target refugees. Nor is it seen as of any help in raising awareness of rights for refugees, which is an issue for many refugees.

Finally, about half of women respondents hold the view that the policy should be favourable to women refugees. These respondents believe home country background, motherhood and gender discrimination in the UK job market put them in a much more disadvantageous positions than their male counterparts and equal opportunities policy should help in mitigating these disadvantages.

7. 9. Feeling of Integration

With the definition of integration[46] as defined in this research (derived from the debated literature) respondents were asked if they feel integrated in the British labour market. Around 20% say they feel they are. Various reasons are given. Just above 12% believe they are where they should be in the labour market, proof that they are indeed integrated. For some, if they are where they are, it is only because they chose to be there or that is what they deserve with the qualifications and work experiences they have. It is also believed that there is integration within "where a refugee should be", meaning that they may integrate with those parts of the society who are found at the lowest hierarchy in the system. What a part-time superstore and community development worker from Scotland said can be taken as an example:

> Considering the fact that I am a refugee I know where I fall. I am coded. They (employers) know us even by our postal code. We live in the poor area (of the city) where even health-wise we are

[46] Definition:- In consistency with the approved definition of 'integration into the labour market' given in the Literature Review, but presented in simpler terms, do you think you can fully and easily be able to access and interact with the labour market and enjoy the same rewards, like equal pay, as the general indigenous labour force without being disadvantaged or marginalized or discriminated against owing to your being a refugee.

disadvantaged. With these qualifying characteristics I accept my position in the job market. For instance, the development work job I do now came to me by itself.(T140)

A domestic household carer and employees in the voluntary and public sectors are included in this category. About 5% say probably because their professions are in high demand in the UK labour market or organisations want to show a black employee working in their company (equal opportunity), they are treated well in terms of promotion and pay, at times better than white colleagues. The rest of the respondents in this category say because of the numerous years spent in the country around the same area, the right networks for employment have been established or with the combined effect of effort and length of stay in the country, they feel integrated in the labour market system.

The rest of the sample, about 80%, say they don't see themselves integrated into the UK labour market for a number of reasons. These respondents say that despite being in employment, they do not believe they are integrated into the labour market as they believe they are discriminated against in the system because of who they are. Respondents in this category can further be divided into three sub-groups on the basis of their positions in the system which makes them believe that they are discriminated against and disadvantaged and thus not integrated: a) those who have/had asylum (immigration) problem; b) those who are doing professional jobs and feel that they face discrimination and disadvantage in that section of the labour market they interact with and; c) those who are doing professionally lower level jobs. Below an attempt is made to see the views within these sub-groups.

i. Difficulty for integration due to asylum related problems

Dominantly those in this category do unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. They claim that because they are denied proper asylum status which is crucial to interact with the job market actively they do not feel integrated into it. This is despite their contribution to the system through tax and NI like other members of the society. Although denial of asylum status is given as a primary reason, additional factors are also said to play a part, such as

language difficulty and general problems that they see other qualified refugees facing. A part-time woman sales assistant highlights these problems when she comments that:

> When you don't have proper paper like me you can't study what you want. Even if you can employers won't take you up happily. Even after having a paper when they know you are a refugee they don't treat you as the indigenous even as Black Britons. I have faced the first problem when I wanted to study nursing at a university (T114).

All the respondents who hold such views are not granted asylum status and do low-skilled jobs including porter, cleaning, waitress or sales assistant and are mainly at high-school graduate level. Men and women are equally represented. In addition to these there are also those who are granted some kind of leave to remain (ELR or ILR) and indeed do jobs which are professional, although not necessarily high level or compatible with their qualifications, and yet do not believe they are integrated in the labour market. These respondents stress that they can only do the types of jobs which are unwanted by others (the host society). "With my status unless the place is vacant and no one needs it there is no way (I can get a job)", says a medical worker in Cambridgeshire as one example. It is also noted that experience of successive failures in job search could have influenced the belief that being a refugee is an underlying factor (when employers discover the applicant is a refugee, that is). Past experience as an asylum seeker is also mentioned as a main barrier to integration in the labour market. A reservation staff employee in a large hotel, now granted Indefinite Leave to Remain, recalls,

> I do not feel integrated with the labour market in the UK. Not at all. In my personal experience, I feel now more confident with my ILR, but before that as an asylum-seeker there was an organisation that turned me down for my absence of leave to remain permanently and I always felt insecure. Employers do not want to invest in training for asylum seekers. Even with leave to remain, refugees could be at a disadvantage owing to their colour, race and media stereo-typing (T117).

Such views are mentioned by respondents both from and outside London.

ii. Difficulty of integration for those doing low or semi -skilled jobs

This group is dominated by men. These respondents believe that they are not integrated in the labour market. 'Exposure' to discrimination and personal perception as a 'second citizen' have been mentioned in relation to this. Being unable to get jobs for which "Black British or Asians" are preferred is an associated issue raised. Difficulty in integration has also been seen from the angle of not matching the positions the natives hold in employment and the work environment. A construction sector worker for instance says "even if I work with white Britons they are at a higher level of pay and they don't give me the chance (to reach their level)". Rather than being integrated, it is believed that the labour market affects positions of refugees in the host society negatively. Another reason for that is the lack of government support for refugees experiencing particular problems. Experiences of discrimination against blacks and refugees in the work place have also been mentioned as additional examples of non-integration. A woman respondent in her 50's who has experience from abroad and worked with Westerners says it is common to be discriminated against as a foreigner in all countries and that it is not an exception in the UK, while another respondent working as a small hotel reservation staff says he believes he is integrated in the labour market in a 'very limited' way, only as long as he is working with the indigenous people (or customers).

iii. Difficulty of integration for the educated and those doing professional jobs

Almost all the respondents in this category are doing the best jobs compared to most others in the sample such as accountancy, course manager, housing officer, secretary, laboratory technician, lecturer or development chemist. Many say they are 'overall satisfied' with their jobs but still believe they are not integrated. Some believe so by recalling the difficulties they experienced before. An accountant, for instance, says:

> I do not believe I am integrated in the job market. Before you get a job there are many barriers; for instance, from my experience before I got this job I have applied for more than 800 job vacancies and the fact that I am a refugee with my nationality and name could put me in a difficult or impossible condition to compete with or fully stand with the indigenous people (T106).

Another professional employee in Greater Manchester also says "No I don't feel integrated. I didn't even get chances to be interviewed, so I had to go through employment agencies. From the start the application forms are designed to identify you. They know who you are".

Additional factors associated with the reality of being a refugee have also been mentioned. Cultural differences and disadvantages, including how to 'sell' or promote oneself that affect employment and the time needed to learn what the host country employers like are said to be time-consuming. "...In my country speaking slowly and in low-tone is a sign of respect. Here it is seen as passiveness and feeling low-esteem...by the time you learn that (what the employers like) you are long-term unemployed. The whole thing puts you in a vicious circle", comments a Masters degree holder employee in London.

Racism, which is believed to be a more serious problem in the less multi-cultural areas of the country is mentioned to be another barrier to integration as there is no accessible and documented evidences of it in recruitment in application forms and job interviews, so that decisions can be contested. Personal experience has been used to back up belief. Lacking confidence in employers and thus reluctance to answer job advertisements is another barrier for integration which may come as a consequence of past bad experiences. It is also indicated that in some jobs being 'white' and speaking English language as a first language is advantageous. A case in point is a secretary who holds this view despite having a white British natural mother who also brought her up in Ethiopia where her father is originally from. Difficulty with integration in the job market can also be explained in relation to levels of jobs: over-qualified for the menial jobs and refused for skilled jobs. Feeling of insecurity is yet another obstacle to integration. It is believed that if a refugee leaves a good job he/she somehow managed to get, the realistic option is to go for a lower level job, if a job is found at all, which may not necessarily be the case for a native person with equivalent qualifications and experience. Inability to go 'anywhere' for a job that may match qualifications and experience, unlike possibly the natives, is also

mentioned as a measure of non-integration. "I can't work in the City", says, for instance, a woman UK degree graduate in Business information system, despite holding a British passport. Many also believe they have to be 'a step ahead' (in experience and qualifications) from the natives to equal them.

To sum up, a fifth of respondents believe they are integrated in the job market because they do the type of jobs that match their qualifications and experience and considering the fact that they are refugees. There are also those who say their skills and experiences are in high demand or employers need representation from people of their (racial or gender) background or because they stayed in the country for many years, they have developed good networks.

The great majority, four-fifth, however say they do not believe they are integrated. Reasons vary however. Immigration status; language; culture; employers' prejudice against refugees and blacks/foreigners compared even to native blacks and Asians are hindrances hampering integration. Lack of government policies to support refugees with special problems are also highlighted. Whilst these respondents mainly do low or medium skilled job, even those doing professional jobs are included in this group. They believe the time spent in job search is too long before they get these jobs, in one case applying for about 800 jobs. Learning cultural issues in 'selling' oneself for instance is a time-taking process. By the time these issues are understood, they could fall in the long-term unemployed trap, a vicious circle from which it is difficult to escape.

Lack of accessible and documented evidence in recruitment and the resulting lack of confidence in employers and thus reluctance to apply for jobs, a feeling of insecurity in moving around in the job market and racism are some of the main issues that respondents mention as factors of non-integration. This leads us to conclude that the 'melting pot' argument by Moynihan and Glazer (1970), assessed in the literature review is valid for our survey groups too. The writers' approach is slightly different from ours, as their focus is on different ethnic groups on many aspects of their lives in New York City and ours focuses on labour market issues. They concluded that the melting pot did not exist in

terms of ethnicity. Our survey also shows that in terms of integration into the labour market many refugees feel, even if they are employed, that they have not been integrated into it yet. However, this doesn't seem to lead us to believe that Ethiopians live in their ethnic enclaves, or are, in the words of Abner Cohen (1969) 'retribalised' in the UK. Our conclusion is therefore that many Ethiopian refugees are neither 'de-tribalised' by integrating into the host labour market system nor 're-tribalised' (like the Hausa's in the Yoruba quarter of Sabo) by forming their separate ethnic enclaves.

