

AN EXPLORATION OF THE WAYS IN WHICH ETHIOPIAN REFUGEE PEOPLE LIVING IN THE UK UNDERSTAND EXTREME ADVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Ethiopian refugee people living in the UK are typical of a wider population of people who, having fled significant hardship in their own country - including war, ethnic conflict, famine, political persecution and torture - have sought asylum here. Within published literature pertaining to the field of mental health¹, the extreme adversity experienced by refugee people from all over the world (pre-, during and post-exile) has predominantly been understood in terms of “psychological trauma”; a construct which often confers consequent psychological detriment that may require clinical intervention to address. This study argues that the construct of psychological trauma, and the assumptions underpinning attempts to study it quantitatively, can, however, serve to overshadow and to subjugate other, perhaps non-pathological, accounts of extreme adversity, which may be adopted by refugee people. Taking a social constructionist epistemological position, this study explores, through the use of semi-structured interviews, the ways in which four Ethiopian refugee people living in the UK understand their experiences of extreme adversity. Dialogic narrative analysis is used to explore the narratives employed by each of the four participants individually, and to examine the multi-dimensional and context-contingent reasons not only for how, but also why, they might have thus narrated their experiences. This study concludes that the narratives employed by its participants construct their experiences - and responses to them - in various ways which differ from dominant trauma narratives. It is suggested that these are influenced by the social, political, religious and economic frameworks within which they had been invited to make sense of life, and thus are not necessarily compatible with narratives which have found utility in a more Western social setting. Implications of these conclusions are considered in terms of psychology theory, practice and policy, alongside suggestions for future research.

¹ The ‘field of mental health’ refers here and throughout this thesis to theory and practice relating to the disciplines of clinical psychology and psychiatry and the various factions of each.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a result of the turbulent political and economic history of Ethiopia, from 1974 to the present in particular, many people have fled in an attempt to escape famine, persecution, torture, regional conflict and war. In this respect, Ethiopian refugee people are typical of a wider refugee population who, in the face of tremendous hardship, have made, or have been forced to make, the decision to leave their homes, communities and livelihoods in search of relative safety elsewhere. I begin this chapter with a review of relevant literature, pertaining to the experiences of refugee people more broadly, and in so doing highlight and critically examine one of the most salient but arguably culture-bound narrative themes within it: that of “psychological trauma”. In examining the construct of psychological trauma, as adopted in relation to refugee people around the world, I explain how the present study aims to explore how experiences of extreme adversity are understood by one specific group of refugee people - namely those from Ethiopia, now living in the UK.

1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is based on a narrative review of literature pertaining to the experiences of Ethiopian refugee people, and of the refugee population more widely. Through a critical appraisal and synthesis of this literature, I present the current prevailing ideas within this domain and also demonstrate how the present study aims to address one specific gap in the research carried out to date. This review was based on literature identified within the databases PsychARTICLES, PsychINFO, SAGE Journals Online and Science Direct²; Appendix 1 lists the terms and parameters used to search for relevant material within them, and the way in which inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Further to these searches, a “snowballing” technique was employed, to isolate additional references, which may not have been otherwise captured. An internet-based search was also carried out, using the same search terms, to identify non-academic material including newspaper reports, documentation of governmental

² In choosing to search the selected databases it is acknowledged that the literature retrieved purposively mostly comprises that from publications from the field of clinical psychology, despite much having been written about this population within a range of other domains. Material from other disciplinary fields is addressed as appropriate, whilst the present chapter retains on a focus the ways in which refugee people are conceptualised in terms of clinical psychology.

legislation, and publications from non-government organisations (NGOs). An outline of the terminology used throughout this study follows.

1.2 TERMINOLOGY

1.2.1 Refugee People

The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees employed the following definition of “refugee”:

Someone who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR, 1951, Article A(2))

Signatories of the United Nations Convention on Refugees must consider the application of anyone seeking asylum within their borders, and grant that person refuge should presented evidence support their claim (Tribe, 2002). As such, the term “refugee” connotes a legal status, indicating that citizenship has been granted in a country where asylum has been sought. The term “refugee” is often used more broadly however, to encompass those people who are “internally displaced” within their own country, as well as people who are asylum seekers or stateless persons (UNHCR, 2012).

The term “refugee” is also commonly used in psychology literature; however Patel has argued that this term is, strictly, a legal rather than clinical one, and thus tends to construct people as legal entities rather than as individually contextualised human beings. As such, throughout this study I use the term “refugee people” (e.g. Patel, 2002) to refer to those people who have fled from their homes in an attempt to escape threatened or actual persecution or physical harm, whether or not they have been granted a legal status in another country. Refugee people thus comprise a vast and heterogeneous global population, estimates of the size of which range from about 23 million to about 50 million worldwide, depending on definitions employed (Tribe, 2002). Varying groups of refugee people regularly find themselves the focus of international attention, and local political rhetoric comprising a balance between the economic impact of

(forced) migration and the obligation to protect and to provide safety to those so displaced (Patel 2003; Connor, 2010). Refugee people from a range of backgrounds and in a range of settings have also been the subject of an increasing amount of published research in the field of mental health, as discussed below.

1.2.2 Extreme adversity

Refugee people will have often, by definition, experienced “extreme adversity”³; a term employed throughout this study to denote highly stressful or threatening occurrences, which may include, among other experiences, poverty, persecution, torture, or enforced material or social deprivation⁴. This may have been whilst living in their country of origin, or during, as well as following, flight elsewhere. Perhaps, unlike other groups of migrant people, they will often also have needed to leave their homes, families and communities abruptly, have been forced to make long and arduous journeys to places of relative safety, to endure hostile conditions in makeshift accommodation, and to engage in lengthy battles to establish their rights to access basic commodities in a new country (Patel, 2011a; Gorst-Unsworth and Goldenberg, 1998). Indeed, several studies suggest that adversity experienced during and post exile may often be comparable to that experienced prior to flight (e.g. Pernice and Brook, 1996): even having been granted asylum elsewhere, refugee people continue to face high levels of unemployment, poverty, language difficulties, poor housing, poor health, racism and social isolation (Watters, 2001; Patel, 2008).

1.3 EXTREME ADVERSITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

Within the field of mental health, the variously cited psychological consequences of many forms of extreme adversity have increasingly been accounted for,

³ Whilst it is acknowledged that large numbers of people will have had similar experiences of extreme adversity and not fled their homes, this study specifically focuses on the experiences of refugee people. A vast literature pertaining to the experiences of people living in post-conflict societies (e.g. Pupavac, 2006) has also been published, to which much of the following discussion is of equal relevance. However for the sake of clarity and brevity the focus of the literature referenced will largely be limited to the experiences of refugee people.

⁴ This term was chosen as an alternative to ‘trauma’, in an attempt to avoid the presumptions and connotations which are often implicit in its use, as is explored below.

understood and communicated through the construct of “psychological trauma”. The following sections outline how this term has been used within psychological literature generally, before its adoption in relation to refugee people is explored.

1.3.1 Psychological trauma

Despite a huge rise in its use in both psychiatric discourse and lay parlance (Furedi, 2004), the construct of “psychological trauma” remains somewhat ill- (or at least multiply-) defined within mental health theory and practice. Furthermore, the conflation of ‘trauma as event’, with ‘trauma as effect’ means its definition is necessarily both multi-dimensional and particularly elusive. Indeed the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) states that “trauma” is defined by:

Stress events that present extraordinary challenges to coping and adaptation, including experiencing, witnessing, or confronting events that involve actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others (p. 467).

As such, the concept of ‘trauma’ has been used in many ways within various fields, the nuances of each depending on the settings in, and functions of how, it is employed. Predominantly, however, the construct of ‘psychological trauma’ is predicated on a deficit model, whereby psychological damage is presumed to be inflicted on some people who are forced to endure perhaps particularly unexpected or unsettling events or experiences that cause great distress. The nature of this impact is often cited as variable between individuals, and as a function of framework within which human experience is understood. However, analogous to its original use within physical medical discourse, the construct of “psychological trauma” often suggests the occurrence of a lasting psychological impairment, which may require clinical intervention in order that an acceptable quality of life can resume (Herman, 1992). This impairment, as explored more thoroughly below, is thought to be what underlies symptoms displayed by people who have not adequately recovered from the psychological deficit incurred.

1.3.2 Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

The construct of “psychological trauma” is integral to the diagnostic category of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which was first included in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III, 1980). A diagnosis of PTSD denotes a pattern of “symptoms”, which have developed following exposure to an unusually traumatic event (Roth and Fonagy, 2005); symptoms which have now been honed to include: the persistent and intrusive re-experiencing of the event, through nightmares and “flashbacks”; avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of responsiveness; and sensory hyper-arousal. If someone who has experienced a “traumatic event” exhibits these symptoms for longer than one month, and if these symptoms also cause significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning, then that person would fulfil diagnostic criteria for PTSD (DSM-IV, 1994). The construct of PTSD is now used to account for and to explain the observable emotional and physical responses of people who have experienced extreme adversity in a vast range of contexts, including serious accidents, violent personal assaults, hostage situations, natural or man-made disasters and diagnosis with a life-threatening illness (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2013).

1.3.3 Psychological models of trauma

Some models of psychological trauma certainly pre-date the introduction of PTSD as a diagnostic category (Young, 1995), but some have since developed to provide a theoretical underpinning for it. Thus, perhaps most prominently, trauma is (currently) constructed in clinical practice and literature as an internal psychological deficit, which disrupts (or itself comprises a disruption of) normal psychological functioning. Problematic symptoms (i.e. of PTSD) are understood, by cognitive psychologists at least, to arise from a disturbance in the organisation of the memory of a traumatic event, and a lack of integration of the trauma into a coherent personal biography (e.g. Brewin, 2011). The processing of the trauma through repeated exposure and “cognitive restructuring” is thus often cited as a pre-requisite for the recovery from it (Resick, Monson, and Rizvi, 2003). Psychodynamic therapy for PTSD has, similarly, tended to focus on bringing “conflicts” into conscious awareness, and an analysis of the defenses being employed to keep related feelings and impulses repressed (Schottenbauer et al.,

2008). The predominant (but not the only) aim of psychological therapy for PTSD and the consequences of trauma more broadly, is therefore the retrieval of traumatic memories, and the ameliorating of associated anxieties. This focus is reflected in current UK guidelines for the treatment of PTSD (NICE, 2005), which recommend individual trauma-focussed cognitive behavioural therapy (TF-CBT), and Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR).

1.4 REFUGEE PEOPLE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

With consideration for the extreme adversity that many refugee people will have experienced, the extension of the attribution of “psychological trauma” (and the associated construct of PTSD) is unsurprising. Ingleby (2005) observed that whilst psychology literature relating to refugee people published from 1968-1977 makes no mention of “trauma”, between 2000 and 2005 (following the introduction of the diagnosis of PTSD in DSM-III, 1980) over 40% of such literature does. He noted that:

From about 1980 onwards, then, the concept of “trauma” increasingly formed the basis of studies and interventions concerning the mental health needs of refugees, whether they were living in the industrialised West or in conflict zones. Very soon, the trauma approach became a self-perpetuating, almost closed system. (Ingleby, 2005, p. 9)

It would seem that the constructs of “psychological trauma”, and PTSD, have thus been widely applied to refugee populations, in an unquestioned progression from their adoption in relation to people in the Western world. This is reflected in the large numbers of publications, by mostly Western researchers, who have used symptom measures formulated in the US and UK, to demonstrate how many refugee people are “traumatised”, or who fulfil diagnostic criteria for PTSD, in communities all over the world. Literature documenting quantitative studies of the elevated prevalence of symptoms of PTSD within refugee populations abounds; for those now residing in Western countries (e.g. Fazel, Wheeler and Danesh, 2005) as well as in refugee and post-conflict communities in Algeria, Cambodia, Palestine, Sudan, Rwanda, Somalia and Ethiopia (DeJong, Komproe and Van Ommeren, 2003; Roberts et al., 2009, Onyut et al., 2009) to name but a few.

Whilst some studies have focussed on the adaptation of measures of the symptoms of trauma with the aim of rendering them more valid for use among people from different countries (e.g. Hussain and Bhushan, 2009; Hollifield et al., 2002; Hollifield et al., 2013), a prevailing presumption seems to remain: that “psychological trauma”, as well as “PTSD”, are universally relevant, even if behavioural manifestations of them differ as a function of the cultural or linguistic setting in which they occur (Friedman and Marsella, 1996). It is this assumption which also appears to underpin the ‘global mental health’ movement pioneered by psychiatrists Patel and Prince (e.g. 2010), which highlights the ‘treatment gap’ of ‘mental disorders’ in developing countries, and champions the training of local people in models of western psychiatric care. Whilst a call for equity of healthcare, justice and material provision globally is arguably unequivocal, the global mental health agenda has also therein been accused of perpetuating the notion that categorisations of ‘mental disorders’ (including PTSD) are valid across linguistic and cultural borders. As further discussed below, other psychiatrists (e.g. Summerfield, 2008; Fernando, 2010) have argued that diagnostic categories (including PTSD) are culturally-contingent and as such their export to populations other than the ones in which they have been developed should be thoroughly questioned.

1.4.1 Psychological therapy with refugee people

Adopting the construct of psychological trauma in relation to refugee populations also carries an assumption of the need for professional skill in noticing, understanding and labelling the impact of experiences of extreme adversity. In turn, this suggests that professional, and indeed “clinical”, intervention is often deemed necessary. The services and resources that Western countries provide, both at home and to refugee people in other countries, has increasingly presumed the necessity of “treatment” for psychological problems resulting from traumatic experiences (Pupavac 2001; Bracken, Giller and Summerfield, 1995); many studies have been published about the use of various forms of TF-CBT, for example, among refugee populations from all over the world (e.g. Hinton et al., 2004). Similarly, recent legislation in the UK (NICE, 2005; Mind, 2009) has called for mental health services to facilitate increased education for refugee people about mental health disorders - the symptoms of PTSD in particular - and to aid

their access to the psychological treatment of them. Additionally, specialist trauma and PTSD services have been set up within the National Health Service (NHS) specifically to offer clinical intervention to refugee people (Patel, 2003).