7.10. Significance of Job and Its Role in Feeling of Integration in the Host Society

'My job is everything to me...' (T102, An accountant)

Field stresses the importance of employment for refugees as follows:

> For many adult refugees, obtaining a job will be central to the experience of resettlement. For a refugee, who has been powerlessly dependent on the benevolence of the receiving country, the psychological value of obtaining a job will be greater even than for an unemployed indigenous worker. Quite apart from its value as work experience, shared by all workers, which may lead to other and better jobs, a job will often provide a context where the refugee can improve language skills and come to terms with the social environment of the receiving country (Field, 1985:27).

In this study we will also attempt to look into the sample population in relation to the role their jobs play in making them feel integrated in the system as opposed to feeling excluded from it.

While this is a statement used by one respondent, sample respondents have mentioned that their jobs have a very important role to play for them personally as well as feeling part of the society in which they live. The first major factor mentioned by nearly two-thirds of respondents is the possibility their jobs give them of supporting themselves independently of government hands-out. Respondents doing all skill levels and types of jobs with all levels of qualifications as well as men and women are included in this.

These respondents say they feel part of the society as they are independent like the indigenous employed people and pay for their basic expenses including flat rents, (household) bills, child care and child study expenses, university fees; they earn a good and average income which enables them to have a decent standard of living, financial security, and not to be seen as "scroungers", a stereotype associated to refugees. Being employed even allows them to own their own home. It is mentioned that there is even an interest to work more for such purposes, had asylum status not created restrictions.

Nearly 45% of respondents say their jobs have made them feel they are part of the system, as noted in the literature review, because of the contributions it enables them to make to the host country. Those who are well educated (degree or above) tend to dominate this group. Being a tax payer is seen as particularly important. Others include paying for National Insurance and pension scheme. Serving the public especially in a public service job and helping the indigenous, rather than 'normally asking them for help'; e.g., bus driving, hotel customer services; feeling able to help others financially; 'paying back' what is taken from the society before employment; fulfilling civic duties are the other issues mentioned by respondents as factors that make them feel that they are part of the host society. This is yet another contradictory finding with the claims of some of the media. Unlike the media's accusations refugees want to pay for their living and contribute to the society they live in, in terms of taxes, National Insurance contributions. As we can see they also want to help vulnerable members of the society rather than being helped themselves.

About 30% of the sample have also mentioned that due to the fact that their jobs have enabled them to be independent and self-supportive as well as contributors to the host society, it has helped in raising or regaining their self-confidence. "I feel if I leave this job, I can get another", says one for instance. Another respondent says regaining self confidence is linked to getting a skill matching job: "Being unemployed and dependent on the system especially at an ambitious working age leaves you with the worst feeling. You don't regain your self-confidence if you don't do a job related to your profession". Yet another professional employee says:

> When I meet other native people the moment they realise I have a job, they respect my views and are open for discussion and friendship. I feel my job helps in getting closer to them and this boosts my self-confidence...as my wife is (white) British the fact that I have a job gives her more confidence when she introduces me to her families and friends. (T108)

Being able to speak one's mind and 'stand up for my rights', 'faith in myself', 'knowing that they keep me because they need me', 'proving that I am capable of doing what (employing company) want', 'to show I can work' are some of the phrases used by respondents to explain how their jobs have enabled them to raise or regain their self-confidence and to feel they are important in the host society.

Another 30% say their jobs have helped them in the process of integration within the host society as it has helped them to socialise with indigenous people in and outside work. Being able to mix with the indigenous people in pubs, gyms, holidays, etc.; socialising with work mates and having 'no inferiority complex' are mentioned as issues. This is said to have saved them from 'mental deterioration' as one says. A respondent in Northern Scotland who lived there for about a decade says for instance:

> (Job has helped) to make lots of engagements and networks with work colleagues. This is one thing I believe I have a good reason to stay (in this city). My job is the key for such networks..." (T138)

In a similar way, being able to socialise with 'some native people' is mentioned by another respondent as the sole reason that makes her happy with her job. It is also noted that jobs help in learning about the culture of the host society through social clubs and work place contacts. There is a rare indication that a refugee could be 'more comfortable' in socialising (outside work) with fellow countrymen even if he/she stays in the country for a long time.

A remarkable percentage of respondents have also mentioned that their jobs have given them opportunities to be part of the system in their daily lives. Leaving home in the morning and coming back home in the evening and sharing the same buses and trains

with the indigenous people in rush hours or driving their own car and wearing smart clothes at work are also mentioned as factors that make them feel integrated in the host society.

Eligibility for services such as bank loan facilities, recourse to public fund and education are also mentioned as important aspects. On a related matter a respondent said "because I pay tax I am interested in government spending patterns... makes me feel I am a good citizen". Jobs also help in making training opportunities available, which could help both for the job in hand or for future jobs. Indeed one respondent says on-the-job training is the only positive aspect of her job. Financial help can also be provided by an employing company for mortgage payments and relocation costs. Sense of freedom to ask for rights and sense of achievement (in life); influential role in the community as well as keeping the mind busy are additional important issues about jobs raised by sample respondents.

With the given background of a refugee or black foreigner, being in employment itself is stressed by some as another feel-good factor. "As a second citizen, to get this job makes me happy", says for instance a part-time packing worker. Another respondent says:

> To say I have a job makes me feel happy. Before getting this job when I was staying at home I used to feel bad when people see me out on the road to buy papers and so on, fearing that they know I am unemployed. Now that fear is not there. I am not sure but it is also possible that my wife's families attitudes towards me might have changed owing to my getting a job. (T151)

A minority of respondents are able through being employed to express appreciation of the host country. "They are wonderful", says an accountant working for a total of about two years in two firms, for instance. "...don't forget that I am a refugee", says a bus driver as another example. The hope or prospect of moving up the labour market is what is pointed out in relation to appreciation of the system. Another woman asylum seeker respondent working as a waitress adds that: "I appreciate the system except the Home Office because if one struggles to study and work, I hope there is a chance to get ahead one day". The system is also believed to be favourable more to work experience than education level. Respondents who believe in the 'fairness of the system' in relation to their jobs are mixed

in terms of the levels of jobs they are doing and possess. Men and women are also equally represented.

But there are also those who do not associate their being in employment with the fairness of the system although they hold professional jobs and they say they are on the whole satisfied with the jobs they are doing. If there is appreciation it is only limited to the employing company.

Whilst the great majority of respondents demonstrate happiness about their jobs and how it makes them feel part of the host society, there is a minority (15%) who do not believe employment contributes to well-being. All men and women respondents in this category do jobs that demand little skill including porter and sales assistant. Part-timers and those who see their jobs as transitional until they finish their studies are also included. Most are holders of first degree or above or are studying for one. Respondents feel they are not doing the 'right job' or job is too small in terms of hours worked or reward to make them feel integrated in the host system.

To summarise this section, excepting 15% of respondents, interviewees express the feeling that their jobs are important in making them feel part of the system and enjoying a feel-good factor.

For the great majority, economic independence and better living standard, tax and NI as well as other forms of contributions to the host society that their jobs made possible are of greatest significance. Self-confidence has therefore been raised or regained in relationships and interactions with the host society as a result. Jobs are also said to play a role in creating opportunities to mix and socialise with the indigenous people creating the opportunity to learn about the culture of the host society.

Respondents have also mentioned service provisions made possible such as eligibility for bank loans; opportunities for (on-the-job) training; possible financial help from employers for mortgages; sense of achievement and freedom. For many, being in

employment and overcoming challenges, contribute to a great feel good factor. Finally there are mixed feelings about whether the system is fair to them. Some believe the system is fair in the sense that there are chances and opportunities to grow and improve, while others do not associate it with the system. For this latter group, if there is an appreciation it is confined to the employing company.

Our findings are consistent with the findings of the EMBRACE-UK study on Ethiopians (2002), which indicates that gaining employment helps refugees to feel settled, in the UK and gain a sense of belonging and citizenship. The EMBRACE-UK study (2002), quotes one of its respondents as saying:

> I am settling well now in terms of finance and health. I am working at this moment... I am supporting myself. I am not taking Income Support. I cope with the system now... England is as my home now. I am accepting here after long years that this is my life. This is my country. Everything that happens in this country, bad or good is as it happens to me. I accept it like people who are living in England or who are born in England (EMBRACE-UK, 2002:139).

This respondent's positive views about England is related to his/her new status as an employed person, which is in marked contrast with one of my unemployed respondents quoted elsewhere in the thesis who would not even support England in football matches as he blames the system for making him unemployed. What these contrasting views by two people from the same country of origin shows is that for refugees employment status plays a decisive role in their feeling of belonging and in shaping their attitudes towards the host country.

7.11. Remittances and Integration

Remittances play a key role in the migration process. The issue of remittances is one of the under-explored aspects of refugees (Koser, et. Al, 2001)[47]. Remittances can be

[47] Also personal interview with David Styan, November 2003.

causes of migration (e.g., Escobar, et al, 1987) and play a central role in linkages between sending and receiving countries (Faucett, 1999). As Khalid Koser's study on Eritreans (2003) indicates, this linkage can be facilitated (or forced) by country of origin government for development activities or migrants may simply want to invest in their countries of origin (MacGaffe and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000; see also Montclose, 2003)[48]. It can also be simply a key family and kinship tie (e.g., Valtonen, 1999).

Remittances have a cause and effect relationship with employment in the host country system and are linked to the process of integration. However, different research link remittances either as a positive or negative factor in facilitating integration. On the negative aspect, recent study by the Employability Forum[49] on UK employers who employ refugees has noted a direct link between remittances and integration into the labour market. According to this study, the need for remittances obstructs integration into the mainstream labour market, say, bus driving, because refugee workers-to-be cannot undertake a job induction for long (Hurstfield, et al 2004). It is not quite clear from this study to what extent remittance is a cause for leaving job inductions early compared with other factors. It is not just refugees but other groups of the society can also be unwilling to stay in job inductions beyond a certain time period.

Moreover, these refugees do not want to undergo long periods of employment training, the reason being that they need to work as soon as possible to remit funds back to their families - which again is a step towards integration.

Research indicate that remittances have a positive role in facilitating integration into the host society. The Chileans study in the United States (Eastmond, 1997), for instance, demonstrated that despite the low interest of Chileans in American life than involvement in their countries of origin politics, the need for remittance forces them to work.

[48] In the UK, Africans for Development (AFFORD) is working towards organising remittance activities by the diaspora to Africa. One of the workshops in their 2004 annual conference in London, which I attended was devoted to this issue.

[49] Employability Forum is the main national advisor to the government on refugee employment. Its main aim is to promote refugees employment. I am a founding member since 1999.

Similarly, the Congolese diaspora study by MacGaffe and Bazenguissa-Ganga shows how the diaspora in France are keen to maintain and strengthen their kinship ties in Congo through remittances even when their business is not doing well (see also the study of Somali and Kurdish refugees in London by David Griffiths, 2002). Therefore, the consensus from the various research studies is that the process of remittance is a strong motivator for active participation in the labour market, and consequently aiding the process of integration.

Remittances are also linked to employment from another but related dimension that those who do not remit could be those ostracised in the host country labour market. As Khalid Koser's study on Eritreans (2003) illustrates that a refugee's labour market success plays a crucial role in the amount of remittances they send. He notes the competitiveness, that many Eritreans were embarrassed that friends were contributing more to their country than they were able to. It is likely that this is another motive for active participation in the labour market.

Last, if not least, it is possible for refugees in the west to support their refugee friends and acquaintances in other western countries, helping them to resettle and integrate into the new country. In her 1994 study on Vietnamese refugees in Finland, Kathleen Valtonen highlights the 'meaningful' ties between these people, where remittance is assumed to be part of this 'meaningful' tie.

Therefore, remitting funds is a key motive for migration. The ability to send remittances to families and friends is strongly related with employment in the host country. The more people want to send remittances the more they are motivated to work, and the more they are integrated into the labour market.

The issues of remittances for our case study was explored using key informants and participant observation methods. It is difficult to access accurate and reliable data on remittances. A key informant, for instance, says Ethiopians see remittance as a private issue and therefore reliable data is withheld. Koser's study of Eritrean remittances reveals

that the money is not sent for family use, but rather to support the Eritrean government, especially during the war between Eritrea and neighbouring Ethiopia. From my own personal knowledge of Eritreans, such remittances were not private. Ethiopians have not been asked as much as Eritreans have to finance the war or other investments, therefore remittances are to support families and friends. This makes comparison with Khalid Koser's study difficult. However, an effort has been made to find as much information as possible.

There is no clear answer to Koser's suggestion that those who remit little or nothing are ostracised. Refugees with rich families in their country of origin may not remit at all, even if they had well-paid employment in the UK. It is also noted that some refugees send a great deal of money from the income they earn from informal employment. These people are 'ostracised' from the labour market in one sense as they are not formally employed, but are active in the informal job market and remitting funds. Some individuals send money to fund development activities in Ethiopia. Others might be employed and fully integrated into the labour market, yet not remit funds because it is not an activity they believe in. To conclude, our findings show that integration into employment is important for remittances, but is only part of the story.

Remittances can flow into the UK from family members settled in, for example, Canada or the US. There are cases where parents or relatives outside the UK send money to help younger family members in their studies, eventually helping them to access employment. In general, it is held that refugees in the UK are able to be self sufficient or can be supported by the system and remittance to support them here is limited.

To sum up this chapter the circumstances of refugees in the work place is an under-explored area in refugee studies. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to have a closer look into the many workplace issues in relation to the case study group. Refugees can share the positive and negative aspects of the workplace issues as the general workforce. In addition, however, a range of pre-asylum factors that they come with and existing host country labour market characteristics as well as policy factors affect the

level of their integration into the workplace in a unique way. This chapter has also looked into the issue of remittances and its effect on integration of refugees into the labour market. The chapter's concern is on the formal employment, as informal employment is dealt with in the previous chapter. Within the formal employment, in turn, our focus has been on what is normally known as 'standard' employment. In the next chapter, we focus on another section of formal employment, the self-employment, and how the interplay between the three factors, namely pre-asylum, host country labour market characteristics and policy factors affect level of integration.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SELF-EMPLOYED

8.1. Insight into the Literature

Self-employment is believed to be a key tool of tackling unemployment. A Social Exclusion Unit report (1997), for instance, reveals that under the New Deal programmes which are formulated 'to tackle unemployment', Employment Zones target areas of high unemployment and 'encourage' more innovative approaches to self-employment (SEU, 1997). The report underlines that self-employment is 'a successful way to combat ethnic minority unemployment' (Ibid).

In addition, self-employment is also believed to challenge the problem of marginalisation for immigrants. Floya Anthias (1992) emphasises the importance of the relationship between exclusion practices and the forms of 'managing' these in terms of the ethnic resources a migrant group possesses. Self-employment can be seen as a 'management strategy' or a 'hiding place' from exclusion.

Sheila Allen, Stuart Bentley and Joanna Bornat (1981) have undertaken an illuminating survey on the problems faced by a 'coloured immigrant community' in a particular British city – Bradford – where the "importance of self-employment within the general employment of the coloured community was recognised".

These writers comment on the growing significance of self-employment within the community. With a special reference to their sample population, they noted that self-employment is seen as:

> A highly desirable goal and although for most of these the ownership of a business would necessarily remain a dream, others were obviously preparing by saving money to launch themselves into some type of business activity (1981:208).

According to the survey, these businesses "provide a wider perspective" to employment. This is not only true for the newly arrived (whose inadequate knowledge of English may provide an obstacle to securing a job), but also for the second generation and for women seeking office or retail jobs denied "by white-owned business".

This community has rooted itself as a separate, almost self-sufficient entity, for two reasons according to the survey's authors:

Firstly, some businesses quite obviously provide services that 'white' equivalents may not provide, for example, clothing and foodstuffs. Secondly, and sharing Aldrich's (1981) above-mentioned view, in many ways this reflects "the real social and economic separation of coloured people as a result of discriminatory practices in the providing of such services as entertainment, car-hire, laundries and mortgages" (210).

In this connection, Allen, Bentley and Bornat claim that this sector has offered the community good business opportunities. Their survey also suggests that the decision to enter self-employment is not only determined by experiences in England.

The survey also documents discriminatory and exclusionary practices faced by the community in acquiring capital from English banks and insurance companies, whether for operation, expansion, securing a suitable site from estate agencies or 'planned discrimination' in the allocation of newly constructed lettings and loan advancing bodies.

Other problems the above writers mention are; difficulties in gaining customers from the indigenous population, not only in cases where culture-specific products are delivered, but also "as a result of discrimination where the same goods and services available in the white community" (216); difficulties in recruiting UK nationals, in part to penetrate the UK market.

Approximately two decades later, the Social Exclusion Unit report (1997) also recognises the difficulties people in poor neighbourhoods face to access finance and advice.

An HMSO (1996) publication illustrates that sector type affects the extent of self-employment expansion. Overall, the finding shows that 44 per cent of those employed in the construction industry were self-employed, compared with only 11 per cent in the services sector and 8 per cent in manufacturing.

The results of Modood's (1997) most recent survey also emphasise the growth in importance of self-employment within ethnic minorities. He notes that:

> The Labour Force Survey has consistently shown, as has the 1991 Census, that the economic profile of some minority groups is considerably shaped by self-employment activity (121).

Modood's survey also presents a diversified feature within different ethnic minority groups. The most common positions of ethnic minorities compared with the 'white' population are that the majority are likely to be working for a particular employer. Ethnic minority self-employment is for the most part located in quite different parts of the economy. While the majority of white self-employment is in construction, agriculture, manufacturing and finance, the majority of ethnic minority self-employment is in retail, catering, taxi and mini-cab driving (124-125).

Modood's findings also seem to indicate changes to the trend outlined by Sheila, Allen and Bentley(1981) regarding product and customer type. This most recent survey reveals that most ethnic minority self-employment does not involve specialised goods or services associated with the person's own ethnic group, nor does it necessarily draw its custom from members of that person's own group.

A Refugee Council report from the first Surrey Conference on Training and Employment Provision in Europe published in 1988 asserts that refugees are able to succeed in self-employment "where institutionalised prejudice poses fewer problems", and recognises the 'major difficulties' in finding venture capital without security (RC, 1988:10). Furthermore, the report holds that refugees create jobs for themselves and the host society by using their cultural and linguistic strengths.

There are certain characteristics of refugee self-employment in the United Kingdom. *'Integration of Refugees in Europe' (RC, 1999)* notes that there are two factors influencing a tendency to concentrate in the service sector. Firstly service sector business are relatively easy to establish, requiring less seed capital. Secondly, the ethnic minority provides a guaranteed clientele. The drawback of this trend, noted in the report, is that, by establishing a business in a highly concentrated sector, growth cannot take place within the business. 'Growth' is seen here as the growth of the entrepreneur, not the business. The report recommends that refugees should be encouraged to seek other business forms.

A Home Office (1995) research report found that the majority of those currently in paid employment were employees (78 per cent). The rest were self-employed (22 per cent), "a rate higher than among the general population (13 per cent)". Interestingly, the report observes that while three-quarters might profess job satisfaction in the paid employment, over half (55 per cent) felt that there were other jobs more suitable for their experience and qualifications than the ones in which they were presently working. A quarter were actively seeking alternatives. Of those who would prefer a different job, 18 per cent wished to start their own businesses. This is in addition to the 15% already in self-employment. The research combines the trends outlined above and remarks that there is a trend toward self-employment by refugees.

The experience of the Employment-Horizon project for European refugees and migrants (1996) indicates that virtually all of the refugees contacted had been seeking to operate as a sole trader in areas such as taxi driving, car maintenance and hair dressing. One of the reasons for this according to Ken Brown, is that some refugees may have come from

countries where there is less regulation and self-employment can be pursued more easily than in the UK. Regulations concerning the production and sale of food or health and safety, allied to contract law and consumer legislation create more bureaucracy within self-employment than many of the people expected or have previously experienced.

Difficulty in accessing credit facilities to start-up business is another problem faced by the refugee community (AET, 1998). Brown notes that difficulties in meeting lenders' criteria often includes being able to provide proof of residence for a period of time, the ability to offer UK references and previous experience of running a business – particularly in the UK. The unprecedented rapid growth in self-employment in the 1980's and 1990's (e.g., Meager, 1991; Harvey, 1995) is also likely to have increased competition for finance. A limited understanding of how the London marketplace operates for particular goods or services may result in a 'confused approach' to such a route and increase the likelihood of individuals moving into the black market. However, Brown concludes that self-employment is a feasible goal for refugees and asylum seekers with 'known examples' of accountants and lawyers who have 'established practices' (Brown, 1996:13).