Again, as with diagnostic measures for PTSD, there have been many calls to consider the applicability and usefulness of Western psychological models for the experiences of refugee people from around the world, and a need for adaptation and “cultural sensitivity” therein (Watters, 2001). To this end, much literature has been published on the development of modified therapeutic models suitable for use with traumatised refugee people (De Haene et al., 2012; Guregård and Seikkula, 2013; Grey, 2008). Still, the dominant narrative⁵ persists: that, due to the extreme adversity experienced, and thus the trauma incurred, psychological intervention of some kind, even if in a modified form, is both necessary and meaningful within refugee populations, regardless of their cultural, linguistic, political, spiritual or ideological origins.

1.4.2 Critiquing narratives of “trauma” in relation to refugee people

First, much has been written critiquing the assumptions on which the constructs of ‘psychological trauma’, and PTSD in particular, are based (e.g. Summerfield, 2001). These critiques have often centred around the observation that, whilst initially introduced as a supposedly a-theoretical set of behavioural criteria, PTSD has, over time, and through what Arthur Kleinman (1987) refers to as a ‘category fallacy’, assumed the role of explanatory agent. As such it is now often used to denote the existence of an underlying individual and empirically verifiable entity that is directly causally related to experiences of extreme adversity (Young, 1995). However, as Derek Summerfield (2005) has noted:

...there are many true descriptions of the world, and what might be called psychological knowledge is the product of a particular culture at a particular point in its history. Western psychiatry is one among many

⁵ The term “narrative” is used herein to denote a linguistic framework through which human beings make sense of, communicate and respond to their experiences (Reissman, 2008). In this sense, talking about refugee people having experienced “psychological trauma” is one such narrative. The use of this term, and the assumptions which underpin it, are discussed in much greater detail in the following chapter.

ethno-medical systems, yet it has tended to naturalise its own cultural distinctions, objectify them through empirical data, and then reify them as universal natural science categories. (p.100)

As has been expounded variously, and over many years (e.g. Bracken, Giller and Summerfield, 1995; Bracken and Petty, 1998; Summerfield, 1999, 2001), the reification (and thus presumed universality) of the constructs of psychological trauma and of PTSD, entails problematic, if not oppressive, consequences. Notwithstanding the potential positive consequences of a PTSD diagnosis to refugee people (for example eligibility for services, or a culturally sanctioned recognition of the extent of their distress), the difficulty highlighted here regards its prescription to a population for whom it may be quite meaningless. The construction of PTSD, along with its therapeutic technologies, was developed, and has continued to thrive, within a particular Western social setting; in which a scientific and mechanistic conceptualisation of the world is privileged; in which a (Cartesian) dualistic concept of a person is dominant; and in which that concept of a person has increasingly been characterised not by resilience, but by emotional vulnerability (Summerfield, 2001; Pupavac, 2001; Furedi, 2004). As such, assuming the relevance of the construct of psychological trauma to refugee populations from all over the world is to uncritically impose a framework of understanding upon people whose responses to extreme adversity, and the meaning ascribed to them, likely vary widely as a function of the social, political, linguistic and ideological environments in which they are found (Patel, 2003).

Accordingly, the adoption of narratives of trauma in relation to refugee populations has been open to the charge of cultural imperialism, whereby one way of understanding the world (i.e. in individualistic, psychological, pathological terms) is elevated, and afforded the status of taken-for-granted, and universal, truth (Summerfield 1999). This kind of hegemony is potentially disempowering in relation to refugee people, labelling as 'damaged' those who are often already highly vulnerable, isolated and socially excluded, and also jeopardising traditional means of coping (Pupavac, 2001). Imposing one narrative framework upon refugee people from a vast range of backgrounds may also serve to subjugate or to erode alternative, more helpful or relevant, perhaps non-pathological,

frameworks within which extreme adversity may be understood (Bracken and Petty, 1998)⁶, as follows.

1.5 ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES OF EXTREME ADVERSITY

Adopting a trauma narrative in relation to refugee people may overshadow, usurp or even negate alternative narratives that might include those of: (individual or collective) loss, grief, or bereavement; ethics, morality or justice; divine providence, judgement or determinism; stoicism, resilience or survival (Summerfield, 2001; Bracken and Petty, 1998; Patel, 2007). As such, there are myriad potential considerations that a trauma narrative may serve to obscure; three (briefly outlined) examples of these, which have been previously highlighted in somewhat isolated publications, are as follows.

1.5.1 Justice and human rights⁷

First, Patel (e.g. 2007, 2008) notes that very little psychology literature has constructed the experiences of refugee people in terms that acknowledge injustice, or the violation of human rights. This is despite the many and varying forms of persecution, discrimination and exploitation which often precede and prompt (as well as continue throughout) the exile of refugee people from their home countries. Constructing the impact of extreme adversity in terms of “psychological trauma” can serve to render irrelevant, the intricacies of the social and political realms in which - and often because of which - people both experience and are invited to make sense of extreme adversity (Patel, 2008). In so sanitising and “psychologising” human suffering, clinical psychology risks perpetuating an oppressive narrative, which is more concerned with symptomatology than with acknowledging, addressing or compensating for the injustices and violations which caused it in the first place (Patel, 2011b). Rather than deeming refugee people “traumatised”, or as suffering from a psychological

⁶ It is acknowledged that the preceding arguments and the following ‘alternative narratives’ are not applicable to refugee people only, but are particularly pertinent in considering the perspectives of, in particular, marginalised people, who have experienced extreme adversity.

⁷ In using the construct of ‘human rights’, I acknowledge a weight of previous debate surrounding both its meaning and function, an exploration of which is beyond the bounds of the present study. Following Patel (2007), ‘human rights’ is here used merely as a framework within which to recognise the outworking of injustice, and to advocate on behalf of refugee people who may have been violated, exploited, persecuted or tortured.

injury or disorder of some kind, constructing their experiences in terms of the violation of their rights as human beings might serve to prompt reparation and redress, rather than clinical intervention aiming merely to diminish the psychological distress caused by it (Patel, 2007; Kinderman, 2005).

1.5.2 Resilience

Secondly, quantitative research focussing on the identification and treatment of psychological trauma has not sufficiently acknowledged that a majority of refugee people appear to have adapted to the extreme adversity they have experienced, without any form of clinical assistance (e.g. Schweitzer et al., 2007). Within the field of clinical psychology in general, there has been a growing focus on what affords “resilience” against the impact of experiences of extreme adversity; a construct which “connotes strength, flexibility, a capacity for mastery, and resumption of normal functioning after excessive stress that challenges individual coping skills” (Agaibi and Wilson, 2005, p. 196). The construct of resilience has also been adopted (but not widely) in relation to refugee people (e.g. Wittmer et al., 2001), and alongside that of “post-traumatic growth” (Berger and Weiss, 2003; Powell et al., 2003); a term which confers, rather than lasting psychological damage, “positive psychological change, experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances” (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2004, p. 1).

As such, narratives of “resilience” and of “post-traumatic growth” can serve to elevate stories of stoicism and fortitude that are relegated in a field in which those of pathology and psychological injury most often prevail (Marlowe, 2010). However, the constructs of “resilience” and “post-traumatic growth” have, themselves been variously conceptualised as internal, individualised and quantifiable psychological phenomena (see Agaibi and Wilson, 2005 for a review). As such they, too, are often couched within positivistic narratives, and conceptualised either as mutually exclusive alternatives to the construct of trauma, or predicated on the existence of trauma, as a necessary precursor to them (Bonanno, 2004). Accordingly, and with some irony, the assumptions which underpin this construction of “psychological resilience” may thus be open to the same critiques as that of “psychological trauma”; resting on pre-requisite (and culturally-bound) presumptions of dualism and universality, and serving to de-

contextualise human responses to extreme adversity (Patel, 2003), even if those responses are deemed (in one cultural context at least) “positive”.

However, the construct of “resilience” has also been conceptualised in more communal, contextualised terms, that have incorporated, among other considerations, the strength and tenacity afforded to refugee people by social and familial support, and religious or spiritual affiliation (Schweitzer, Greenslade and Kagee, 2007; Sossou et al., 2008). Harvey (2009) has also promulgated an ‘ecological’ conceptualisation of resilience (among a range of populations), which situates the capacity to survive within the context of the environment in which a person exists:

An implication of the ecological perspective is that resilience is transactional in nature, evident in qualities that are nurtured, shaped, and activated by a host of person-environment interactions. Resilience is the result not only of biologically given traits, but also of people’s embeddedness in complex and dynamic social contexts, contexts that are themselves more or less vulnerable to harm, more or less amenable to change, and apt focal points for intervention. (Harvey, 2009, p. 17)

As such, a narrative of communal resilience does not construct individuals as passive recipients of “psychological trauma”, or as de-contextualized entities which are able to withstand it, or to thrive in response to it. Rather, it constructs them as integral members of a complex wider system, with the agency and capacity to respond to the challenges that extreme adversity may pose. “Clinical” interventions based on this narrative, then, might seek to promote the capacity of communities to withstand adversity, rather than treating individual patients of it (e.g. Maton, 2000). The importance of community resilience is also compatible with several qualitative studies with refugee populations, as follows.

1.5.3 Survival

A third alternative narrative of extreme adversity, other than one of psychological trauma, is that of survival, for which there is a range of physical, economic and social requirements. Indeed, rather than understand their experiences in terms of

emotional or psychological sequelae, refugee people have often cited more basic means of survival (e.g. food, shelter and medical care) as their most immediate concerns (Kramer, 2005). Zarowsky, for example (2000, 2004), in her work with refugee people in East Africa, found that:

Violence, distress and displacement related to war and forced migration [were] not interpreted in a medical framework aimed at individual or collective healing, whether physical or psychological.' (Zarowsky, 2000, p. 385)

Rather she observed that experiences of war and of displacement were understood in terms of:

...an attack on webs of relationships through which individuals, families and groups have immediate or potential access to the material, social and political resources which allow survival. (Zarowsky, 2000, p. 398)

Furthermore, as Nordanger (2007) has noted, "when studies from other populations are brought to attention, one sees that socioeconomic expressions of psychosocial distress are not uncommon" (pp. 79-80). He cites, for example, Kagee (2004), who found that South African people who had been tortured for political reasons — even if they could be diagnosed with PTSD — were more concerned with problems of economic marginalisation than with symptoms of "psychological trauma". The same has been reported from Cambodian victims of the Pol Pot regime (Boyden and Gibbs, 1996) and from Sri Lankan victims of aerial bombings (Somasundaram, 1996). Trauma narratives often medicalise and pathologise people (by assuming the applicability of disorders like PTSD) who have lost the very means of survival, and encourage use of resources and funding for "treatment" rather than support to begin to regain in a new country that which has been previously lost.

1.6 HOW DO ETHIOPIAN REFUGEE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND EXTREME ADVERSITY?

Despite potential alternative narrative frameworks, as outlined above, the construct of trauma has remained dominant in research with refugee people. As a discipline, clinical psychology has largely neglected to conduct research that foregoes the a priori assumptions that often underlie the application of narratives of trauma to refugee people (Summerfield, 1999). As such, research which affords refugee people themselves an opportunity to convey what sense they have made of their experiences is therefore of pertinence.

1.6.1 Why Ethiopian refugee people?

A review of relevant literature has shown that very few studies have been carried out in relation to the experiences of refugee people from Ethiopia, despite vast numbers of people having fled from there in recent times, due to on-going political unrest and economic instability. Hundreds of thousands of people fleeing Ethiopia over the past 50 years have been forced to utilise refugee camps in neighbouring Somalia and Sudan (e.g. Bulcha, 1988), many have settled in the Middle East, whilst a small proportion have sought asylum in Europe, North America and Australia (Danso, 2002). Whilst studies involving Ethiopian refugee people are scarce, only a handful of studies (Papadopolous et al., 2003, 2004; Palmer, 2007, 2010) have ever aimed to document the experiences of those now living in the UK. Whilst accurate data pertaining to the numbers of Ethiopian refugee people living in the UK are simply not available, a mapping exercise by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2006) suggested that there were more than 30,000 Ethiopian people living in Britain at that time. Before reviewing the published psychology literature concerning this population specifically, the following two sections will provide an overview of the country of Ethiopia and its recent political history, in an attempt to begin to contextualise the lives of the people whose experiences this study explores⁸.

⁸ It is acknowledged that the information provided under the following two headings is only one possible narrative account of Ethiopia's history, incorporating only on the perspectives expressed within the documentation that was available to me; namely that written in English, mainly by Western writers. Whilst the whole of this chapter is also thus qualified, recognition of this in relation to Ethiopia and its people is especially pertinent in aiming not to perpetuate a dominant story in an arena within which alternative voices are rarely heard.

1.6.2 The nation of Ethiopia

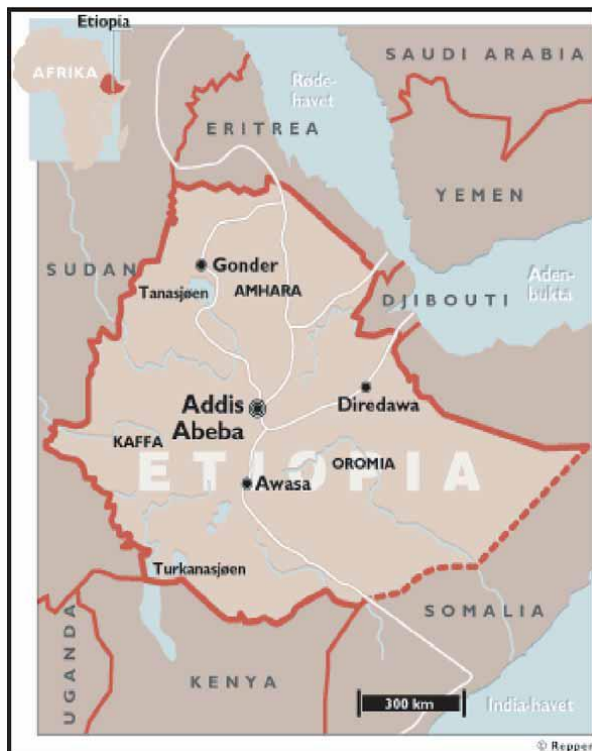


Figure 1:

Map showing Ethiopia's location in the "Horn of Africa"

Ethiopia is a landlocked country with a population of over 80,000,000 (WHO, 2013), situated at the heart of the Horn of Africa (see Figure 1), which has for centuries been "an area of high unrest" (Cabestan, 2012, p. 53). Ethiopia comprises over 80 cultural and linguistic groups, and is characterised by its Christian Orthodox past, as well as by Islamic influences from neighbouring Arabic states (Palmer, 2010). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2010) Ethiopia is among the poorest of the least developed global economies, rated 157th of 169 countries listed, with an estimated 50% of its population living in poverty and an average life expectancy of 53 and 56 for males and females respectively. Adult literacy rates are reportedly around 50% for males and 35% for females, whilst education, despite being theoretically free for everyone, remains the preserve of the relatively wealthy. Ethiopia is also one of the world's largest recipients of foreign aid, receiving approximately US\$3 billion in funds annually from donors including the UK, which equates to more than a third of the country's annual budget (HRW, 2010). Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (MFA, 2013) cites the UK as "one of the most dependable partners in Ethiopia's fight against poverty", and that "Ethiopians, of course, will never forget the role that British forces played in Ethiopia's fight against fascism

during the Second World War”. However, whilst Ethiopia experienced a brief period of subjugation from 1936 to 1942 at the hands of Italy, it is the only African country that has never fully been colonised by a European government (Countrywatch, 2013).