The Surrey conference on the Training and employment Provision for Refugees in Europe (referred to above) noted that self-employment is the way forward for some refugees, as it allows the talents and motivation of the individuals to come to the fore. The report recognises that self-employment is not the solution for the majority of refugees. This is because refugees do not find the complexities of European economic systems, company law, taxation and so on easy to understand. The difficulties in building up contracts, understanding the market and obtaining capital (RC, 1988:17) should also not be underestimated. The report recommends appropriate training programmes to help refugees in these areas.

The '*Integration of Refugees in Europe*' Project has highlighted additional barriers uniquely faced by refugees in setting up businesses. The Loan Guarantee Scheme is one potential source of funding for self-employment businesses. According to the findings,

the difficulty is that there are restrictions placed upon certain areas of activity, such as ticket and travel agents, taxi and cab hire, retail, property management, insurance, hair dressing and beauty parlours. These are "typically the business into which refugees enter" (RC, 1999; see also Brown, 1996 above). Another example of financial exclusion, according to the project's findings, is that, whilst in theory finance may be granted to refugees, individuals with Exceptional Leave to Remain cannot apply, despite having permission to work in the UK. The findings argue that, given that it can take up to five years to gain the Refugee Status required for a bank loan, this 'seriously impedes refugee self-employment'.

What we learn from the above is that, whilst access to start-up capital can also be a problem to other groups of society, like immigrant ethnic minorities, refugees additionally contend with immigration-related issues and a lack of awareness of how the UK system works. It is worth noting that under the current system asylum-seekers may wait years for a decision on their application. This is likely to discourage business start-up, due to uncertainty regarding their probable length of stay in the UK. Therefore, a number of factors hinder refugees in successfully pursuing self-employment as a route out of unemployment.

I. Pre-Asylum Factors and Characteristics

8.2. Sample Characteristics: Business and Owners

8.2.1. Brief Profile of Business Owners

i. Gender and Age

Fourteen businesses were sampled. Of these, 11 (about 80%) are owned by men while 3 (about 20%) are owned by women. The majority, 70%, are in the 31-40 age group, while those between 21-30 and 41-50 constitute the remaining 21.4% and 7.1% respectively.

ii. Qualifications

As can be seen in Table 8.1. below, half of the business owners have either a Master's or Bachelor's degree or hold diplomas, as their highest qualifications. One has no formal education ('illiterate') and the rest have 'other' qualifications. These 'other' qualifications include sector-specific courses linked to the individual's business, such as hotel and tourism courses taken by a restaurateur. In some cases short-term courses have been taken on top of A-level or incomplete degree courses. Those with higher education may also have taken additional short-term vocational courses.

Table 8.1. Highest Qualification of Business

Count

		Highest						
		Illiterat	High graduat	Diplom	1st graduat	Masters degree	Others	Total
	Femal				1		2	3
	Male	1	2	3	1	2	2	11
Total		1	2	3	2	2	4	14

It should be noted that the degrees or diplomas held by individuals, which include Social Science, Natural Science, Engineering and Agriculture, are not related to the type of business being run. Even when the qualification can be linked to business type, there are additional business needs. For instance, one respondent commented that although his qualification – a UK Masters degree in Chemistry - is related to his pharmaceutical business, he also needs management skills. A UK graduate in Business Services reported that her qualification is important in giving 'more confidence' and less relevant to her occupation.

Just over 60% of those with some kind of qualification have gained these in the UK. This includes 50% of those holding a Master's degree (the other half gained in a transit country) and all of the Bachelor degree and Diploma holders. Just over a fifth of respondents gained their highest qualifications in their country of origin.

Approximately 50% of the proprietors gained their highest qualification 0-3 years before starting their businesses. Only one owner has had his highest qualification longer than ten years and was otherwise employed before starting his current business. The rest, just under a quarter each, gained their highest qualification between 3-6 and 6-10 years before they set up their businesses.

iii. Past Experience in Running a Self-owned Business

As Allen, *et al* (1981), in section 8.1.above, indicate the decision to enter self-employment can be rooted in pre-asylum years. Nearly 60% of the business owners had prior experience of running their own business. Of these, about 20% say they gained their skills and experience from family-owned businesses in their country of origin (e.g. restaurants). About 30% had companies, independently or as a partnership, either in their country of origin, in a transit country or in the UK. Approximately 7% said they gained experience by observing how previous employers managed their businesses. About three-quarters of those who had some experience said that it is relevant to their current business. Some have no previous experience of being self-employed but believe their prior employment has helped them gain transferable skills. These include management skills.

iv. Immigration Status and Time Taken to Set Up Business After Arrival

Nearly 45% of the business owners arrived in the UK before 1990. About 30% came in 1990. The rest, under 30% of proprietors, arrived in the years 1991-96. Regarding immigration status, 43% have Indefinite Leave to Remain, 29% have been granted British citizenship and about 14% have Exceptional Leave to Remain. A similar percentage are either a European citizens[50] or asylum seekers. The low participation rates of self-

[50] European citizenship may include working in the UK as a citizen or spouse to a citizen of another EU member state.

employed asylum seekers can be linked to the various restrictive regulations and circumstances mentioned in the literature review earlier on.

Table 8.2 (below) illustrates the length of time occurring between asylum claim and the creation of a business.

Table 8.2. Year asylum claimed vs. year business

Coun

		Year business								
		199	199	199	199	199	199	199	200	Tota
Yea asylu claime	before	1	2	1	1			1		6
	199				2			1	1	4
	199					1				1
	199							1		1
	199						1			1
	199						1			1
Tota		1	2	1	3	1	2	3	1	14

As shown above, the majority of individuals (10 out of 14) claimed asylum in the UK in or before 1990. This indicates that individuals take time to set up a business[51] and also that this form of employment is not readily accessible for new arrivals. The time taken may be linked to difficulties in gaining seed capital and premises. Other issues, such as asylum status, may also take priority over self-employment.

8.2.2. Brief Profiles of Businesses

i. Types of Businesses

The types of businesses examined in this study have been broadly categorised as either culture-specific or non-culture specific (general) organisations. Broadly speaking, culture-specific businesses embrace those business types whose services are mainly tied to the traditions and cultures of the Ethiopian community. They target community

[51] No respondent reported that they did not immediately claim asylum after arrival in the UK . Therefore the year asylum was claimed has also been taken to mean the year of arrival.

members as their main clientele. Out of the 14 businesses just under half (six) are typical. These include traditional Ethiopian restaurants, a hairdresser and a delicatessen.

The second category are non-traditional or non-culture specific, which provide services for all in the host society. Just over half (8) of the businesses fall into this category. They include shops, a supermarket, travel and letting agents, a driving instructor, a pharmacy and a minicab firm. Just one is outside London.

Individuals gave various reasons for choosing their type of business. Factors influencing a choice of traditional and culture-specific businesses include links with substantial prior experience; a desire to introduce Ethiopian culture to the host society; to benefit from absence of competition with host country businesses (niche market status); a belief that the customer base can be widened to include the host society. Those involved in non-culture specific businesses cited reasons such as a lesser need for capital than for a traditional, culture-specific business; greater business knowledge from past experience or relevant professional qualifications, greater prospects for profit and 'growth economically'; taking advantage of the existing ethnic mix within a geographical location rather than relying on a scattered community; avoiding competition with established traditional culture-specific businesses; encouragement from a supporting institution.

ii. Some Issues and Characteristic Features of Businesses

An attempt was made to establish whether organisations expanded to other sectors or remained in their original markets over time. Of those surveyed, about 80% have remained within their original market, though they may have grown in size. Approximately 20% are managing businesses that have either altered direction or have expanded into associated sectors. These include converting a business to its current activity, dissolving a partnership or adding more services to those currently provided.

All those surveyed spend full-time on and gain their sole source of income from their businesses. Some work more than the conventional seven hours per day, in some cases

working up to 18 hours a day. The reason for such long hours is the perception that the business requires full-time attention to maintain the customer's faith in availability of services or goods. "Even when I am away all of my attention is in the business" says one owner for instance. Some work may involve more time than others, for example hairdressing, where it can take hours to deal with one client. In general respondents feel that their income is at least enough to live on without taking a second job.

The majority (80%) run their businesses independently (as sole traders), while the rest work in partnerships. Finance is the main reason to run a business with partners. Other key reasons include the legal requirement to start a private limited company (with more than one owner); the need to share experience for the business to succeed; the company's operations requiring co-operation for success.

8.3. Motives to Start Own Business

National surveys in the UK, notably that of 1987 by the Department for Education and Employment, indicate that independence and earning a good income constitute the main reasons to motivate self-employment (Bevan, 1989). This study also looks at why respondents chose to go for self-employment rather than try to find existing jobs. Various factors have been found for this decision. One is the difficulty in getting into mainstream employment. One respondent, for instance, said: "I had an M.Sc. degree in Agriculture (from a transit country) and it wasn't quite helpful to find a job. I had to re-qualify or start from zero in my education to get the type of job I wanted"(T201). Although not the sole reason, some respondents cited discrimination in the UK labour market as one reason to work for themselves. One respondent claimed the way he was treated by a previous employer was his reason to become self-employed: "I used to work as a building surveyor. They were promoting my juniors ahead of me. I was discriminated against and that was the main reason for me to leave that job in favour of self-employment" (T212). Another said that the organisation he was then working for was about to lay off workers and offered employees a good pay package for voluntary redundancy. He says he chose

to be voluntary redundant because, "I had at the back of my mind the issue of discrimination (and forced redundancy)" (T213). Fifteen percent of respondents said that hopes for a higher income when self-employed was their sole motivator. A respondent, for instance, says "I was employed for Peter Dominie Wine merchants and I wasn't that happy with the income I was earning" (T204).

Thirty-five percent of respondents cited reasons other than higher income and difficulties in finding employment. These include having more freedom and determining one's own income and working hours. The desire to be 'independent of boss instructions' has also been given as a reason. Self-employment can also resolve travel issues. One individual said that she wanted to operate in the UK and in her country of origin. Being self-employed has given her the freedom to travel 'back and forth' to run the two businesses concurrently, which might not have been possible in mainstream employment (T207). Simply being more interested in running one's own business has also been given as yet another reason for self-employment, while one respondent said that self-employment simply evolved when supporting agencies encouraged him to start a mini-cab firm.