1.6.3 Recent political history of Ethiopia

From 1930 to 1975, Ethiopia was ruled by Emperor Haile Selassie, “a symbol of independent Africa” (Meredith, 2006, p. 207), who, whilst ruling as an autocratic monarch, is said to have striven to modernise Ethiopia, abolishing slavery and developing a more stable infrastructure. He kept at bay internal uprisings, and extended his rule over Eritrea, as well as regaining his rule after a five-year period of Italian occupation that came to an end in 1942. However, he was also accused of squandering vast sums of public money, and of failing to intervene during a period of famine. Following a time of growing civil dissatisfaction and unrest that began in early 1974, Haillie Sellassie was overthrown by a military committee, or “Derg”, led by Mengistu Haile Mariam, who executed 59 members of the previous royal family and governing party, and instated an increasingly socialist regime. This government formed close Soviet ties, whilst eschewing relations with the US, and came to represent an increasingly bloody and totalitarian administration, responsible for the torture and execution of thousands of suspected opponents, in a violent programme known as the “Red Terror” (Countrywatch, 2013).

The collapse of the Derg was preceded and hastened by droughts and famine, coup attempts, and insurrections. In May 1991, the regime was overthrown with US backing by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), led by Meles Zenawi. The EPRDF has remained in power since then, committing to a new constitution and to democratic elections, but maintaining its position at the helm of an ethnically divided, virtual one-party state, amid accusations of election-rigging, extensive human rights violations and the use of international aid as a “political weapon to control the population, punish dissent, and undermine political opponents” (HRW, 2010). Fundamental liberties, including freedom of the press and freedom of association, also remain circumscribed. The government, and the country, has continued to encounter a series of setbacks, including a hugely costly war with Eritrea in the late 1990s, another devastating

famine in 2002 and various violent ethnic clashes, alongside growing tensions with Islamist militias in Somalia (Countrywatch, 2013).

As such, people living in Ethiopia would have been exposed to various and on-going forms of extreme adversity; Ethiopian refugee people now living in the UK comprising those who fled political persecution around the time of both the 1974 military coup and the overthrow of the Derg in 1991, as well as those who have fled more recently to escape ethnic persecution and war with Eritrea. In this way the Ethiopian refugee population in the UK is diverse, both as a reflection of Ethiopian society, and of the differing lengths of time they have spent in the UK. The way in which Ethiopian people have been invited, or forced, to make sense of their lives is likely to be intimately related to the context(s) in which they have existed, within unique political, social and economic climates that have differed variously in recent years. Of relevance here, then, is also a consideration of the current political environment in the UK, in relation to refugee people especially, and of how this may have impacted upon the experiences of Ethiopian people who have sought asylum here.

1.6.4 Political landscape of the UK in relation to refugee people

1.6.4.1 The process of seeking asylum

Refugee people from anywhere in the world seeking asylum in the UK must apply to the UK Home Office to have their case reviewed. Refugee people must undergo a close scrutiny of their identity and of the situation which is preventing them from returning to their home country safely, before a decision as to their right to remain in the country is reached (UKBA, 2013). Whilst their claims are being processed, people seeking asylum are either detained for “fast track” assessment (of which there were over 2000 in 2011), or are required to meet stringent regulations for maintaining contact with a representative of the UK Home Office (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2013). Until a decision is reached, people seeking asylum in the UK will not necessarily be eligible for housing provision, and are unlikely to be allowed to work (UKBA, 2013). Welfare support for this population is currently capped at £36.62 per person, per week, leaving many people who are seeking asylum living in poverty (UNHCR, 2013).

Being granted “leave to remain” might confer official recognition as a refugee, or instead permission to stay for “humanitarian protection” or through “discretionary (i.e. temporary) leave to remain”. In each of the latter cases, the protected individual can stay in the UK for five years, after which they will need to apply for indefinite leave (Migration Observatory, 2013). Only a minority of asylum applications (33% in 2011) is successful, but if the right to remain in the UK is refused, an applicant may be eligible to appeal this decision. A report from Amnesty International (2004) suggested that in 2002, 22% of appeals (equating to applications from 1,400 people) were successful, highlighting grave flaws in the assessment procedure, which had frequently resulted in lengthened application processes and thus an increased likelihood of destitution. Seeking asylum in the UK can be a lengthy process - despite the target set by the UKBA of a six-month limit - and has often been labelled not only unjust and highly distressing (Bracken and Gorst-Unsworth, 1991), but also itself “traumatic” (Robjant, Hassan and Katona 2009).

1.6.4.2 Life with refugee status

Even if a refugee person is granted leave to remain in the UK, several reports suggest that they will likely thereby face difficulties finding suitable housing, gaining appropriate employment and accessing adequate health care (e.g. Home Office, 2010). These experiences of on-going adversity may also have been confounded by recent government spending cuts that have affected non-statutory refugee-based services especially noticeably (Refugee Action, 2013), whilst cuts to UKBA funding have had a disproportionate impact on the provision of statutory support to refugee people (Hill, 2011). This, in turn, has occurred against a political backdrop which has increasingly favoured and promoted the idea of “integration” (of different ethnic groups in the UK) over that of “multiculturalism”. As McPherson (2010) has noted:

Multiculturalism has been charged with fostering “unhealthy” ethnic enclaves, which are linked with acts ranging from anti-social or criminal behaviour to terrorism. The move back from multiculturalism towards integrationism reflects

a view that conformance by outsiders is the answer to a lack of social cohesion. (p. 547)

An increasing rejection of multiculturalism has led to an emphasis on, and a direction of funding towards, the “cohesion” of communities, rather than an acknowledgment of the intricacies of cultural identities and value differences therein (McPherson, 2010). As a result, refugee people will increasingly have been positioned as “other” to the general population (and as disconnected outsiders within it) with the onus on them to permeate and to conform to the prevailing social environment, whatever that might be. The tightening of asylum regulations by successive governments, over the past 15 years especially, has likely only perpetuated as well as mirrored the on-going societal hostility directed at refugee people now living in the UK, and the racism and discrimination that remains commonplace (Patel, 2008). The section that follows examines the research carried out to date with Ethiopian refugee people who have sought asylum here, and who have thus attempted to navigate the UK political climate and asylum application systems here described.

1.7 PREVIOUS RESEARCH WITH ETHIOPIAN REFUGEE PEOPLE IN THE UK

The studies of Ethiopian refugee people living in the UK, published to date (Papadopolous et al., 2003, 2004; Palmer, 2007, 2010), have focussed on experiences of settlement in this country, in terms of the asylum-seeking process and also access to services, amenities and education. Both Papadopoulos et al. (2003, 2004) and Palmer (2007) carried out semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with Ethiopian refugee people in London, and documented responses that (in line with the broader refugee population, as above) suggested participants had experienced specific difficulties with integration and adaptation (e.g. to changing familial and gender roles, and loss of social status, and difficulties with language learning) and also with navigating the asylum system; a process whose complications were often confounded by previous experiences of political persecution and interrogation. They also reported low levels of employment, despite often high levels of education; financial insecurity;

dissatisfaction with housing conditions; and social isolation and loneliness in the context of a culture in which help-seeking is unfamiliar (Palmer 2007).

None of the studies listed above provided an opportunity for the Ethiopian refugee participants to speak about their pre-exile experiences of extreme adversity however, or the ways in which they had made sense of the difficulties they had faced since settling in the UK. In studies by both Papodopoulous et al. (2003) and Palmer (2007), participants were asked explicitly about their beliefs about mental health, and the causes of mental illness; indeed both studies introduced these constructs, and invited participants to talk in these terms, without prior reference to them by the Ethiopian people involved. Both studies suggested that their participants tended to make sense of mental health problems both in terms of spirituality (e.g. through possession by an evil spirit) and also (in the case of depression) in terms of social isolation and loneliness, but also spoke about UK mental health services being both inaccessible and culturally irrelevant. Whilst both studies assumed the applicability and relevance of a mental health narrative, and of the construct of PTSD therein, neither afforded an opportunity for alternative narratives to be elicited or constructed, should they have been available or preferred.

One isolated qualitative study of note here, but involving people still living in Ethiopia, (Nordanger, 2007), comprised 20 interviews with people who had been variously affected by the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean war. Participants were asked, via a trained Ethiopian field worker, about the “psycho-social distress” that they had experienced in relation to the extreme violence, loss and persecution they had faced, and what they thought had been the cause and lasting impact of this. The author conceptualised participants’ responses (mirroring studies by Zarowsky mentioned above), as largely reflective not of psychological damage or disturbance, but of what he termed “socioeconomic bereavement”. Their ‘post-war distress’ was understood in terms of impacts upon a household’s means of income generation, and resultant termination of education and social marginalisation.

1.8 AIMS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Despite the studies outlined above, no research to date has focussed on the ways in which Ethiopian refugee people living in the UK might understand, talk about or respond to extreme adversity; including that which may have been experienced in Ethiopia, during exile or since arriving in the UK. A consideration of the extreme adversity they are likely to have experienced, as well as of the relative neglect of this population in previous research makes such an exploration all the more pertinent. The aim of the present study is therefore to explore the narratives that one small group of Ethiopian refugee people living in the UK adopt in making sense of and communicating their experiences, and why they may have come to narrate their lives in the way they do.

Such an exploration necessitates a qualitative design, as detailed in the following chapter, in order to eschew, as far as possible, pre-existing assumptions of the ways in which people are affected by, or have made sense of, experiences of extreme adversity. This study thus provides an opportunity to explore how Ethiopian refugee people might talk about their experiences as a function of their changing cultural and political environments, social status and community affiliation, which may have important implications for the provision of statutory as well as non-statutory clinical psychology services in the UK and beyond.

1.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study aims to address the following questions:

1. What kinds of narratives might Ethiopian refugee people living in the UK employ in order to make sense of experiences of extreme adversity?
2. Do these narratives differ from those which are dominant within a western mental health setting, i.e. those of psychological trauma? If so, in what way?
3. Does this exploration have any implications for the services that are offered to refugee people from Ethiopia, and also from other countries?

2.0 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I outline the methodology employed to address the aforementioned research questions. I first provide a justification for my epistemological stance in relation to this study, and its relationship to relevant psychology literature, as outlined in the Introduction. I then provide a methodological justification for this study, followed by details of its design.

2.1 EPISTEMOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

As has been outlined above, research published within the field of mental health, relating to refugee people, has tended to assume a realist, positivist stance in relation to the impact of extreme adversity; i.e. in terms of psychological trauma and PTSD. As also expounded above, the quantitative paradigm, and the narratives it generates, is potentially problematic for a number of reasons, and may also serve to subjugate alternative ways of understanding extreme adversity. As such, I adopt a social constructionist epistemological position in relation to the present study, which both underpins and is necessitated by my research questions, and shapes the ways in which I aim to address them.

Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge that was developed as a critique of prevailing modernist theories, that tended to treat language as representative of individual - especially psychological - phenomena (for example “psychological trauma”) that are often supposed to exist independently of it (Harper and Spellman, 2004). Social constructionism, in contrast, treats language as constitutive of experience rather than representative of it; meaning that experience, and therefore knowledge, is constructed through, and identified with, the ways in which people talk about the world. What constitutes knowledge is based on social convention and praxis; on ways of talking that are helpful or functional in understanding and responding to the world. As such, some ways of talking are privileged over others, in particular settings, perhaps because of their utility or parsimony, and can come to be taken for granted as true, and universally so. For example, the language of empiricism may have utility, in some spheres, for communicating and responding to events in the world. However, when applied to human experience, this language can detract from an acknowledgement of the multiplicity of dynamic and fluid influences impacting on the ways in which people

make sense of life, whilst also suggesting that there are universal truths to be uncovered, about how human beings operate and of what they comprise.

2.2 METHODOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

2.2.1 Taking a qualitative approach

Conceptualising this study, and its aims, within a social constructionist epistemology means that a qualitative research design is most appropriate. Qualitative research aims to explore the subjective ways in which people experience and talk about their lives, rather than attempting to quantify them within a previously established framework of measurement (Willig, 2008). This is particularly pertinent to the present study, the aims of which being to explore the narratives employed by Ethiopian refugee people in making sense of their experiences of extreme adversity, and how these might differ from those which are currently most dominant within mental health literature.

2.2.2 Choosing a qualitative methodology

There is a wealth of qualitative methods available for the exploration of the ways in which people make sense of and talk about the world(s) they inhabit (Harper et al., 2011), the suitability of each depending on the nature of the explorative task in hand. Given the focus of the present study, the aims on which it is based, and my social constructionist stance in relation to it, I decided to adopt a narrative approach to the gathering and analysing of data. What follows is a brief outline of what the process of “narrative analysis” involves, preceding a rationale for and justification of my decision to use it.

2.2.3 Narrative Analysis

“Narrative analysis” refers to a group of qualitative research methods which are, broadly, employed to identify and to explore the narratives that people use to make sense of and to communicate their experiences; to explore “how a speaker or writer assembles and sequences events and uses language and/or visual images to communicate meaning” (Reissman, 2008, p. 11). Whilst the term “narrative” has a broad and varying currency (Reissman, 1993), one prominent use of the term, and the one employed herein, is as a product of the act of sense-making; a way of organising and communicating experiences, in some kind of

storied form. In this way, constructing a narrative account entails the imposition of a meaningful pattern on what might otherwise seem random and disconnected, and involves the telling of stories that “recount past attempted solutions to how [people] should live, and are part of their on-going attempts to seek present ways of living” (Frank 2002, p. 110). As such, narrative analysis does not regard research participants as representative of a wider population, or their responses as necessarily generalisable to any community of which they are a part, but is instead used to explore the unique complexity of influences contributing to how individual people construct an account of their lives.

2.2.4 Why narrative analysis for this study?

The aims of this study, as above, stem from and necessitate their address within a social constructionist paradigm, in which meaning is understood to be generated and communicated through language, rather than represented by it. This means that a form of discourse analysis is deemed most appropriate, in exploring the ways in which - and reasons why - experiences are constructed within certain social environments. I take a narrative approach to analysing data collected for this study, firstly because, rather than focussing on the specifics of the linguistic devices employed by interviewees, as other forms of discourse analysis do, it identifies and explores broader stories utilised in the construction and communication of experience. Given that the first language of the participants in this study is not English, an exploration of the reasons why they told the stories they did, rather than the details of how they told them, is deemed most appropriate. Although I have identified no previous studies which take a narrative approach to the analysis of interview data from participants whose first language is not English, I feel that its careful exploration of influences affecting the stories that people tell makes this kind of analysis most appropriate for the present study. Furthermore, as observed by Barthes (1977, p. 79), and aptly, for the purposes of this study, “narrative is international, trans-historical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself”. The headings that follow delineate three further means by which narrative analysis, in particular, is understood to serve the purposes of the present study.

2.2.4.1 Giving a voice to the silenced

Providing an opportunity for people to construct narratives for analysis, allows them to talk about their experiences in settings in which they may otherwise have been silenced or ignored. Narrative analysis provides an opportunity to elevate and to examine perspectives and stories that differ from those which are usually most privileged, and thereby to allow for a more nuanced understanding of a person or group of people, about whom one generic story has tended to prevail. As has been expounded in the Introduction, refugee people are not often given the opportunity to speak about how they understand their experiences - in this case of extreme adversity - which have instead been studied mostly through a quantitative lens. Ethiopian refugee people have been particularly neglected in psychology research and, as such, analysis of the narratives employed by members of this group seems particularly appropriate. As Ewick and Silbey (1995) observed, “by allowing the silenced to speak, by refusing the flattening and distorting effects of traditional logico-scientific methods and dissertative modes of representation, narrative scholarship [has] participated in rewriting social life in ways that are, or can be, liberatory.” (p. 199)

2.2.4.2 Exposing hegemonic assumptions

As well as giving a voice to the previously unheard, narrative analysis involves an examination of the influences acting upon the adoption of a particular narrative. As Bruner has noted, “given their constructed nature and their dependence upon cultural conventions and language usage, life narratives obviously reflect the prevailing theories about “possible lives” that are part of one’s culture” (Bruner, 2004, p. 294). People tell the stories that are available to them, in the social or political setting in which they are told, and through which they have been invited or enabled to make sense of their lives. In this way, the narratives that people adopt can become subject to the influences of convention; the way people talk about their lives, including their experiences of extreme adversity, likely imbibe or reflect the ideological, cultural and social values prevalent in the context in which they are employed. Consequently, we are as likely to be constrained by the stories we tell (or that are culturally available for our telling) as we are by the form of oppression they might seek to reveal. Furthermore, as Bruner (2004) has argued:

...the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieves the power to structure perceptual experience, to organise memory, to segment and purpose-build the “events” of a life. In the end we become the autobiographical narrative by which we “tell about” our lives. (p. 496)

2.2.4.3 Deconstructing power

Given the above, narrative analysis also facilitates an examination of the role of power within a particular social setting, and thereby affords the opportunity to challenge and unsettle it. Emerson and Frosh (2004) argue that narrative analysis addresses one of the potential shortfalls of discourse analysis more broadly, through an explicit recourse to personal agency. They claim that the capacity of narrative analysis, “for close attention to the social construction of subjectivities in relation to dominant discourses, and its potential for reflexive openness, makes [it] ... capable of critically contributing to the interplay between personal and social change” (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p. 10). Narrative analysis, perhaps uniquely among qualitative methods more widely, also warrants consideration of how people actively construct the meaning of their experiences. In this way, narrative analysis has a strong political connotation, and serves to highlight the ways in which individuals can demonstrate their values and also resist power. Again, this seems particularly apt in relation to Ethiopian refugee people, who, by definition, have first experienced political oppression, before having been forced to settle in a country in which they are, by default, part of a marginalised minority. The applicability of this characteristic of narrative analysis, along with the two detailed before, may be summarised parsimoniously by the following:

The political commitment to giving voice and bearing witness through narrative is underwritten by the epistemological conviction that there is no single, objectively apprehended truth. Conversely, the epistemological claim that there are multiple truths is based on the recognition that knowledge is socially and politically produced. Together, the two claims regarding narrative scholarship argue that the multiple stories which have been buried, silenced, or obscured by the logico-deductive methods of

social science have the capacity to undermine the illusion of an objective, naturalised world which so often sustains inequality and powerlessness. (Ewick and Silbey, 1995, p. 199)

2.2.5 Taking a critical approach to the construct of “narrative”

Narratives can take many forms and be conveyed through a variety of media. They can be adopted and developed by individuals or communities, and serve differential purposes, “whether to instruct, to explain oneself, to enrol others in a cause, or simply to entertain” (Frank 2012, p. 42). As such, narratives are not necessarily coherent, linear, chronological or enduring, and are often fluid, fractured and context-dependent. Emerson and Frosh (2004) promulgate a critical approach to narrative and the analysis of it, adopting a “relational theory of identity, one that locates the recurrent re-storying of our lives within the flux of contradictions and tensions of the several social worlds in which we are simultaneously actors and respondents to others’ actions” (Mishler, 2006 p. 42).

Following Emerson and Frosh (2004), the present study adopts a critical position in relation to the concept and analysis of narrative, recognising that the ways in which people talk about their experiences vary as a function of the setting in which they do so. In this way, a discursive rather than cognitive approach is taken to the analysis of narrative, treating narratives not as “expressions of how people understand things... [but] as interaction-oriented productions” (Edwards, 1997, p. 288), through which, as with language more generally, meaning is constructed rather than represented. Accordingly, I acknowledge that the term “narrative” is itself a social construct that has utility for the purposes of this study, but which does not thereby otherwise confer truth, or existence as any kind of empirical phenomenon.

2.2.6 Dialogic Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis has taken on many forms (Mishler, 1995; Reissman, 2008), each of which has a different site of focus - for example structure, content or theme - depending on the nature of the analytic task in hand. This study uses a form of what has been called “dialogic” or “performance” narrative analysis (Reissman, 2008; Frank, 2012) which expands attention from the content or form

of a narrative, to the complexity and impact of its dialogic environment. Dialogic narrative analysis (the term used from here on in), draws in particular on the work of Russian literary philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), and recognises that the stories people tell report their reality as they need to or are able to convey it on a specific occasion, with the resources available to them, and according to the actual or anticipated responses of their audience, either real or imagined. Furthermore, dialogic narrative analysis not only explores how narratives are co-constructed through dialogue in a particular interaction, but also “recognise[s] that any *individual* voice is actually a dialogue between voices” (Frank, 2012, p. 34, emphasis original). In this way, dialogic narrative analysis explores how multiple voices are expressed within a single narrative, and what fragments of other stories and perspectives it comprises.

Dialogic narrative analysis also pays close attention to the influences affecting, not only the narratives that people employ, but also the ways in which data are analysed. It aims to be relatively “bottom up”, “eschewing theory as far as possible at least until the data have been examined performatively in terms of their own emergent properties” (Edley and Wetherell, 1997, p. 210) but is also inherently and unavoidably subjective. As such, dialogic narrative analysis is necessarily purposefully and actively self-conscious and reflexive; it “does not assume objectivity, rather it privileges positionality and subjectivity” (Reissman, 2003, p. 332). In this way, it openly and deliberately constructs a new narrative, about why people speak about their experiences in the way that they do, but one which it neither claims to be correct in any sense, nor to be the only story available. In the present study this new narrative will inevitably be impacted by my subjective position as, among many other considerations, a white, female western trainee clinical psychologist, analysing and writing about data from a specifically critical perspective. This consideration is again integral to dialogic narrative analysis, however, which has no interest in presenting itself as the last word; as Frank (2012) has noted, “part of what makes a dialogical report good is the opening it creates to further representations. Here again is the dialogical commitment to unfinalisability” (Frank 2012, p. 44).

2.3 STUDY DESIGN

2.3.1 Consultation

Integral to the development of the present study was the process of consultation, with the manager of an Ethiopian community organisation based in London, who was himself a refugee person. The organisation he was managing provided support and advice to Ethiopian people living in the area, but had seen its funding cut dramatically over the past 5 years, leaving it able to provide a skeleton of the programme it had previously run. I approached the manager of this organisation in the early stages of planning this study, and he agreed to help with recruitment of participants as well as to share his perspectives on its focus and procedure. The process of consultation, throughout the duration of this work, was not only invaluable practically, but was also consistent with the epistemological framework within which I aimed to carry it out. Through consultation with an Ethiopian refugee person, I wanted to try to minimise the impact (or at least to be made aware) of the assumptions I inevitably brought to this research, and to make the study design as applicable to, and as ethical for, the people involved, as possible (see Patel, 1999; Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway, 2007).

2.3.2 Data collection

I used semi-structured interviews as a means of exploring the experiences of the Ethiopian refugee participants in this study. These interviews aimed to provide participants with the opportunity to speak about their experiences outside of the confines of a rigidly structured exchange. Details of the way in which these interviews were conducted are outlined under the heading “Interview procedure”.

2.3.3 Inclusion criteria

I recruited only people who were over 18 years of age, who were born in Ethiopia and had sought asylum in the UK. As a monolingual researcher I decided to conduct interviews in English, rather than with an interpreter, and as such participants needed to be able and willing to talk about their experiences in English only. The rationale for this is discussed more fully below.

2.3.4 Recruitment

I recruited participants through the manager of the community organisation mentioned above; some potential participants were acquaintances of his, and others I met during my visits to the centre in which the organisation was based. I spent time there on several occasions, and was also invited to a Christmas event, as well as a weekend social group, which were both well-attended by members of the community. Potential participants were approached either by me or by the manager of the organisation, whereby the study was explained to them verbally, and each was given an information sheet (see Appendix 2). I contacted those people who had expressed an interest in participating, and arranged a time to meet for an interview with those who wished to proceed. I offered reimbursement of travel expenses to and from the interview location, but offered no further payment, intending to reduce the potential for coercion, with regards to agreement to participate.

2.3.5 Participants

I interviewed four Ethiopian refugee people for this study⁹, all of whom were male, and between the ages of 40 and 70. They had all been granted refugee status when I met them, but there was wide variation both in the length of time they had been in the UK (between 2 and 20 years), as well as the length of their asylum application process (between 6 months and 18 years). I had aimed to interview at least five refugee people, but the process of recruitment was such that this was not possible, at least in the timeframe available. Through my visits to the Ethiopian community organisation with which I had made contact, I met and spoke with many people, ten of whom (three women and seven men) told me that they would be willing to participate in an interview. On contacting these ten people again, mostly by telephone, only four were forthcoming in offering me a time to meet for an interview. Whilst the manager of the organisation encouraged me to persist in further pursuing these people, I was also keen that no one should feel pressured into agreeing to be interviewed. Given the nature and project of dialogic narrative analysis, interviewing only four participants, whilst not

⁹ I emphasise here that these participants are neither considered as comprising a sample of a wider population, nor are their narrative accounts considered a reflection of - or generalisable to - a discrete social group. A reflection on the impact of participants' individual situations and demographics is integral to the way in which data were analysed using DNA, as above.

necessarily ideal, was deemed sufficient to proffer utility. Indeed, many studies that use narrative analysis are based on single case study designs (e.g. Frosh and Emerson, 2005).

2.3.6 Language

All forms of information pertaining to this study, along with the semi-structured interviews it involved, were in English only. The manager of the community organisation, through whom participants were recruited, explained that English, whilst not a first language in any region of Ethiopia, was widely spoken throughout the country, and that all educational curricula were in English rather than any Ethiopian language. An alternative option to interviewing in English would have been to use an interpreter, to translate (in situ) participant responses into English. However, considering language as a social endeavour, and as constitutive rather than representative of experience, as above, means that the way people talk about their lives in one language is not necessarily translatable directly into another. Words and concepts, as discussed previously, are developed and used within particular socio-political contexts, and may thus not find an equivalent in another linguistic sphere. In speaking only in English, the participants were likely to have been restricted in their range of expression, but they were also able to direct and discuss, as far as possible, the way they constructed their narrative, which may have been prevented or obscured through translation by a third party. The present method of data collection (i.e. without use of an interpreter) also avoids difficulties that arise when there is another person in the room; someone who is also likely, because of their background, language and cultural, political or community affiliations, to have had an unquantifiable impact on the ways in which participants chose to narrate their experiences.

In choosing to conduct the study in this way, I acknowledge that the people I interviewed were being asked to narrate their experiences entirely in a language other than their first, which is likely to have variously affected the ways in which they spoke about their experiences, and even understood themselves and their personhood (e.g. Burck, 2004). Interviewing in this way will have undoubtedly restricted both how fluently and confidently they were able to express themselves, as well as the level of subtlety, vocabulary and linguistic nuance available to

them. I acknowledge that had interpreters been used, the data collected would likely have differed to some extent, both as a function of the linguistic framework that would have been available to the participants, and because of its subsequent translation to its closest approximation in English. However, the use of dialogic narrative analysis allows, and indeed invites, reflection on the impact of the interviews having been carried out in English, rather than this merely having been an unfortunate artefact of them. As above, integral to my analysis is an acknowledgement of, and reflection on, the impact of all aspects of the setting in which interviews took place; not least of the role that language played in how the interviews, and their subsequent analysis, were carried out.

2.3.7 Consent

When I met with each of the four participants, I reviewed the information sheet, giving them the opportunity to ask questions about the study and the interview procedure. I explained that I was interested in hearing about their lives, whether or not they spoke about them in a similar or different way to other people. I reiterated that they were free to share as much or as little in response to my questions as they felt comfortable doing, and outlined the confidentiality of their interviews, as below. I asked each participant to sign a consent form (see Appendix 4) if they were happy to proceed with an interview, explaining that they were not obliged to be involved, and that they may withdraw from it at any time without disadvantage to themselves and without obligation to give any reason.