Nearly 45% gave one or more of the above as reasons for becoming self-employed. Additional reasons were an interest in the challenge; invitation by a current business partner and the job security that (successful) self-employment provides. Many respondents have made it clear that finding mainstream work was not a problem and that they had jobs before being self-employed. It is not clear whether their 'past jobs' were equivalent to what they felt they deserved in terms of work experience and qualifications. The fact that many mentioned that they wanted to increase their income and job security through self-employment could be an indication that they were less than happy with what the job market offered them.

In sum self-employment is seen as an 'escape route' from unemployment, an alternative to discrimination in the workplace, and often more secure than mainstream employment. Although, as mentioned above, many respondents stated that they did not have problems in finding work, they may not have been able to find work that they considered

appropriate, in terms what they may think they deserve. Reasons for not getting such jobs could be linked to factors such as simply being a refugee or asylum seeker. Regarding motivation to start one's own business, our findings correspond with those others, including those referred to in the literature review above (section 8.1.), in that self-employment is often used as an escape route out of 'ethnic unemployment' (Social Exclusion Unit, 1997); a 'management strategy' or a 'hiding place' from exclusion (Anthias, 1992); "provide a wider perspective" to employment (Allen, *et al*, 1981); or it is "where institutionalised prejudice poses fewer problems" (Refugee Council, 1988). There are similarities with findings of other studies overseas. In his work on Soviet Jewish and Vietnamese refugees in California, Gold (1992) established that the main reason for self-employment was the experience of disadvantage in the labour market and that this was used as a coping strategy. Kathleen Valtonen's study on Vietnamese refugees in Finland and Canada arrived at a similar conclusion (Valtonen, 1999). The findings of this thesis confirm those of Gold regarding self-employment as source of self-esteem and satisfaction in working for oneself.

There is however little evidence from my research to confirm Gold's points on other incentives such as (limited) contact with unfamiliar culture. Ethiopian self-employed refugees live amongst the host population and serve all sections of society, although contact with ethnic community members is crucial, especially for culture-specific businesses. Our data also does not correspond with conclusions from others who believe some ethnic groups to be more business-oriented; e.g., Eritrean muslims (Kuhlman, 1994) or Hausas in Nigeria (Cohen, 1969). Traditionally many Ethiopians believe that the Guraghe ethnic groups are more business-oriented, but that has not necessarily proved the case according to our data.

8.4 Job Creation

Only about 20% of businesses have not yet created additional jobs. These businesses may run in partnership or may be restricted to being sole trader, such as franchising driving instructor or because it has only recently begun trading.

The majority of businesses (80%,) have created additional jobs. Almost two-thirds of these businesses trading for at least three years. About 15% of the businesses have created restricted jobs to their family circle and just over 5% have employed solely from their community. This may be because they are either too small, such as corner shops, or are culture-specific and would otherwise need a lot of training; e.g., baking traditional pancake. The rest, which constitute the majority, have recruited from mixed ethnic groups, including the host society. Whilst the businesses may have individually created up to 12 jobs, on average across the sample they have created 5 full-time and part-time jobs per business. It is noted that, with the exception of one owner, all have started their businesses with an employee. Additional employees have been recruited as the business has grown over the years.

Looking to the future, all want to expand or are already in the process of expanding their businesses and believe that they will create more jobs. Fifteen percent said that they prefer to hire someone from their community because of the cultural-specific nature of the job, or to help their community members, or for easy control and affordable pay. Over 85%, however, said that they would hire anyone from any community as long as they could do the job. These include culture-specific business types. In a case where the business is outside London and the job involves on-the-counter service a staff member from the local community is seen as an advantage. An owner of a large pharmaceutical organisation, (large enough to be offered bank loans of £1million) stated that having no native workers had damaged his business. A recent study conducted by the Home Office, entitled *Labour Market Performance of immigrants in the UK Labour Market,* explores self-employment and notes that there is a scarcity of research on the self-employment of immigrants (Christian Dustmann, et al, 2003). This scarcity increases when considering refugees. One particular area where this noted is on the subject of job creation. The few studies in migration literature that are available confirm our findings that self-

employment has strong potential to create employment for community members. The Bradford study on Asian migrants observed in the literature review above (Allen, et al, 1981), for instance, argues that such businesses "provide a wider perspective" especially for those who are newly arrived and whose inadequate knowledge of English may be an obstacle to finding work. Ersan Yucel's analysis of Turkish migrants in the former Federal Republic of Germany notes how Turkish businesses create employment opportunities for fellow migrant countrymen (Yucel, 1987). This agrees with the evidence of this research. A seminal work on New York City by Glazer and Moynihan (1970) associates problem of black unemployment with the lack of businesses owned by black people. However, our study also studies how self-employment can create work for others who are outside a particular ethnic group. Our evidence illustrates that refugee-owned businesses can create jobs for the wider host society and other ethnic minorities; e.g., Afghanistani chef or Eastern European waitresses. This is in the best interest of the businesses themselves, considering their diverse customer groups.

II. Host-country factors

8.5 Capital-Related Issues

8.5.1 Sources of Start-up Capital

There is empirical evidence of significant current wealth effects on the probability of entering self-employment (Mesnard and Ravallion, 2001; Evans and Jovanovic, 1989; Evans and Leighton, 1989; Holtz_Eakin, Jouflaian and Rosen, 1994; Magnac and Robin, 1996; Blanchflower and Oswald, 1998; Paulson and Townsend, 2000). Whilst start-up finance is an issue for all self-employment beginners, Metcalf and Benson (2000) argue that unemployed ethnic minority suffer a "double disadvantage" as not only do they tend to have fewer savings with which to finance their business, they also tend to have greater difficulties in accessing commercial loans. We examine this in relation to the sample surveyed further down. In terms of start up capital, about a fifth of the business owners said that they had money from personal savings, while a similar proportion gained their

start-up capital by borrowing from family and friends. Just over 35 % said that they put together their initial capital from both personal savings and support from families and friends. 20% of respondents got their initial capital from a combination of personal savings and bank loans or council grants, including free rent for premises.

8.5.2. Contact with Banks for Loan

Credit is a powerful weapon. Anybody possessing this weapon is certainly better equipped to manoeuvre the forces around him to his best advantage. With appropriate credit institutions and credit policies one can lead a society towards a desired shape (Yunus, 1987:4)

As Professor Yunus emphasises, credit plays a decisive role in business success. In this section it is attempted to observe the issue of credit (bank loans).

The majority 57% of those sampled have approached banks for loans at some stage of their business operations. Of those who have applied for bank loans just over 60% have been successful.

The factors influencing successful bank loan applications amongst the sample were explored in the survey. One factor seems to be the amount of money requested. A request for a few thousand pounds can have a better chance of success compared to those who ask for a higher sum. A long-standing relationship with the bank is also an advantage. Thirdly, if the business is likely to succeed, it may even be approached by a bank wishing to extend a loan. One mini-cab firm owner who wasn't quite happy with his business' success says, for instance, "after sometime we started the business Halifax approached us themselves and offered us £7,000 which we decided not to accept"(T214). A fourth indicator of success is a solid business plan and the ability to present it well. Having a European citizen as a business partner is also said to be an advantage. It should be noted that some banks are perceived to be more likely to extend credit than others, which could be comparatively discriminatory. As an example, a corner shop owner expanding his business to larger premises said:

> Barclays let me open an account with them and decided to give me £44,000 loan for expansion. But Natwest, probably the worst discriminatory bank, refused me even to open account with them. When I asked why they said I don't satisfy the score and again when I asked for explanation they wouldn't tell me anymore. Natwest wouldn't allow me even to open account. They said no without any reason (T202).

There are also those who are unhappy with the way banks provide loans to refugees. Only one respondent said that the high interest rate was discouraging. In general respondents believe that requirements by banks are discriminatory and their explanations for refusal are unsatisfactory. One business owner who approached many banks recalled:

> I approached Leicester and Alliance in 1995 and they said they wouldn't lend to me unless I were a British citizen. In the year 1995-1996 I applied for loan to Nationwide and they turned down my application for low credit scoring. In 1998 I asked Natwest for a loan so that I could buy a vehicle for use as a taxi and they said they are not satisfied with my credit scores. In the same year I asked Lloyds to offer me a loan for a shop and they said no on the grounds that there is a Sainsbury's supermarket nearby and the shop cannot make profit (T205).

Business owners also said that they were faced with questions that they considered to be too personal and irrelevant, and which discouraged from making a loan application. A shop business owner said, for instance:

> I applied for loan to Midlands bank and gave them all my success records and personal mortgages for credibility and creditworthiness. They said they can't lend me as they were not satisfied and as I wasn't a Midland's client. When I asked them for more explanation, they started to ask me too detailed (personal) questions which I thought were irrelevant and on the basis of which I protested. I believe they could lend for others [the natives] in the same circumstances. Natwest did not give me any response for application for 6-months despite my repeated drop-in requests (T201).

About 50% of those who applied for bank loans believe that the bank discriminates against refugees or are not sure if they do ('don't rule it out'). This group is dominated by those who have been refused loans. The main argument for this opinion is that the criteria set by banks is seen to focus more on personal detail than financial success. These

respondents are convinced that the banks set criteria on personal details which excludes refugees. A respondent who owns a shop and failed in his application for loan with the Midlands Bank said, for instance:

> Yes they discriminate against refugees who normally live on social security at the start, unlike other immigrants (who normally come with their money). They have discouraging criteria; e.g., requirement for 2-3 (long) years membership with the banks which is difficult for refugees. A refugee may come without their passport - necessary to open a bank account. Even with three years membership they say we can't be sure about your credibility as you have not been with us for long enough (T201).

A restaurateur, as one example of many, said that "they ask you too many, in my opinion, unnecessary questions like immigration status and they seem to judge you by that and by who you are rather than by business success story...they used to ask me to show them documentary evidence that I am a citizen here"(T204). The rest of respondents, all of whom were offered loans, say banks are concerned with performance more than anything else. This group is dominated by those who have either British citizenship or ILR and who have lived in the UK for up to 21 years.