2.3.8 Confidentiality

All interviews were recorded without use of participant names, but rather in correspondence to the file number on the recorder. Each recording was transferred to my password protected computer immediately after the interview and transcribed personally, again without use of names, and with any potentially identifying information either deleted or changed. A list of the names and contact numbers of participants, along with their corresponding number, was kept in a password-protected document on my computer. After examination of this submission, any information relating to the identity of participants will be destroyed along with the recordings of the interviews. Transcripts will be kept

securely for a period of five years, when all data and consent forms will be destroyed, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

2.3.9 Interview procedure

I carried out two of the interviews in a private office in the Ethiopian community organisation building and the other two at the homes of the participants in question. Both of these participants suggested I meet them at their homes as they neither visited the centre often, nor lived locally to it, and both told me they would feel more at ease being interviewed in their own homes than in an alternative space. I acknowledge that the context in which interviews were carried out may well have impacted on the narratives employed during them, and reflect on this as a part of my analysis. On meeting each participant, once their consent was gained, I began recording, using a digital voice recorder. I invited each participant to speak as openly as they wished, and to use their own words to tell their story. I aimed to incorporate modes of expression used by participants into any subsequent dialogue, to promote the construction of a narrative in terms that were applicable and meaningful to them. Interviews were around 1 hour in length and I offered to send each participant a copy of their interview transcript for their own reference.

2.3.10 Interview schedule

Semi-structured interviews were based on an interview schedule and prompts therein (see Appendix 5). The questions which this schedule comprises were developed as a response to the appraisal of published literature, as detailed in the previous chapter, and in conjunction with both my supervisor and with the manager of the Ethiopian community organisation to whom I have previously referred. Specifically, he helped me to word questions in a clear manner, and to shape them so as to confer as much relevance as possible. As such, the questions asked were integral to the analytic process more broadly, in that they were necessarily formulated from a particular perspective, and with particular research aims in mind. The interview schedule was used as a guide only, and questions were added, altered or omitted depending on how conversations developed within each interview. The questions asked focussed on: participants' early lives growing up; their experiences of leaving Ethiopia and of settling in the UK; and how life had changed for them over time. These questions aimed to

facilitate discussion with participants about the different ways in which they had made sense of and coped with experiences of extreme adversity across their lifespan, and what had been most important to them at various stages therein.

2.3.11 Transcription

Acknowledging that the method of transcription is often dependent on the way in which transcripts are to be analysed (Reissman, 2008), I transcribed all of my interviews verbatim in their entirety, in an attempt to capture, as far as possible, the way in which narratives were (co-)constructed and developed through the dialogue that elicited them. I transcribed as much detail from my interviews as I could, making note of false starts, laughter and pauses, as well as particularly emphasised words or phrases. The level of detail included, and the transcription conventions used (see Appendix 6) combines that modelled by both Reissman (2008, p. 30) and Frosh and Emerson (2005). I also noted, after each interview, my impression of it, and reminders of anything I noticed which might not have been captured by the sound recording.

2.3.12 Analysis

I used a number of questions adapted from Frank (2012) on which to base the dialogic narrative analysis of my interview data (see Appendix 8). I analysed each transcript separately, as detailed below, before summarising what seemed to me the most salient themes transcending all four. Given the nature of my interview schedule, and of my epistemological stance in relation to this study, I decided to treat all of the data collected through my interviews as constitutive of the narrative(s) of each participant. Some previous studies (e.g. Jones, 2002) have isolated only certain sections of data as qualifying as “narrative”, excluding, for example, additional information such as descriptions or explanations. Firstly, given that all of my questions asked participants explicitly about an aspect of their life and the sense they had made of it, I felt it pertinent not to exclude any sections of the transcripts from analysis. Secondly, I did not want to impose any preconceived criteria in determining which part of any recorded dialogue did or did not warrant analysis, or in so doing curtail or disrupt the voices which, through the analysis, I was hoping to elevate. Furthermore, I aimed to avoid the

assumption that there is such a thing as “a narrative” of which it would make sense to consider being isolated or extracted in some way. As above, I use the term “narrative” as a means to communicate one way in which people talk about their experiences, not to denote any kind of empirical structural form of the linguistic representation of them.

2.4 ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical approval was granted for this study by the University of East London (see Appendix 9 for details). The Ethiopian community organisation through which I recruited participants did not have an ethics committee or any formal protocol for assessing my study design. Following a detailed introduction to the present study, the manager of this organisation stated that he was happy to support it and to be involved with the recruitment process, provided that each potential participant was briefed in the same way and given an opportunity to provide or to withhold their consent to be interviewed. Please see Appendix 10 for an email he sent in order to retrospectively confirm his willingness to support this study.

3.0 ANALYSIS

This chapter details the dialogic narrative analysis carried out on the transcripts of the interviews that I held with four Ethiopian refugee people. It incorporates some aspects of my discussion - as outlined above, integral to the analytic process was a close consideration of the dialogic environment in which narratives were elicited. This necessitated a reflection on the meaning of what was said, in part as a function of the nature and procedure of the research process as a whole. I analysed each transcript separately, in the same order in which the interviews took place, using the questions listed in Appendix 8. These questions are adapted from those listed by Frank (2012) and take into account the audience of and the resources available to each participant, as well as their possible identities and affiliations; Appendix 7 contains a sample of the analytic process applied to each transcript. I begin each section by explaining how I became acquainted with the participant in question, before documenting my analysis of the narratives they employed¹⁰. I end this chapter by considering the ways in which the four case studies presented share some underlying commonalities, and use the ensuing Further Discussion to consider their potential wider implications.

3.1 PARTICIPANT ONE

I telephoned Participant One to introduce myself without having met him previously; he was a friend of the manager of the Ethiopian community centre with whom I was in contact, and thus perhaps motivated to participate, in part, as a favour to his friend. Participant One told me he was very willing to be interviewed, and we met soon afterwards in his home, at his request. He explained that he had recently been writing his memoirs and had prepared notes before our meeting, to remind him of areas he had considered most salient in relation to the study information letter he had received. In this way, I felt I may have been positioned by him in a student role; a young outsider (to his experiences, his ethnicity, his history and his home) whom he was offered an opportunity to teach, about his life and the sense he had made of it, through a fluent and somewhat rehearsed and pre-prepared narrative account. He spoke

¹⁰ I chose not to include explicit demographic information about the participants of this study, in an attempt to facilitate their introduction using the language (and terms) that they themselves had deemed most appropriate.

confidently, letting me know that he had no pressure on his time, and providing long and detailed responses to my questions that did not seem to invite or facilitate the development of a dialogue. Perhaps this was a reflection of the authoritative position he adopted, as an Ethiopian man of standing in his community, and in relation to me as a white, younger, English woman.

In answer to my first question, “Can you tell me a little about where you grew up..?”, he gave a very brief overview of his life, picking out five main milestones: his birth place, Addis Ababa; his secondary education; his employment in the Ethiopian Air Force and subsequently as a “provincial governor” (under Mengistu); his three year imprisonment at the hands of the subsequent (EPRDF) regime; and his “success” in getting a visa to come to the UK before being granted asylum here. As such, in the space of 35 lines of transcription [3-38], he had established that he had grown up in a developing urban setting, was educated to a greater level than the majority of the population of Ethiopia, and that he had held esteemed occupational positions of authority, which had necessitated his imprisonment when his government was overthrown. He thus succeeded in establishing very quickly the status of the man to whom I was speaking (both within a social hierarchy in Ethiopia, as well as in relation to me), and the position(s) from which he was to narrate his life in the interview that followed. This was all achieved despite the way in which my opening question in fact enquired only about *where* he grew up and in so doing positioned him immediately back as a young child in Ethiopia, whose agricultural family life, as he went on to explain, had comprised a constant battle against poverty.

Participant One described his early years as “not an easy life”, recalling that “to have enough to eat, that was your aspiration” [201-202]. He explained that material possessions, as well as food, had been scarce, and that he had been expected to work as a shepherd for his family from the age of five. A recurring narrative that he drew on repeatedly, however, and introduced early on in our interview, is suggested by the following:

So maybe, it's, it's as one Iranian philosopher said, err, err, sometimes the poverty could be a source of strength to you, understand? It can harden yourselves. [94-95]

This narrative was used throughout our interview, but by no means exclusively, as a way of communicating the sense he had made of the life he had lived; that the adversity he had encountered had not defeated him but had prompted and enabled him to actively “break the shackles of hardship” [130], and “confront the problems <Hannah: mmhmm>, not to just collapse in front of them” [137-138]. As such he appeared to be performing a narrative of survival; constructing himself as a resourceful and unbeaten man, who had coped with adversity by confronting and overcoming it, and being left stronger as a result. In so doing, his narrative also served to preserve the construction of the power of his social status, both in Ethiopia and in the context of our interview, which he had begun from the outset of our meeting.

He proceeded to draw parallels between his own life and those of various historical political and religious leaders, whose great successes had been founded on the overcoming of adversity. In so doing he demonstrated not only the broad wealth of literary material available to his narrative construction (and thus again his status as a highly educated man), but also that his ideas were rooted in, as well as comprised, the stories of historical figures. Indeed much of the meaning he ascribed to his own life was explicitly highly contextualised within very rich historical as well as religious accounts. For example, he situated the struggles of Ethiopia (and by implication his own family's poverty) within a wide political and geographical narrative, that drew in, among other factors: inexorable population growth that had exceeded potential for food production; ensuing civil unrest; and oil-oriented intervention from the west in neighbouring Arab states, that had caused disruption to local governance. He thereby constructed a persuasive narrative, of international oppression, adding, “...people are talking about terrorism <Hannah: mmhmm> ahh today. We have been terrorised for so many years [laugh] you see” [359-360].

Still, despite an account of his nation's on-going plight, he continued:

I don't know, I can't say we are any different people but err historically
<Hannah: mmhmm> errrm we have never been er, been subdued by
external forces. [306-308]

In parallel to the overarching narrative he adopted for his own life (i.e. adversity fosters and provokes demonstrations of strength), he constructed the recent history of Ethiopia as one of the resistance of encroachment by external forces, despite incredible hardship. He spoke about himself as a part of this nation, as “an Ethiopian”, whose own personal experiences, and responses to them, were subsumed within, as well as identified with, a wider political picture. His narrative communicated that he, in alignment with, and affiliation to, the nation of which he was a part, had faced incredible opposition and persecution and yet had countered it with enough force to facilitate survival. In drawing these parallels to a wider political context, he made little reference to personal responses or emotional reactions to the adversity he faced, perhaps because within the narrative he constructed, a personalised account would have been incongruent or even irrelevant. His adoption of a broad, national narrative perhaps also reflected the defiance and resistance to invasion of which he spoke: to have narrated individual responses to the hardship he faced may have been to relinquish some of the power he had sustained in constructing his narrative thus far, and perhaps also to contravene the (defiant and impersonal) style in which, as a former politician, he would have been in the habit of speaking.

Against the political backdrop which he constructed, I asked what he thought had enabled the Ethiopian people to cope, and to carry on [371-377]. He answered:

Yeah, [...] just, by, strong survival instinct, you see? <Hannah: mmhmm>
err, that means you don't complain, even if you go out/ you go without
food, <Hannah: mmhmm> you know in Ethiopia there is no connection
between the government and the people. The people go hungry, they don't
complain, that is the fault of the government. They, they say it's the work of
God. <Hannah: mmhmm> this hunger has been brought upon us by, er,
some mistake of ours, from God and, I think next time God will be merciful
and bring us better. So, people die, they simply die, they don't complain...
we have got a culture of victim, they call it a victim culture... that means

we, we go hungry quietly, we get sick quietly, we suffer quietly, we die quietly <Hannah: mmhmm>. We have got this culture, this victim culture. We, we never complain. [378-390]

This excerpt, along with the passage that follows, draws on a narrative which Participant One portrayed as dominant and pervasive among Ethiopian people, but one with which his relationship changed several times over the course of his reconstruction of it. The prevailing idea is that suffering is to be accepted quietly, based on, here, a faith in (or perhaps long tradition of) the existence of God. Thus he alluded to a belief that that which befalls individuals, as well as the nation as a whole, is in divine hands, both in terms of punishment for past ills, and in terms of a hope for a better future. To an extent, Participant One distanced himself from the “victim culture”, saying “*they* say it is the work of God”, and “*the people* go hungry”; perhaps a reflection of his now distal position in relation to the suffering described, and also of his access to information about Ethiopia’s governance that would not be available to most of the population. He further suggested that this “mentality” (or perhaps this narrative) was what had allowed “different governments, with so many brutalities [to] survive for such a long time, you know <Hannah: uh huh>. Because they don’t complain.” [394-396]

However he also, throughout this section of the interview, referred to a “we” that belied his own investment in this idea, and an on-going allegiance to a national identity, which he continued to protect. Throughout the interview he seemed to promote the idea of acceptance of adversity over that of entitlement; of taking and working with what is “God-given” [435], rather than protesting, or expressing defeat in response to, having been personally violated or wronged in some way. Indeed he subsequently suggested that a “victim culture” was not incongruent to the ideas expressed earlier, or contradictory to the juxtaposition throughout his narrative of the concept of “fighting”:

But... that doesn’t make us not, err, not to be strong. We are still strong <Hannah: mmhmm> because we know how to live in adversity. <Hannah: mmhmm> We are always looking for tomorrow. Adversity, we don’t know that, that’s why I asked you, if you ask me adversity, I will ask you again,

adversity, what is adversity, you see? [laugh] We just live like that, you see? [426-432]

His response here was particularly pertinent, in reminding me that the idea of coping with adversity engenders the presumption that it is somehow out of the ordinary; an obstacle that needs to be managed so that life can resume. What he was communicating here was that the construct of adversity was, to him, in a sense meaningless, because his life was defined by and equated with hardship; because people in Ethiopia “just live like that”. He narrated his life therefore as one of survival, perhaps where power and dignity were to be found in acceptance, in the sense that this connoted the capacity to transcend adversity, rather than to be distressed, distracted or defeated by it. Perhaps this also served to further explain the absence of a more personal or emotional narrative, in that such an individualised framework (along with the construct of “coping”, for example) would be rendered redundant when the whole of life had been defined by what I had, perhaps clumsily, termed “adversity”.

At this point I was aware that I was changing the direction of the interview, keen too to talk about his experiences of persecution and his exit from Ethiopia. But the same sense of inevitability seemed to pervade this part of his story too:

...see it is normal in the third world, when governments change, the new rulers will tend to, errr, persecute the followers of the previous one.
<Hannah: uh huh> It's a cycle. [450-452]

However, his performance of survival was on-going: he spoke about having been “taken prisoner of war”, and “thrown in prison” [455-456] for three years by the new government in 1991, despite the fact that “they couldn't find any crime” [481-482]. Although he spoke with a tone of acceptance he also again alluded to a capacity for the transcendence of hardship, referring to his imprisonment, in fact as a “mercy” and “a blessing in disguise” [526] (rather than a personal affront), bringing an end as it did to seventeen years of conflict under the previous regime.

When he began talking about his arrival in the UK, however - relatively directly via a three-month visa in the Middle East around five years ago - the tone and focus

of his narrative changed noticeably. He became more animated, and descriptive of the series of losses he incurred:

Because they rejected my case, er, they said, no, your case is not/ so, rejected. That is eh, that is the worst time in your life. <Hannah: mmm>, for every immigrant <Hannah: mm, mm, mm>, because you'll be in limbo, you see? <Hannah: mm>, you will never know, where you will end up, you see?... that is the hell of times. [623-627]

His change of tone was reflected in the identification of himself as an “immigrant” [625] rather than as an Ethiopian; the “only black person in that, in that aircraft” [616], who was suddenly removed from the context within which he had come to make sense of his life, and thereby stripped of the status and social standing he had previously forged. He spoke of feeling a lack of instilled value on arrival in the UK, saying that “they make you, they make you, err, very little” [707], and objectified as part of a bureaucratic “backlog” [684], in a “hotch potch” [688] and discriminatory asylum application system. I also became aware of a shift in the dynamic between us, whereby he was now expounding his plight in attempting to forge an existence in the country in which I had lived comfortably for my whole life. I was aware that he wanted to maintain a sense of the identity as a “strong old man” [441] that he had constructed earlier, whilst (and perhaps also *by*) recalling how his social status, and thereby his dignity, had been taken from him:

I cannot cope with this, I was in a different life, and, you know, I was in the airforce, <Hannah: mmhmm>, I was better fed, errr, compared with the other public. Then I was provincial governor, <Hannah: mmhmm>, I had a better income, yeah, so I just, I just fall from the cliff when I come here, because I became simply nobody in this country, nobody takes care of me. [767-772]

I was aware that, at this point in the interview however, and perhaps notably after a short convenience break, Participant One was also keen to convey a sense of gratitude for the life he had (eventually, after being made to “pass through fire” [706]) been allowed to establish. I felt that maybe he thought he needed to appease me for his portrayal of my country, as uncaring and belittling, but was also reminded of the wider audience his narrative may have addressed:

[My sons] must love this country, because this country has done for us what our country has not done for us <Hannah: mmhmm>, yeh. I am not speaking this for lip service, I speak it from my mind and my heart. [848-852]

His several ensuing references to the “freedom” he had been afforded in this country, and the “peace of mind” [867] that his rights within an equitable legal system afforded, seemed to, for a short time at least, obscure the previous construction of the “hell” he was put through, in applying to be granted asylum in this country. At this point in the interview, he positioned himself as someone who was indebted, who should be grateful for the provisions he had been granted, but in striking contrast to the sentiment evoked earlier, that Britain, as a nation, retained no debt of guilt or responsibility towards Ethiopian refugee people like him. I wondered to what extent his expressions of gratitude reflected a sense of obligation and accountability, and a deliberate, if functional, alignment to a way of talking he had not used before:

...the poverty of the Africans is the lack of good governance. That’s, err, the most difficult thing to live in third world countries, you see. Corruption? Errr, err, you are not respected as a citizen, your rights are not protected. These are the differences between civilisation and, erm, barbarianism if you will, if you want to say it. [869-873]

His use of the collective term “the Africans” as well as “civilisation” and (albeit hesitantly) “barbarianism” was striking and somehow shocking, evoking a damning and perhaps provocative indictment of the country he had left behind. I wonder to what extent his use of these words, along with “peasant” and “third world” elsewhere, comprised an invitation (which I neglected to pursue) to reflect on the relative power engendered by our two respective nations, and by us, as citizens of them. This may, of course, also have merely reflected ambivalence on his part, of his current situation, straddling two cultural identities. It is of note that he used the word “barbarianism” shortly after expounding his gratitude towards the UK, perhaps in conforming to a societal narrative which has tended to laud a sense of superiority. This was despite, and in contrast to, the perhaps more honest and in turn punitive summary of this nation that he proceeded to give.

For the final section of the interview, and in answer to my question “have you noticed, any particular ways in which people in this country respond, or cope, or, or yes respond, when difficult things happen?” [998-1000], Participant One made a link back to several ideas which he had variously employed earlier on in our interview, in saying:

Ah, yeah, because, for example, er, I don’t erm like when people say, “I am depressed” <Hannah: mmhmm> I hate that very word. Why are you depressed? Because life itself is a depressing world <Hannah: mmhmm> this, is, it, it is depression itself... you have to prepare yourself to confront this, situation <Hannah: mmhmm> If you are depressed you are defeated. You are unfit to survive. [...]...When you are born, I take it that you are thrown into a battle field <Hannah: mmhmm> with a gun. You see? If you want to come through that battlefield, if you want to win the war, you have to be able to fight. [1003-1017]

He proceeded to expound a long list of basic services and amenities to which the British people have free access, in direct comparison to the hardships “of Biblical proportions” [1033], which afflict the people of Ethiopia. His account of this situation seemed to be thus: that the British people are somehow “pampered” [974] to the extent that a sense of entitlement, and expectation of a “perfect world” [1022] means that, unlike in Ethiopia, “nobody wants [or perhaps needs] to fight” [1066]. For him, life itself is, as above, characterised by hardship, in the face of which his only choice is to fight and survive; there is neither conceptual nor pragmatic space in his narrative for the construct of “depression”. Perhaps, to him, this construct represented fear in the face of adversity, or surrender to it; either way it would only connote a distraction from the ultimate goal of survival, and thereby equate with “defeat”.

3.2 PARTICIPANT TWO

I met Participant Two at a Christmas meal at the centre for the Ethiopian community organisation with which I was in contact. I introduced myself to him and his European wife, explaining that I was there, as one of very few non-Ethiopian people present, to meet potential participants for my study. I spoke mostly to his wife throughout the meal, who offered participation on her husband’s

behalf, and gave me her number to arrange a time to meet at their home. I visited them around a fortnight later at their flat, as they told me they rarely visited the community centre. I wondered whether Participant Two would have agreed to participate without his wife's encouragement and mediation, and so I was conscious from then on to ascertain that he was indeed happy to be involved with the research, and tried to provide ample opportunity (in the absence of his wife) for him to withdraw.

I was also keen to confirm the willingness of Participant Two to participate in the interview as, while he did independently give his consent to take part, he also expressed some reticence, and asked several questions pertaining to the confidentiality and anonymity of any answers he might give. He made reference to concerns about tribal divisions within the Ethiopian community in London, which he told me he would not want to exacerbate through any identifiable responses to my questions. When I asked him, after our interview, whether he knew of anyone else who might like to participate in my study, he was very reluctant to recommend anyone, saying, of each person his wife suggested, that their life had been too difficult to speak about. This seemed to reflect his position in relation to participating too, as understandably reluctant; suspicious of my motives as a stranger who shared none of his experiences of being a refugee person, and aware that the study involved a (perhaps daunting and potentially distressing) exploration of "extreme adversity". As such, I was aware from the outset of the power I engendered, having fully instigated, and then being in a position to manipulate, the interaction that ensued.

Participant Two stated that, despite his concerns, he wished to continue with the interview, and so we began recording. When I asked him to tell me a little about his life growing up in Ethiopia, he said:

So I grew up in the city, Addis, so [...] during that time it was/ life in Ethiopia was good, it was er the king's regime <Hannah: uh huh> life is was also different, there was capitalism at that time <Hannah: uh huh> so I been, well, fortunate because I have er a good life at that time <Hannah: uh huh> my father has a lot of property and these kinds of things. So I grew up in good life standards <Hannah: uh huh> so it was very nice. Ah, after that in

1974, I was just a little boy in a way, but, um, the regime changed [laugh]... After that everything start upside down... we used to have a lot of things, the new government took everything. [3-13]

In this way, he began his interview by adopting a narrative of loss, communicating to me the “good” life that he had, in relation to the “king’s regime”, before the onset of a military coup, which “took everything”. In opening his account in this way, he was perhaps demonstrating to me that he had known a different life to the relatively disadvantaged context in which I met him, and (perhaps in parallel to Participant One) attempting to reconstruct some of the social standing that he had known in Ethiopia. In narrating what he had lost he was also narrating what he once had, including those (very familiar) expectations he had harboured for his future:

I was on the process to gain, you know? <Hannah: mmhmm>. You study, high school, from that to go to college, to have a job, these kinds of things, have been waiting for me <Hannah: mmhmm>. And suddenly, you/ you can’t expect about life. [105-107]

In response to the losses which he recounted, both at the time of this regime change (his father had been forced to flee, and his brothers to move abroad to find employment) as well as later in his life, he also spoke about having to “take everything that comes” [183], to “survive”, “adapt”, and “adjust”. Whilst his vocabulary of verbs was perhaps passive, it certainly did not communicate defeat. His narrative was again one of acceptance and survival, making no reference either to personal affront or to emotional or psychological sequelae. Indeed, rather than giving an individualised, self-oriented account, in this interview he made sense of his early experiences of loss, and his responses to them, in terms of his position in a social, co-dependent setting. His narrative was a communal one, for which he often used the second person “you” or the first person plural to communicate a collective response to the adversity he faced:

So we just have to carry on <Hannah: mmm>, what we have. So we have to adjust <Hannah: mmm> you must/ you can’t give up or surrender life. [158-161]

Perhaps adopting such a narrative enabled him to feel less isolated and exposed in an interview in which he may have felt invaded and interrogated, but it may also have reflected the protection and support that a more collective way of life had afforded. Indeed he spoke repeatedly throughout our interview, about his sadness at the loss, on fleeing to the UK, of the social community in Ethiopia of which he had been a part, for example:

You depend on family <Hannah: mmhmm> you depend on community <Hannah: mmhmm>, so if something happened, your neighbours help you, the community help you, these kind of things <Hannah: mmhmm>. There is very nice social things in Ethiopia ... That's what I miss, that's what I love. So, always is the memory that comes back <Hannah: mmm> when you went abroad, when you didn't see these kinds of things, sometimes you don't even see your neighbour next door <Hannah: mmhmm> who is living, you don't even know, apart from the number of the door. [74-83]

I asked him about his experiences in the years following the first regime change (when he was a young boy), and he explained how he had completed his studies and had worked his way up to a "good position" in a government-affiliated company. Again, the milestones around which his narrative was constructed were based on education and employment and his accomplishment therein, perhaps demonstrating their importance to him, but again also constructing his identity as a function of the social standing he had once known. His position as a government worker had also meant, however, that when the military regime was in turn overthrown in 1991, he had again encountered "difficulties":

From higher management, they pick their own people <Hannah: mmhmm>, because who is gonna be trusted? <Hannah: mmhmm> This is alive everywhere, there is this kind of system, <Hannah: mmhmm> so, you have to be/ fit in somewhere, either by [...] tribe or some kind of things, which one you believe, these kinds of things. [219-223]

He described becoming aware of "spies" operating in his workplace and, without giving any details, that his life was under threat. He spoke about being forced to "take sides", but also about his reluctance to affiliate himself to one political group. This also served to further contextualise his reluctance to participate in an

interview, which, in parallel to the situation just described, was to involve being questioned by a near stranger, asked to construct an account of his personal experiences and affiliations, and to have the details of it probed and recorded. Perhaps his immersion in a largely second person and pragmatic account was also an act of resistance to, and protection from, interrogation and enforced affiliation, that mirrored his previous defiance.

He developed his account of the years after the second government change (of 1991) by evoking a series of brutal images, for example, “they just pass through, with a tank you know” [270-271] and “er my house, it was half burned when they shot, the, what you call, er... It was military depot” [260-261]. When I asked how he had managed to cope, living through these experiences, he constructed a powerful image of being “inside of the fire” [276], whereby:

So I saw all this, in life, so, when you are accustomed these kinds of things nothing, that is nothing new for you. So <Hannah: mmhmm> It doesn't matter so, so you are inside, yeh, you are inside so you just carry on living.” [278-280]

Again, with echoes of the narrative employed by Participant One, he appeared here to be performing his survival, not as the overcoming of an isolated external event or events, but as the endurance of on-going hardship (related through reference to “fire”) that was constructed as an all-engulfing, if destructive, milieu. In this way it made no sense to speak of “coping” with adversity, when it enveloped and characterised (however violently) an entire way of life. He added “there is no choice. There is sometimes there is no choi/ where to go... this is your country, this is your home. What can you do?” [284-285]. In asking me this question he reminded me that, for him, the very act of living had been “just surviving, for one day” [296]; normality conveyed through the statement, “I just have to live ‘til I can” [319].

I asked him to speak in more detail about his move to the UK, for which he said he hadn't been “ready” (“my friends, they just want to push me out” [319-320]) and which he said signalled another unwelcomed new beginning; “another upside down” [329]. He narrated this time in clear terms of disempowerment and

suppression, through, for example, his objectification as an entity to be managed: "...so, they process you, they will grant you, or refuse you" [402].

The moment you arrive, they just, everyone want from you... you are another victim here <Hannah: ok, yeah> someone make something out of you. [375-379]

The narrative that followed mirrored the asylum seeking process that it constructed; an endless and repeating cycle of rejected applications for asylum, of being passed "from one solicitor to another" [417], of work permits issued and then revoked. He noticeably narrated this period of his life in the first person, drawing my attention to the social isolation of which he spoke, and to his experiences having been particularly humiliating. He expressed his sense of utter powerlessness thus:

At least let me work. <Hannah: mmhmm> I'm not disabled or anything, I'm not asking anything. Don't want any charity or these kinds of things <Hannah: mmhmm>. Let me work, let me pay tax <Hannah: mmhmm> let me pay my solicitor, let me do, what is the system want me to do? <Hannah: mmhmm> Because they don't let me. They don't let me anything. [437-439]

He seemed to be appealing (emphatically) to a wider audience here; asking direct questions of a political system which represented a dehumanising and impenetrable barrier to employment, and thus to the agency and self-sufficiency that this would entail. This seemed to represent the most distressing period in the story he told of his life so far; being kept alive by the state whilst not being "allowed" to work for his own survival seemed to contravene the identity he had previously constructed, and the meaning this had afforded. He proceeded to construct the asylum-seeking process as demeaning and humiliating; a system within which his rights were violated, and his humanity eschewed, until he felt he fared worse than had he been in prison.