The issues above are related to those who have approached banks for loans, however there are also those who have never approached banks, representing about 43%. A fear of intrusive questions, about which refugees and asylum seekers are vulnerable (such as citizenship or other immigration status which they might not have yet been awarded) and lack of information regarding whether banks can help are key factors for not approaching banks for loans. Additional factors include difficulties in meeting the financial costs of a bank's requirements, such putting together a business plan which is said to be expensive, or finding (an acceptably high) deposit; or not being in debt and no real need to borrow at that time.

8.5.3. Awareness of Other Lending Institutions for Ethnic Minority Business

This study also attempted to find out whether there was enough communication about what schemes and institutions might be able to provide support to ethnic minorities and refugees in getting or accessing loans. Just under 30% say they are aware or have heard of them. However respondents in this category have not taken up the advice and support these organisations offer for various reasons. These reasons include ineligibility of specific business types (e.g., letting and travel agency) or ineligibility through employment status (most need to be unemployed in order to benefit). It is noted that respondents might not have heard about these organisations when unemployed or before being self-employed. Those who do receive support do not usually gain a positive outcome. As an example a respondent said that the business plan a refugee support organisation had helped him to create has not helped him to secure a loan with Natwest and Lloyds banks, while another woman respondent said that the training she attended [as a result of their support] towards getting financial support has not helped.

The rest (70%) said that they were unaware of lending schemes, institutions targeting ethnic minorities or those organisations that providing advice to access such organisations, if any. This can be despite attempts to find help. Where an individual has not tried to find help, it could be because they may be reluctant to apply for a loan or may be confident in their ability to impress mainstream banks for financial provision. Not knowing how to access a loan is further factor.

8.5.4. Capital security

Only one entrepreneur said that his business is secure and with no reliance on loaned funds. Over a fifth of respondents said that they do not feel that their business secure with regard to capital. While this group is dominated by traditional/cultural restaurants, those established recently and those whose costs are outstripping income are those who feel the least secure. A loan may or may not be a remedy for such problem depending on the interest of the business owners. Just over 70% are not sure that their business is financially stable and do not rule out or rule in the importance of loan in the future. The success or failure of their business may depend on unpredictable elements, for example,

weather conditions for a hairdresser or the trend of information technology for communications business. High interest rates and the banks requirements (for instance using a person's home as collateral) are barriers to applying for bank loans. Many have said they rely on their own personal efforts rather than bank loans.

8.5.5. Capital-Related Government Support

The self-employed would like Government to help them in various ways towards capital acquisition. These include influencing banks to relax requirements so that refugees may benefit from services. Requirements excluding refugees include requiring an individual to show either a passport or Home office papers [rather than mainly business performance]. Complexities exist for legal residents; e.g., as one respondent mentioned a mis-spelling of names or nationality by the authorities. This takes time for correction and banks are unable to help during that time. Thus some would like to see separate alternative lending schemes and institutions for refugees.

One other area of support where those surveyed would like Government help is the creation of support mechanisms to alleviate the high costs of running a business. A traditional restaurant owner in North London said:

> Business rates are increasing from year to year by more than 8%. So you are required to pay a high expense for the same business, in fact for declining business. The council doesn't provide any facilities except for rubbish collection (even we pay for it). But we pay a higher and higher council tax which I find it difficult. I wish that the Government would do something to sort this out (T204).

Increasing bills for utilities, or insurance and difficulties in finding parking spaces even for unloading are also issues mentioned where the self-employed would like help from the Government..

The provision of training and a campaign to raise awareness of information regarding loans are also areas that respondents felt that the government should be addressing, in particular for refugees as they come from a completely different background. A delicatessen, as an example, says "information is lacking about where we can get loans with low interest rates. I hear that there are some lenders but I do not know who they are...I go everywhere I think I can get help [only to come back without success]"(T209). Additional support required includes regeneration of business areas (including infrastructure) to increase custom. A call shop owner in North London, for instance, says:

> Business shops in our area (Finsbury Park) where ethnic minorities work do not have a good standard quality, say like shops in Wood Green. This creates a bad image for customers and it is not good for business. Government has to help through our tax money or through small and soft loan facilities to renovate our buildings (shops) inside and outside (T206).

Whilst just one small shop business owner said he has never been bothered about what help he may want from government or doesn't associate his business problems with being a refugee, government support has been sought in general to 'encourage rather than discourage' business which may have multi-dimensional effects. These are all those issues linked to depleting capital such as high costs and 'harsh' council conditions, as well as training, awareness-raising and provision of greater information.

In summary, refugees do not usually arrive in the UK with capital. Other studies show a similar characteristic; for example, the Soviet Jewish and Vietnamese refugees in California, studied by Gold (1992). Janet MacGaffe and Bazenguissa Ganga (2002) in their study of the Congolese traders between Europe and Africa have also noted this difficulty of lack of funds amongst immigrants (in their study's case immigrants living on the margins of the law in Paris). According to our data, more than 80% of respondents compiled their start-up capital from sources other than lending institutions. This is consistent with the Refugee Council's study, *Integration of Refugees in Europe* (RC, 1999), which notes that one of the factors that influences a tendency to concentrate in the service sector, which my study also confirms, is the fact that service sector business are relatively easy to establish and require less seed capital. This could be one reason why the

businesses in our data did not need to borrow from lending institutions. The main sources of start-up capital were found to be personal savings, families and relatives. The importance of ethnic links in accessing start-up capital is also highlighted in Janet MacGaffe and Bazenguissa- Ganga's study of the Congolese diaspora in France. Indeed, for these traders, MacGaffe and Bazenguissa Ganga noticed that social capital is more important than monetary capital. However, as Gold observes, ethnic links can lack power and there could be a need to borrow from mainstream lending institutions.

The self-businesses in our study have attempted to borrow from banks at some stage. Our findings are that initially, or at the start of trading, nearly two-thirds would not have been granted bank loans despite attempts made to apply. It has been established that banks can discriminate against refugees, since their requirements are difficult to meet and that some of their lending criteria have the effect of excluding refugees. Most important of the latter are the requirements for 'proper' immigration status or British citizenship. The evidence from data gathered for this research confirm the conclusions of previous studies outlined in the literature review above (e.g., Allen, *et al*, 1981; AET, 1998; Brown, 1996). The Home Office (Dustmann, *et al*, 2003) research on the labour market performance of immigrants in the UK indicates that the wider ethnic minority groups are also disadvantaged in acquiring capital. However, the research does not explore how and what form the disadvantage takes, as in this study. Refugees may avoid approaching banks for loans as they may not want to be confronted with intrusive questions without the surety of being successful, or because they may be unaware that it is possible to get apply for a loan. None of the respondents have received a loan after accessing support which targets ethnic minorities as potential loan applicants. Seventy-five percent are unaware that this support exists. Our data, for instance, does not show evidence that self-employed refugees are aware of the existence of the Loan Guarantee Scheme that Refugee Council mentions in the *Integration of Refugees in Europe* (1999). Whilst almost all respondents did not want to comment on the capital security of their businesses, many confirmed that they would rely on their own personal efforts rather than loans to ensure future business success. As a logical consequence, many believe that the government should influence banks to scrap exclusionary requirements (such as irrelevant questions on immigration

status) and to focus primarily on business performance as legal residents. Either as a complementary or an alternative scheme would be the establishment of separate lending schemes for refugees alone, again set up by government. The provision of relevant training and information materials on applying for funds and easing the high costs of running a business recommendations from the sample group.

8.6. Issues Relating to Premises

8.6.1. Acquisition

About 20% of respondents have local council premises and 50% have premises from a private landlord. The remainder with premises acquired them through other means, including buying a key from a previous occupier, buying the freehold, or renting the premises through an agency.

The most serious difficulties faced while buying premises are those acquiring property from the council or via [letting] agency. High property prices for and no knowledge of alternatives are issues for refugees. A respondent who opened a shop in an underground subway joining containers recalls, for instance:

> The council agent in charge of me didn't want me to take this place. I had difficulties for six months (at the start). Finally he told me to pay an unprecedented high rent, which the ex-owners of the containers didn't pay and which doesn't match the property market price as I know now. I was asked to pay or leave it. Because I was desperate I had to take it (T202).

Respondents felt that the council sends agents who control business activities and set unreasonable conditions. These respondents believed that the difficulties they faced in acquiring their premises are linked to, among others, their being black refugees (foreigners) and not trusted to keep up with the rent. Agencies are also said to ask for immigration status and when they realise the applicant is an asylum seeker or refugee they are 'put off'.

8.6.2 Satisfaction with Premises

Taking location, lease terms and conditions as well as safety and security issues as main yardsticks, respondents were asked whether they were happy with their business premises. About 43% said that they were happy on all counts; a similar percentage said that they were partly happy and partly unhappy while a small percentage as the remainder said that they were dissatisfied on all counts.

A high satisfaction score regarding the premises' location included elements such as the site being an individual's own choice, the existence of community members or other main clientele groups in the area, the retention of a highly-regarded business name being close to transport (tube and rail)or a residential area; lack of local competition. Factors influencing a disappointing score included being located on a side road or in deprived areas with few customers. It is noted that business difficulties sometimes arose from council activities and were perceived as discriminatory against foreigners. A shop owner in a subway for instance complained:

> Now a crossing is being constructed above the subway. My former clients do not need to use the subway and drop to my shop on the way. This is affecting me. The construction company did not bother about our business as we are not English (T202).

With regard to safety and security some concerns were raised, including concerns at local drug trade and location in a 'rough' area, bad customers or past experience of being burgled.

With regard to the terms of leases and rent agreements almost all said that they are standard and acceptable. A few raised the issues of high business rates and rents, in particular when applied to an extension of the business (such as creating an internet café in a minicab firm).

8.6. 3 Support from council or other housing institutions and awareness of advice and support providers for refugees

Just about 15% of respondents said that they received support from the council in relation to business premises. This support includes supplying the addresses of vacant premises for contact; providing training programmes and mentoring on self-employment. The Refugee Council is also regarded as an important source of contact addresses. According to this group, in general councils are seen to have supportive attitudes towards ethnic minority businesses.