At this point in the interview, Participant Two asked me to stop recording. Recounting his experiences had left him apparently very distressed, which served as a stark demonstration to me of what the asylum-seeking process had meant to

him, and a reminder that perhaps I had been more focussed on capturing his unfolding narrative than noticing the impact of the questions I had asked. This interview was for my benefit - he had not asked to be involved - and it seemed that the recollection of the adversity, on which I was asking him to focus, was in itself an experience which left him feeling vulnerable, angry and possibly even exploited by me. Still, his request that the Dictaphone be switched off was a performance of power in one sense; ensuring that the narrative it recorded was not interrupted by the distress he was expressing. He explained that he needed a moment to calm down and, after around 4 minutes indicated that he was ready to recommence.

His narration returned immediately to his determination to “survive” (using this word noticeably frequently) despite his situation, possibly in a reconstruction of the identity he had narrated previously, and to counter the vulnerability he had just demonstrated. He talked about knowing of other people who were seeking asylum at the same time as him, and who “gave up” - who took drugs, or committed suicide - but asked, “If I have been doing myself, who’s gonna get benefit?” [467-468]. His narrative account developed into one of resistance of the oppression and restriction he faced (as opposed to giving in to it), in terms of actively fighting and subverting it, and forging an occupation for himself despite it:

...yeah, I managed to finish my course, yeah. In the meantime I, I got access to have er apprentice courses, you know, to have experience, big hotels, these kinds of things <Hannah: mm, mm> so, it helped me, to forget these kinds of things, yeah. [577-580]

In this way, he seemed to be performing survival in terms of working towards a specific goal; “I have to fight, by, by diverting myself in a different way” [589-590]. In so doing, he was able to “forget” the adversity he faced, rather than focus on it.

He described finally being granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK - after eighteen years - as a “relief” and a “release” but not an event which had caused “excitement” or elicited “celebration”, as his friends and family had expected. Instead he considered it a “job done” and the end of a period of fighting which should have been over long ago. However, he also spoke of it as something of an “achievement”, and in itself an unprecedented demonstration of survival, “after 18

years, after 18 years yeah. I never heard someone stay 18 years” [597]. I asked him, “What would you say was most important to you to get through that? What, what was most important to you, for keeping fighting, and keeping going?” [637-639]. He said:

Yeah, so what I realise, I have to depend on myself, yeh. So, no one is gonna help me, you can’t trust anyone. This is, yeah, because I grew up from trusting everyone, <Hannah: mm> when I came over here, everything’s business, <Hannah: mmm> so, to make money out of you, all these people, you end up, even if there are a lot of people to be trusted, <Hannah: mmm>, you end up, don’t trust anyone, you just don’t look anything [.] If you’re surviving yourself, just try depend on yourself <Hannah: mm, mm>. That’s what I learn. [656-662]

In so doing, he constructed his experience of life in the UK in markedly different terms to that of his life in Ethiopia, in the absence of the supportive social network of which he had been a part, and within a context in which he felt he had been positioned primarily as a commodity for the making of money. What had once conferred support and protection (i.e. trusting and relying on other people), as above, now conferred risk and vulnerability; in its place a construction of an independent man, whose strength now came from depending on no one but himself. However, in contrast to this “realisation”, he proceeded to lament, again with echoes of the sentiments expressed by Participant One, how a system that left him relying on the state, rather than on community, served to erode the strength and the agency he had found therein:

That’s what ruins your life, you know? In Ethiopia you have to work for yourself, or, depend on family, and grow up as a social, as a people together, you will survive <Hannah: uh huh>. Here you have to depend on the, the, benefits system <Hannah: mmhmm> that’s why the, err, they put you in the system, which is never happening in Ethiopia <Hannah: ok>. That’s what makes you even here, weak. [682-686]

In this way, despite “learning” that, in the UK, he needed to rely only on himself, the cost of doing so was to sacrifice the strength he had found in the community he had previously constructed as the source of so much support. .

3.3 PARTICIPANT THREE

I was introduced to Participant Three during a visit to the Ethiopian community centre, where I subsequently met him coincidentally several times. He said he would be willing to participate in an interview, although we had some difficulty coordinating a time to meet at the centre. I wondered, therefore, whether he was keen, indirectly, to help out and to support the work of the centre manager, rather than wanting to be interviewed for any benefit to himself. He cancelled our first two appointments, and said he had forgotten about our final one until my telephone call on the day to remind him. Thus, I felt that perhaps he, also, was reluctant to be interviewed - on the day we met he arrived later than planned, and asked how long the interview would take, saying he did not feel he had much to contribute. We met in a private office at the community centre, but in a building frequented by various members of the community of which he was a part. Although he gave his consent to be interviewed, I felt he had agreed to participate reluctantly, perhaps in acquiescence to the manager who had suggested I ask him, and perhaps because he felt he could not decline. As such I felt somewhat uncomfortable throughout the interview (though I did not feel able to acknowledge this), not wishing to press him for details he did not offer, especially because of the added inconvenience he had likely incurred travelling to the centre, with the disability he had¹¹.

I opened, as with all the interviews, asking him to tell me a little about where he grew up and what this had been like. He told me he was born in a village East of Addis Ababa but that he had incurred his disability aged five, which had necessitated him leaving the village for “medical treatment”, before starting at a “special school”:

Yeah, it's there that I finished my, primary, and secondary school education <Hannah: mmhmm>, then I went to Addis, erm, for high school education <Hannah: mmhmm>. Following my [...] erm [...] my erm, conclusion

¹¹ I have not identified the nature of this disability in order to protect the confidentiality of this participant's account. However, I am also mindful that Participant Three would still have been aware of the conspicuousness it conferred, both in terms of his identity and his story, which may in turn have influenced what he chose (and chose not) to speak about.

of my high school education <Hannah: mmhmm> I [...] went to Addis Ababa University <Hannah: ok> and then I finished err, my first degree, education, then went to errr, minister of education department of, err department of transport and communications, <Hannah: mmhmm> government department actually <Hannah: mmhmm> for err work... That's what I, that is my history <Hannah: mm, mm, ok> in short, history, history <Hannah: yeh>, in Ethiopia. [17-26]

This brief, opening narrative, like much that which was subsequently constructed, was based firmly around the theme of educational achievement, perhaps representing (as well as status and the opportunity for power and influence) something constant and enduring which, unlike most other aspects of his life, could not be taken away from him. As with his narration of all the experiences about which he spoke, his account was measured, factual and non-tangential, which seemed to mirror the way in which he conceptualised his life. He constructed his story as one of calm determination, purpose and objective, with a firm end in mind (namely to educate himself in order to gain skills and find employment), making clear to me that none of the experiences of adversity of which he spoke had precluded (or would preclude) this on-going goal.

Very early on in the interview, he mentioned having incurred his disability aged 5, and, I felt, in so doing had given me permission to enquire further. I was aware however, that in doing so I was also drawing attention to another aspect of difference between us, that may have been constructed, in the UK as well as in Ethiopia, as a cause of weakness or even spiritual deficit - he told me his parents took him to several Orthodox Churches to be blessed with holy water - for which, with the ensuing narrative, he may have aimed to compensate. About his disability he said "...actually, it wasn't easy, to, [...] to cope, with er, with what happened" [52]. He spoke in matter-of-fact terms (e.g. "the thing turned out to be, err, unfortunate" [67-68]), but saying that:

I forgot, all, that happened, that had happened before. So, that means I got used to the, new, the new realities <Hannah: ok> you know <Hannah: ok> of my life. [71-73]

This was indeed another idea that pervaded much of the narrative he employed throughout our interview; the importance of “getting used” to new and difficult situations, and also of forgetting them. This is perhaps in direct contrast to more Western, cognitive narratives that stress the importance of “processing” and “working through”, in coping with experiences of extreme adversity.

I asked how his life had changed since this time, and again he made sense of this question through reference to the significance of his education, using the metaphor of having built his life, and his capacity to live independently, upon it:

...for me <Hannah: mmhmm> education is a great thing. It, it opened my, it opened a way to, err, to modern life <Hannah: mmhmm>, to a standard of life, to <Hannah: mmhmm> more quality life <Hannah: mmhmm>, it opened the gate to many opportunities in life. [183-186]

In this way, education was also constructed as a catalyst that had afforded “change”, which he narrated in terms of the development of “confidence”, as well as the opportunity to access information and to gain knowledge about the world and his community which otherwise would have been kept from him. I therefore wonder whether education was so prominent in his narrative because it afforded him a way into a world which had been variously otherwise restricted, and gave him the key to access information and a status that would otherwise have been unavailable. This narrative was also used to perform that status for me (and perhaps a wider audience) in a setting in which it had been, in different ways, threatened and diminished:

...I feel, like I err, err, er, I [...] like an educated person <Hannah: mmhmm> so, I feel good to my <Hannah: mmhmm> to, to, I feel good <Hannah: mm> erm, and err, that, er [...] gave me, even, I got respect from other people <Hannah: mmhmm>, because of my, because of the achievement <Hannah: mmm> [...] erm, I got as a result of being educated <Hannah: mmm>. So, err, it, it change <Hannah: yeh> actually, your life <Hannah: yeh, yeh> so, it changed my life. [197-207]

I then asked him about what led up to him leaving Ethiopia. In retrospect, this question seemed incongruent to the dialogue thus far, and certainly changed the

direction of the narrative that was being constructed. This question also again drew his focus to a time when the identity of which he had been speaking (namely his status, his educational “achievement” and his occupation) were all suddenly lost, and a time when his physical safety, as well as identity, was most threatened. Perhaps I was recreating something of this experience of being undermined in asking this question, which might also provide one explanation for his faltered speech in answering:

Err, yes. Erm, [.] erm, what led me [.] to get out of the country actually <Hannah: mmm> is, err, [.] erm, is [.] the difficulty I faced, <Hannah: mm, mm> while I was, at work <Hannah: mmm>. You know, erm, [.] the government [.] erm changed <Hannah: mmhmm> erm. There was a change of government, err, change of regime <Hannah: mmhmm> err, just before, err, five, six years, err, before I left the country. [220-221]

Participant Three did not give many details about the “difficulty” (or what he later termed “abuse”) that he suffered, speaking in broad terms like “they, would, err, deprive, of you, fundamental freedoms and rights” [271-272]; alluding to “mental torture” [236] but not expanding on what this entailed. I did not feel able or invited to ask for any further details; perhaps it was too dehumanising (he called it “barbaric”), or perhaps doing so would have contravened the identity he had constructed in our interview so far. Perhaps giving no further details also pertained to the act of accepting: “I didn’t have any alternative” <Hannah: yeh>. “Errm, you accept [.] what [.] what, what you faced, you know?” [307-308].

I asked him “...I just wondered how you, how you made sense of that, and how you managed to carry on, to cope, to, to, to keep going when you were in that situation” [287-289], to which he replied:

[The regime] did not [.] err, allow me to lead <Hannah: mmm> a decent life <Hannah: mmhmm>, as a government worker <Hannah: mmm>, as a citizen <Hannah: mmm> as well <Hannah: mm, mm> [.] So, they, deprived me, of, every basic, erm, [.] opportunity in life <Hannah: mmhmm> So, I, couldn’t get on with them <Hannah: mm, mm>, I couldn’t get on with them <Hannah: mmhmm> I couldn’t get on <Hannah: mm> err, with my life. [298-303]

As such, he constructed the consequences of the persecution and abuse he faced in terms of the deprivation of his rights, and as an obstacle to him “getting on” with his life, and pursuing the goals he had for it. Again, perhaps expecting that he would have provided more of a personal, or emotional account, I asked; “...and what, do you think, what do you think was the impact of living like that on you? What do you think was the effect of having to go through, through that, how did that affect you?” [317-319]. His answer was long and repetitive, as if unrehearsed, and as if he had not spoken about his torture in terms of its “results” before, other than as previously narrated, in terms of the obstacle it posed to the life he was building. I wonder what effect my question had on the way in which he continued to construct the experiences he had, in terms oriented to “thinking”, “imagination” and “mentality”:

...it affects, it affected me, actually, erm, normally, err mentally it/ because when you are tortured you know <Hannah: mmhmm> err, [...] you don’t, err, [...] think, even in a positive way <Hannah: mmhmm> in your life, err, all you can imagine, is, all the bad things, all the bad experiences <Hannah: mm, mm> you have exp/ you have experienced, so I have experienced. So, in a way, [...] it deprived you of your [...] you know, err, free thinking <Hannah: mm> [...] free, err, way of thinking <Hannah: mmhmm>, free way of, err, [...] er, mental. It, it deprived you, you, you, of, of your mental, err, freedom actually <Hannah: ok>. It changed the way you, you think, the way you view things <Hannah: mm, mm>. Err, that’s the results, those kinds of thi/ those kinds of things <Hannah: mmm>. Err are the results of err, the mental torture you <Hannah: mm> are, are faced for years. [320-330]

His narrative here (which I had perhaps directly prompted) made sense of the consequences of his torture, through the construct of freedom; communicating his understanding that the experiences he had been forced to endure had restricted his rights, his thinking and his imagination, which, given his disability, may have been especially pertinent.

He explained that “by corresponding <Hannah: mm, mm> with, err, institutions abroad <Hannah: uh huh> [...] I got a chance to get out of the country” [280-282]. In this way, he was perhaps alluding again to how his education had helped him

to “escape” and to survive, but also narrating leaving Ethiopia as having been an active choice. Although he said that leaving Ethiopia was a “relief”, he also explained that “it’s just like to start, life, from the scratch” [431-432]. He constructed himself at this time as a somewhat passive figure, finding himself at the mercy of the Home Office. But his narrative also incorporated various references to the exercise of his own agency: he spoke about deciding to familiarise himself with the area, and “learning”, “reading” attending “courses <Hannah: mmhmm> err, you know, to get some skills” [446-447]. Thus, he narrated an active navigation of his situation, and a rebuilding the life he had lost - based on the acquisition of skills, not on a process of recovery or healing in any sense.