The great majority, however, said that they have never had support from their councils. Indeed many said that if anything their council's practices had been discouraging. No information leaflets or other materials were available from councils. Indeed it is said that in some cases they are discriminatory. According to a shop owner:

> Business rate valuation officers in the council are not accessible. When you call them and they listen to you on the phone (accent) they don't bother. They are the key whose valuation is decisive for councils to work out rent, etc. (T202).

Inner city councils were considered to be unhelpful in making free parking spaces available for businesses or their clients even for one hour. Those surveyed complained that charges were made for black bags but these were not collected. It is possible that they might not have tried to access available support from their councils. Some were unsure about what support was available from councils or institutions relating to housing support.

About 50% of respondents were totally unaware of, or are not sure about, organisations that specifically help refugees with advice and support in relation to self-employment. No one in this group had received any information about such service providers. Some respondents mention Refugee Council and a few more local advisers. It was suggested that community organisation should help in this.

8.6.4. Private Letting Agencies

The survey has also attempted to explore the importance of private letting agencies as viable institutions to aid refugees' businesses. Almost all respondents say either they are not sure about their importance or believed they are neither of importance nor relevance to refugee business. The main reasons for this belief included the high service fee charged, the too much income-related detail they ask for to the extent that this detail has to be compiled by a professional, and finally, the undesirable locations marketed to refugees. Respondents also complained that agents did not take them seriously, and discriminated against women and foreigners. A restaurant owner commented, "They are snobbish. If you are black and go there, they don't take you seriously. From my experience their assessment is prejudiced on the basis of accent when you communicate with them on the phone"(T207).

8.6.5 Support Needed from Government

Various areas have been suggested for government intervention to support refugees. These include recognising the fact that refugees are unlikely to have in-depth knowledge of UK systems 'as the system is difficult to penetrate'. Elements which could be promoted through government include raising awareness by communicating where to go to for support (councils and others) through community organisations; providing guidance on applications for licences by such groups; facilitating [relevant] training; helping in easing high costs for rent, business rates; waste collection expenses and charges for fire brigade and police service which in some places are said to cost nearly 50% of rent; providing help to renovate business areas to attract customers; helping the self-employed to get council housing with shorter waiting times; establishing loans for premises acquisition; extending protection for ethnic businesses especially those culture-specific ones which can be targets for racist attack.

In addition respondents mentioned other areas which, though not directly linked to premises, involve legislative issues. A small shop owner for instance says:

> Paper distribution is monopolised by WH Smith in some areas and by others in other places. We prefer to buy from publishers but the law wouldn't allow that. The monopolists conditions are very harsh. They ask you to pay, if they like, an unacceptable amount and they don't listen to you. As you have no alternative you will have to pay. Government doesn't listen as all retailers are ethnic minorities (T202).

It is also suggested that councils should 'encourage rather than discourage' such businesses. In the initial phase of business start-up, councils are accused of applying pressure to proprietors by asking them to leave accommodation and asking 'lots of questions' about the source of funds for the business start-up. In one case, a respondent said she was threatened with arrest and deportation [in relation to such questions]. Thus it is recommended that as an alternative it would be better if there were government agencies independent of councils and working on this issue. "Councils are lazy- there are many shops closed down in the streets that belong to councils" says a restaurant owner.

To summarise this section whilst around 80% of the business owners acquired their premises through various means, mainly personal dealings other than from councils it has been established that those who acquired their premises from councils were faced by the greatest difficulties. Councils were reported to be prejudiced against 'black refugees or foreigners' and mistrust their ability to pay rent, while agencies were reported to be 'put off' when they discovered that the applicant for the premises was an asylum seeker or refugee. Respondents said that councils caused difficulties or did not help in easing problems post-acquisition through the lack of information available. Moreover respondents felt that councils were discriminating against foreigners for not having English as their first language or and by failing to provide free parking spaces for nearby business premises. The lack of awareness of organisations providing advice and support for refugees in premises acquisition is a serious issue. With regard to private letting agencies, it was discovered that the proprietors were either unsure about their importance or found them to have negative attitudes towards refugees or foreigners. Therefore many

believed that the government should play a role in easing problems by disseminating useful information on where to go to get appropriate support and by providing training and financial support as well as security protection. Local councils are also wanted to "encourage rather than discourage" refugee businesses in the way that they function.

One of the areas where self-employment issues for immigrants are under-explored, as concluded by a recent Home Office study (Dustmann, et al, 2003), is reflected on the issue of premises. Here again the scarcity is worse when it comes to the narrower group of immigrants – refugees. Of these rare studies on immigrants, the Bradford study on Asian own-businesses studied by Allen, *et al (1981)*, as noted above in the literature review (section 8.1), documents the discriminatory and exclusionary practices faced by the community in acquiring capital from English banks and insurance companies including to secure a suitable site from estate agencies or 'planned discrimination' in the allocation of newly constructed lettings and loan advancing bodies. Many studies indicate that there have been improvements in race-related disadvantages over the last decades. So there could be positive changes since the publications of the Bradford study by Allen, *et al* (1981). Moreover, the institutional disadvantages mentioned by our study's participants to be related to their being refugees, or as those with language difficulties or as black people may well be true, or it can simply be perception. In any case our findings have arrived at similar findings as Allen *et al* (1981) did more than two decades ago that there is a feeling of being ostracised by the property market system to develop refugees businesses.

8.7. Clientele Groups Related Issues

8.7.1. Main Clientele Groups

About half of the businesses surveyed have their own community as their main clients. The type of services provided plays a major role in this, with culture specific-services predominantly attracting members of their own community. Thus all Ethiopian

restaurants are included in this category, not only because of their location within the community, the food they prepare and sell but also because of the culture of music and weekend. Also included in culture-specific businesses are a delicatessen and hairdresser, which again specialise in Ethiopian goods and services. Whilst type of service is the key determining factor in forming a main client base group, it is noted that even if service provided is non-culture specific (letting and travel agent for instance), main client base could again be the community group. The reasons for this are that the firm finds networking and making contacts more straightforward with its community members. Likewise community members are likely to be more comfortable in using a firm which has a familiar cultural basis.

The next highest client base is drawn from the host society, the main client base for about 35% of the businesses. These businesses provide services which are not culture-specific and include shops, driving instruction and a pharmacy. The key factor is location - this client base lives and/or works near the business outlet. The remainder (about 15% of businesses surveyed) have a mixed customer base and offers a generic service. A mini-cab firm is a case in point.

The survey also wanted to establish whether there is a tendency for customers from some ethnic communities to ignore their local services and to find similar services run by people from a similar cultural background. Such examples have been noted. For instance, in a part of London where there is a significant Arab community it was noted that customers preferred letting and travel agencies from within their community and in the case of a corner shop some Asians are said to prefer to go to Asian shops. It is indicated that this also exists in areas where there is no established ethnic minority business. A pharmacy business owned by an Ethiopian in Southern England can be a case in point. The respondent from the business recalls that:

> When we started our pharmacy business in this city native customers would be shocked to see us serving and the moment they saw us they would say 'sorry I will come back' and would never do so. Indeed one [white native] client one day openly told me things like 'that shop is bought by a

> Pakistani', this and that. I then joked to her that I have even liked her dress and would also buy it if she wasn't careful and we laughed at that (T213).

It is noted however that once customers have experience a consistently good level of service, these attitudes will change and they are unlikely to avoid the outlet. In cases where some business owners said they had no experience of being ignored by customers from certain backgrounds, other factors were typically the absence of other competition; e.g., the absence of an Indian restaurant near an Ethiopian one. Whilst customer service (treating customers well) is important, those running culturally-specific businesses are less likely to be shunned (avoided) by those outside that culture.

8.7.2. Guaranteed Clientele

The majority believe that they have a more or less secured clientele group and reasons that make them believe so include business being surrounded by residential blocks of flats and established working places like council offices; absence of competitors; hope of business growing; lowering prices of services provided which is being appreciated by customers; confidence on proper management and handling of customers; business being in existence for a long time [and known to many]. These businesses include both the culture-specific and non-culture specific businesses.

There are, however, those who say they don't see or are not sure of guaranteed clientele for the foreseeable future. Reasons to believe so include the nature of their clients loyalty depends on the appearance of competitors and that there are trends that affect their business negatively. The Paris study by Janet MacGaffe and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2002) on Congolese inter-continental trade found out that friends and faith-related relationships form a steady clientele group. Our data found out that this is the case for some but not for all of them. We have found that there are Ethiopian refugees' businesses who are almost entirely dependent on host country clients, especially when their businesses are not culture related. Indeed our study has arrived at similar findings as Keith Hart's studies in Nima among Frafra entrepreneurs where he concluded that there is no easy correlation

between entrepreneurial success and ability to make friends. Our findings also have similarities with the Home Office study (Dustmann, et al, 2003) which concludes that ethnic relations help immigrants to be competent in "some" particular self-employment areas. David Griffith's study on Somali and Kurdish refugees in London (2002) touches on ethnic relations as a resource in self-employment. Indeed, Gold's study on Soviet Jewish and Vietnamese refugees in California (1992), also highlights the "symbiotic relationship" between ethnic community and its businesses. Our study's findings have similarities with these two studies only to a limited extent. One reason could be that especially in the case of Gold's Californian study there are 'ethnic enclaves' of the refugees in question whereas that is not quite observable among Ethiopian refugees in the UK.

8.8. Comparison of past employment and current self-employment

Business owners had been doing hired jobs in the UK before they embarked on their current self-employment. It is noted that there are issues that they liked from their hired jobs and those that they like from their current self-employment. To start from the former main issues they liked about their past jobs include less responsibility, for instance, in making customers happy; less hassle with some bad customers and shoplifters, tax and workers' wages; more relaxed and time for pleasure and socialising with friends as well as family life; less depressed and frustrated with income level (unlike when business is quiet) as it is a regular same wage. Issues liked about current self-employment mainly include working for oneself however long hours they may be makes happy and 'self-motivated'; being self disciplined and confident; being ambitious to grow; being own boss; better income and planning economically; better job security and avoidance of short notice redundancy or firing; experience about the 'business world'.

Self-employment as an escape route from discrimination in hired job has also been an issue. A respondent, for instance, claims that past discrimination in a hired job was a reason for him to go for self-employment. The respondent recalls:

I used to work as a building surveyor. I was discriminated against in promotion as they were promoting my juniors ahead of me and that was the reason for me to go for self-employment (T212).

With all the pros and cons of past hired and current self-employment, with the exception of one business owner who is now earning less income than past semi-skilled job all business owners have preferred their current self-employment to the past one.

III. Policy-related factors

8.9. Challenges with awareness of self-employment related regulations as foreigners

Al-Mahari (2001) indicates that self-employment is mainly a function of what is perceived by individuals as "profitable information". As people coming from a third world country where self-business regulations are quite different from those in Europe, it was attempted to see if this was a problem for the business owners. The findings are that above 40% of them have faced some kind of problems to cope. These problems include those that have to do with difficulties to understand complications with self-employment taxation and VAT calculations. Hiring professional accountants could have high financial implications and their support can still be limited. A minicab firm owner for instance says:

Even if we have accountants we have to know when to claim tax return, etc. Right now I am paying £1,200 because I didn't have that knowledge (T213).

Health and safety regulations are said to be the other issues as difficult areas for some to cope. It is said that inspectors can be very demanding and pay unexpected visits. It is said that the regulations could be quite difficult to understand 'even for the educated ones' and recommended that training 'in simplified ways' is needed on issues like food safety regulations. In the case of the remainder who haven't mentioned problems with the self-

employment regulations some have indicated that they haven't faced problems only 'so far' or not in the type of business they are involved or had the problem in the past or no opinion is given leaving the possibility of facing a problem open.

Our study's findings correspond with the conclusions of some of the writers referred to in the literature review above (section 8.1.). Ken Brown' observation, based on the Employment-Horizon project for European refugees and migrants (1996), that some refugees may have come from countries where there is less regulation and self-employment can be pursued more easily than in the UK is true for the Ethiopian self-businesses studied. But we have little evidence to confirm his association of refugees' being engaged in particular types of businesses than others, because of fear of complications of the self-employment rules and regulations in the UK in some particular sectors.

8.10. Earning and Tax Related Issues

An attempt has been made to look at earning level in relation to some features of the businesses. Table 8.3 below shows level of earning in relation to the nature of business, namely culture specific or non-culture specific.

Table 8.3. Gross Annual Earning of Sample Businesses

Gross Annual Earning (£)	Type and number of businesses embraced in income bracket		Total
	Country of origin culture specific businesses	Non- Culture specific	
Less than 5,000		1	1
5,001-10,000	1		1
10,001-15,000	3	2	5
15,001-20,000		2	2
20,001-30,000	1		1
30,001- 40,000	1		1
Over 40,000		2	2
Undisclosed		1	1
Total	6	8	14

As the table above shows the majority of businesses have a gross annual earning between £10,001 and £15,000, with a more or less similar distribution between the culture and non-culture specific businesses, namely restaurants, corner shop, hairdresser and an international call shop. The second relatively higher proportion falls in income groups of £15,001-£20,000 and over £40,000, the maximum exceeding £60,000 a year. An attempt was made to notice if there is any particular relationship between the different amounts earned and factors such as length of time business was operating, gender of owners, or nature of business (i.e., culture specific or non-culture specific). However, nothing of such relationships been observed. Possible explanations for this could be the small size of the data (although the sample is very large for the community in question) and the fact that there is no much difference in the earning ranges. Just one respondent has refused to disclose level of income.

Mark Harvey argues that if, by economic definition, many self-employed workers are in fact employed workers, the "fiction" of self-employment arises from the discrepancy between this economic reality, and the legal and tax definitions of self-employment. Put another way he says "it is in fact taxation that 'makes' people self-employed, attributes them the status of self-employed" (Harvey, 1995:8). Self-employment appears to be not to have a deep-rooted existence within the Ethiopian community at least in the sense that there are no many big self-businesses motivating to look into details of tax issues. It is, however, attempted to see if it is quite an issue for the sample respondents. Just under half of the respondents say the amount of tax they pay so far is reasonable including one respondent who looks at the issue of tax in relation to the social services he enjoys and which are financed by government's tax revenue. The rest above half of the respondents include those who can't say much about tax as new starters or with very low-income. This group is, however, dominated by those who feel that they pay too much tax compared to earnings, despite tax holidays up to a certain period of time. Respondents complained that the tax self-assessment form is too complicated and requires the help of a professional accountant which is an added cost.

The Surrey conference on the Training and Employment Provision for Refugees in Europe referred to in the literature review, in particular section 8.1., above recognises that self-employment is not the solution for the majority of refugees. The conference has concluded that this is because refugees do not find the complexities of European economic systems, company law, taxation and so on easy to understand (Refugee Council, 1988). In relation to the complications on the tax system, our findings confirm the conclusions of the conference. Our study has also similar recommendations, as expressed by survey participants, that appropriate training programmes are needed to help refugees in these areas.

To summarise this chapter, many writers including those referred to in this chapter argue that self-employment can help immigrants in general and refugees in particular in tackling problems of unemployment and exclusion. It is argued that self-employment is targeted by many such communities upon arrival and for a number of reasons there is a tendency by them towards ethnic based self-employment.

It is however noted that self-employment is far from easy for these groups as it is negatively affected by a whole range of factors related to pre-asylum circumstances, such as lack of adequate knowledge and experience on how the European system of self-employment works and the fact that they come with no capital to start business, although many have had self-employment experiences in pre-asylum years. Pre-asylum community connections and networks are helpful in forming a clientele base, but they are not the only sources of clients, as native consumer society is also quite important. In addition, there are also host-country related problems such as those that have to do with acquiring start-up or expansion capital from banks and also in relation to acquiring premises from local authorities. Many believe that they are discriminated against by financial institutions, by councils and the property market, owing to their being refugees. Policy factor is also noted to be another issue at least in as far as it has not helped to solve these problems and helped refugee business people get training on how the self-business system works in the UK. These are some of the disadvantages that refugees uniquely

face, as noted from our study's findings. Writers insist that the institutions which shape the incentives available to entrepreneurs and also perhaps hinder them in their two-sided role are probably amongst the most important in determining relative levels of economic activity (e.g., Abell, Khalaf and Smeaton, 1995). In the community's case the above-mentioned and other areas of disadvantage and exclusion (discussed in the work) have also been found to be issues.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Integration into the Labour Market

Refugees are migrants (Kuhlman, 1994) and while writers make the distinction between refugees and migrants, the discussion then often proceeds 'to blur these distinctions' (Escalona and Black, 1995). Refugee literature still needs to develop in terms of 'fundamental theories' and the literature is not well developed in the area of the labour market. According to Vaughan Robinson, the recurrence of refugee influxes and the frenetic pace of research required to keep up with them has distracted attention of academics from developing new theories or assembling existing theory in new ways. Thus pro-active, planned programmes of basic research have been rare in the field of refugee research (Robinson, 1993). This is particularly noticeable when considering refugee interaction with the host society's labour market (DWP, 2003; Bloch, 2004) Even in the wider Western Europe no significant 'comprehensive' studies have focused on refugees post-resettlement (Joly, 1992). Those in employment status are all too often taken as 'surrogates' for measuring the totality of the quality of life (Robinson, 1993). An attempt has been made to show in this work to highlight the deficiency of the refugee literature on labour market using the conclusions of policy-makers and scholars in the field.

With this reality, many writers in the field of refugee studies suggest that researchers turn to related disciplines, especially 'labour migration' theory, where there are 'very impressive' bodies of work (E. Marx, 1990). A selective literature review undertaken in this thesis in chapters two and three on the existing debates around economic migrants has attempted to provide an insight into the circumstances of economic migrants. The

literature reviewed in chapters two and three covers debates on race relations and how the processes of exclusion and disadvantage have taken shape in the UK labour market, especially after the arrival of the New Commonwealth immigrants following the Second World War.

However, as this study argued in evaluating the different areas of literature reviewed, especially in chapters 2 and 3 (i.e., theories on race and race relations and ethnicity by Modood, Anthias, *Dualists*, Castles and Kosack and the integration literature, etc.), there are missing links regarding refugees. Their debates do not include the unique circumstances of this important section of ethnic minorities. The existing literature on ethnic minorities and immigrants in the west, developed by various social science disciplines do not explore, as passionately, the special issues of refugees whose circumstances in the host country labour market are affected by a range of pre-asylum, host country and policy factors. Most importantly, refugees are trapped by asylum-related problems (which plays a central role in their education and employment rights). The 'involuntary' nature of many refugees' flight from their countries of origin may also have special effects, compared with voluntary labour migrants, who for instance come with start-up capital for own businesses. These pre-asylum, host country and policy factors have specific impacts on refugees' level of integration into the host country's labour market, which are overlooked by most writers on ethnic minorities. This study is an attempt to contribute in filling this gap by taking Ethiopian refugees as a sample refugee group, because it has been possible to access data on them and because Ethiopian refugees can be taken as an example as they share several common characteristic features with other refugees.

This study has also attempted to critically review the current debates around the issue of refugee integration in host societies. It then identified the most relevant variables to explore processes of ostracism and disadvantage in the labour market. The findings help us to argue that levels of integration into the labour market are affected and can be measured by pre-asylum, host-country and policy factors, although the demarcation lines may not be fine at times. More specifically, the study has explored the multi-dimensional

effects of these factors in ostracising the sample refugees from the labour market as barriers, and made them unemployed. Examples of pre-asylum factors responsible for refugees' unemployment can be qualifications and experiences on arrival; host factors include the way the labour market system works and the media and policy factors include denial of rights to work. It has also been attempted to investigate factors that affect refugees' self-employment. These include again pre-asylum (e.g. home country experiences in self-employment, or lack of start-up capital on arrival), host country factors (including issues in relation to accessing bank loans or getting premises) and policy factors (such as how self-employment regulations work in the UK. With regards to those in standard hired employment, it has been attempted to show how issues in the workplace are also deeply affected by pre-asylum factors (e.g., workplace code of conduct); host country factors (e.g., types and conditions of work available) and policy factors (e.g., equal opportunities policies).

The study concludes that refugees may share positive and negative experiences in the labour market with other immigrants and ethnic minorities or, even people of other colour. But, in addition, they also have unique issues they live with owing to pre-asylum, host country and policy factors. These factors directly and uniquely impact on their integration into the host society's labour market.

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