About the “mental torture” that he endured in Ethiopia, he said:

...you can’t forget it. Until erm, [...] until some time, er, actually <Hannah: mmm>, these kinds of things, erm, will follow, erm you, for years, before you forget things, totally <Hannah: mmhmm>. [...] No, you you get, worried, you get, you feel an anxiety <Hannah: mmhmm>, anger, and anxiety <Hannah: mmhmm>. By, by you know, by thinking over, over it, by bringing things in your, in your mind <Hannah: yeh>, you, you think, you you know, you, feel, anger, and anxiety, about them <Hannah: mm, mm>. So, before you forget those things, it takes you some time <Hannah: mmm>, some years, actually <Hannah: mm, mm>... But, in time, little by little, it fades away, it fades, you know. [469-472]

His narrative is one of experiences following him and fading over time, again until they can be forgotten; perhaps thus suggesting another reason why he did not offer details of them to me, as to do so would only “bring them to mind”. Again, his narrative was not about recovering from emotional injury, or indeed of the need to dwell on or to process that which he had been forced to endure; in fact, as above, it constructed quite the opposite.

Participant Three also spoke about his hopes for the future: “To get a kind of job, or er to get, erm [...] self employed at least <Hannah: mmhmm> but all that I need, that I need to do is just er work out, how to bring that to reality” [533-534]. His narrative was one of on-going determination, whereby employment was still his

ultimate goal, and his “purpose”. I wondered to what extent this narrative was one which was dominant in the UK (that worth and status come from one’s occupation and economic standing), and as such, whether his adoption of it was an act of alignment to the society that he had entered; a society which, nonetheless, had left him unemployed and needing to re-train, despite a previously high ranking job in Ethiopia. Similarly, he said that “while I was there [in Ethiopia] <Hannah: mm>. [...] I know everything” [591-592], but that:

I don’t quite often feel, that kind of thing, but there might be, erm, times when <Hannah: mmhmm>, you, very rarely actually <Hannah: mmhmm>, when you feel [...] that [...] I don’t, er, when you say that, I don’t belong <Hannah: mm>to [...] or, I don’t deserve this kind of thing because I don’t belong/ I, don’t belong to here, at least originally. [616-620]

In closing his narrative in this way, he thereby reminded me that, despite the construction of his identity throughout as assured, confident and purposeful, underlying his position was an awareness that he, after all his years of being here, still did not feel he belonged.

3.4 PARTICIPANT FOUR

Participant Four was a volunteer worker at the Ethiopian community organisation with which I had made contact. When I first met him he said he was willing to be interviewed, but, again, we had great difficulty arranging a time to meet. We encountered several episodes of miscommunication, whereby I was concerned that he would think that I was unreliable or disrespectful, but which also left me wondering whether he indeed wanted to proceed with an interview, or was feeling pressure to do so as an indirect favour for his manager. When we finally managed to meet, Participant Four explained that he had needed special dispensation from the Job Centre to miss a coinciding weekly appointment there; again I wondered how much pressure he had thus felt to attend our meeting, and how able he would have felt to decline. We carried out the interview in an empty room at the community centre; it was very cold, and its emptiness a reminder to me of the situation that had befallen the organisation, in terms of cuts to its funding and

resources. He spoke confidently but I was aware that the situation in which I met him (seeking employment with little success); he knew I was a postgraduate student (he wished me well for my studies) and that he was narrating his life from a position of feeling incredibly frustrated and incapacitated by the social and economic systems in operation around him. I wondered whether this contributed to his apparent reticence to take part, and bore this in mind throughout the following analysis.

In answer to my first question, asked in opening all four interviews, Participant Four replied:

[.] err, [.] I was born in Addis Ababa <Hannah: mmhmm> and, ah, I went to school in Addis Ababa, also university in Addis Ababa, I did work in Addis Ababa, after that I left to London, err, to Germany <Hannah: ok, ok> scholarship for one year, thereafter, I finished and, they, also, they tell me that I have to continue my scholarship to Norway <Hannah: mmhmm> for four years. I have done there, electronics, database of economics <Hannah: mmhmm> and I was to go back and there was a change of government, I went here, I was granted political asylum, I settled here in Britain [laugh]. [4-11]

Again, Participant Four narrated his life here, and indeed throughout his interview, in terms of educational and occupational milestones, making clear his attainments, and thus his position as relatively privileged, within a wider society in which higher education and urban living were far from the norm. He continued to construct his social position by telling me that his father had been a governor, whose senior position led to him being jailed by the military government that seized power in 1974, and that he had later died in prison.

...everything has been repossessed you know, by the government <Hannah: mmhmm>, we used to have in the bank, money, that money was frozen, and we used to have from farm land, and everything wa/ land was taken away. [60-62]

He also told me that his mother had died when his father was in prison “because of the stress or something, she was passed away also” [32-33], and that this “was

very har/ it was the hardest time of my life” [74], “a disaster” and “diabolical”. I asked him how he had managed to cope at that time, and “how do you see, how do you think that affected you... when things were <P4: err> really difficult? [101-102]”. In so doing my assumption was that the losses he had experienced would have had a lasting impact on him, and that he would have made sense of what happened in terms of some kind of personal response to it. Again, however, he constructed the consequences in pragmatic terms that focussed firstly on economic survival and adjustment and then the on-going pursuit of education:

...ahh, because, er, [...] ah pff, it was, it was very hard, the only thing I can proceed is, with your question, is that I have to stick with my studies <Hannah: ok> and, err, err, er one of my uncle and he took me to his house... and after that you see as I am young I have forgotten everything and I started/ I tried to study <Hannah: mm, ok>, and, err, my grade was very good <Hannah: mmhmm> educationally I am very good. [80-85]

Again, with echoes of previous interviews, he constructed the way in which he coped with the hardship he faced in terms of the achievement of goals, rather than with reference to emotional well-being or any process of grief. The only way to regain that which had been taken away from him, including the elite lifestyle he sorely missed (“we used to go by car, we used to be picked up by car and, er, when we come home... food er must be on the table” [104-106]) was to pursue an education. In a parallel process, he was also (re)constructing himself in our interview, as an educated man who thereby retained a social status that was variously threatened throughout the course of the story he told, including in his present context. Again, reference to emotional responses would have been, with hindsight, irrelevant to this account, as well as possibly incongruent to the identity he was constructing.

Furthermore, he explained that:

...you don't have any choice <Hannah: mmhmm>, I have to adapt it <Hannah: mmhmm>, it was not, it was not easy, through, a long time, you see, through a long process, you, you used/ withou/ without anything, you have to adapt to that situation. [112-116]

I wondered in how many ways he meant that had no choice; perhaps he was referring to his lack of agency as a young child, or perhaps as a citizen in a country governed by an authoritarian, communist regime, in which “it comes by, in the country, you see, for everyone, it’s not special for my family only” [188-189]. He elaborated on this idea by saying “you should not expect that life has to be always the same, it has to be ups and down” [120-121]; communicating, perhaps similarly to Participant Two, neither a sense of entitlement towards that which he had lost (despite how disruptive it had been), nor a sense of defeat. These ideas permeated the whole interview and are discussed further below.

Participant Four also made sense of his coping with the difficulties he faced, and the strength he constructed, through reference to the community of which he had been a part. He explained that other families looked after him, freely providing anything he might have needed.

...due to that reason I am very strong, I am/ I have got, er, so many people on my side <Hannah: mmhmm>, due to that reason, I don’t feel, just from time to time, I am have to forget everything <Hannah: mm>, I have to concentrate on my studies... I’m very occupied because of this, I don’t have err, I don’t have a gap for thinking, you know. [177-183]

In this way, his narrative account also, again, made use of the idea of “forgetting”; that being supported, and focussing on education, meant he did not think about the things he had experienced earlier. Indeed, the adversity he faced, at least early on in his life, is somehow also lost (or perhaps rather actively displaced) in his narrative, amid the construction of his life in purposive terms. Participant Four constructed being “occupied” as a helpful response to the adversity he had experienced, but I wondered how this also related to the following, which he recalled in relation to his father’s imprisonment:

...nobody explained to me on that time you see, because, that [...] as, as I was young, also, it was not the same as, err, these times, of generation, you see, because everything in our culture is hidden, you see, you don’t have information, you don’t, nobody tells about these things, and because, it’s, it’s bad thing, they have to, just, stop talking to that, that thing only. [217-221]

Thus, he was also suggesting that “bad things” were not spoken about openly. Perhaps this related also to the prominence of the narrative of acceptance, that people in his community had tended not to draw attention to or dwell on the adversity they faced, but instead to adapt to it and to forget it. I also wondered to what extent this idea had impacted on the process of recruiting potential participants, and my difficulties therein, as I was explicitly asking people, through the process of being interviewed, to expose and to narrate their experiences of extreme adversity; a task which, in terms of prevailing Ethiopian culture, may have been highly unusual, inappropriate or even meaningless. Keeping information hidden, or otherwise tempered, also reflected a political climate (“the communist system”) where freedom of information and state media were highly regulated (“we have got only the newspapers, the newspaper is talking about that regime only <Hannah: mmhmm> ... very narrow” [257-259]) and where expressing allegiance to opposing ideals could lead to persecution.

In parallel to Participant One, he often made sense of his own experiences not only in terms of the political situation in Ethiopia, but also in terms of a broader one, of international hierarchy, oppression and corruption. In this way he seemed to be performing his own sense of power and resistance, using his “knowledge” of the world to align himself with a country he constructed as unfairly oppressed and exploited on a world stage. He explained his understanding of Ethiopia’s ties to the Soviet Union, which had traded arms in return for ideological allegiance, and how, as such; “[laugh] they don’t have a choice, they have to be socialist, you know?” [367-368]. Constructing a more recent climate, he said:

...instead of America fighting in som/ in Somalia... they will send their mercenaries [Ethiopians] there, <Hannah: mmhmm>, and is, to fight <Hannah: mmhmm>. This is what they are doing, the Americans are supporting, more Britons are supporting the, er, Ethiopian government <Hannah: mm> a lot of people are in prison <Hannah: mmm>, a lot of people are out of work. This is what they, they don’t listen to, you see, Obama he said, that’s a democracy, I have to see in Africa, a democracy, but, he is the one who is supplying money to him... That is not going to the people, to education, to road, or, or anything, to the people, <Hannah: mmm> but it is for the military government only. [400-417]

Perhaps he wanted me (as well as a wider audience) to know that, despite being forced to stay away from his country, he still felt a sense of injustice both about how it has been treated, as well as represented, globally (citing Jonathan Dimpleby's BBC documentary in the 1980s as one medium of this). Perhaps this also reflected some of his response to the situation in which he found himself presently, and expounded later, of being disempowered and discriminated against, whilst trying to build a life in the UK, and having to navigate a social hierarchy, even amongst other immigrant people.

I asked Participant Four about what had led to him leaving Ethiopia, and to seeking asylum in the UK. He said that, after having left to study in Europe for a number of years, he had been warned by friends; "...you better not come back <Hannah: ok, ok> err, because I don't belong to that ethnic group, the one with <Hannah: ok> the one who has got the power" [466-467]. Despite describing having been turned down from many jobs, because his education and previous employment had been outside of the UK, he narrated the next stage in his life with a clear story about how he tried to take control, and to make a living for himself. He spoke about learning to drive, then buying a Mercedes and working as a high-end chauffeur; making a lot of money taxiing "celebrities" and "VIPs" to and from "five star hotels". However, he also said that:

... after a while, it was good, I say that, you see, sometimes they put you down you see, when you are driving <Hannah: mmhmm>, err, [...] they consider you as you are ignorant and uneducated person you see. [527-528]

I wondered whether he was speaking as a refugee person, as well as a chauffeur here, in terms of his feeling belittled and humiliated in his attempts to live and to work in the UK, but also constructing the presumption of a lower social status than that which his education and privilege in Ethiopia conferred.

He continued his narration by talking in detail about trying to "draw some kinds of business, but, I was not successful" [556], citing the difficulties he had faced within a social, political and economic system that he understood as having thwarted his goals. It seemed that he was taking great care to construct his situation, not in terms of his own shortcomings, but in terms of the racist

discrimination and series of bureaucratic barriers he faced. In so doing, he was protecting the identity he had been constructing thus far, but also demonstrating again how he understood his experiences as situated, and contextualised, and thus not as an individualised or personal blight. For example, he made sense of his current difficulties, in finding employment, in terms of the local political climate, (“this conservative government, is, you see, [...] they don’t want you give a break” [569-570]) and perhaps in answer to (topically) dominant narratives in the UK:

...ah you see, the money they gave is, from hand to mouth [...]<Hannah: mmm> that’s not enough money, £71 a week <Hannah: mmm>. What are you going to buy with <Hannah: mm> these days <Hannah: mm>, is is, especially. Err, they, they think that er this is a big money, because of our laziness, we are sitting, and to take that money. [579-583]

What he seemed to be constructing was a perhaps important distinction between the “acceptance” of which he spoke earlier, in terms of having no choice but to carry on (and pursue his education) and an acceptance through co-ercion here, which instead rendered him powerless:

...because the government said like that, we have to accept <Hannah: mm, mm> we don’t have any option <Hannah: mm, mm> [laughing] unless otherwise you don’t go over [to the job centre], even you see, I have to get permission for you today. If I, if I don’t turn up today, <Hannah: mm> they will suspend me four weeks of err, housing benefit, and everything. [648-652]

Perhaps he was finding his current situation so difficult because it engendered an enforced dependence within a political and administrative system which he constructed (ironically but highly frustratingly) as itself preventing him from being able to make a living for himself. In contrast to the “acceptance” of adversity to which he alluded earlier (and which pervaded narratives throughout previous interviews), he expressed an incredulity, that seemed to both reflect his loss of status and agency since arriving in the UK, and a sense of ascribed impotence, despite the education he had previously acquired. He developed his narrative about his work situation as follows, constructing his predicament thus: that after

all that he had faced, there was something particularly hopeless, damaging and “devastating” about being unemployed (and seemingly unemployable):

...if I sit like that I am going to die of depression, I said <Hannah: ok, ok>. Because if I, if I don't get a job, you see? Er, a job is not only for money, you know? <Hannah: mmhmm, mm> It's not, it's a waste of time also, it's a waste of/ it's not only money you see, it's a waste of time... it will, it will force you to go to depression and after that you will have problem of brain damage, might be, one day, [laugh] you will kill yourself. [658-668]

Nearing the end of our interview, he also introduced a narrative that was employed in other interviews too, which drew on a belief in God that allowed him to balance and to reconcile the two voices (acceptance versus incredulity) that had been heard before. He used his understanding of God as a way to balance his dissatisfaction at his situation, with an acknowledgment and reconstruction of his relative privilege and power:

Also, you have to see, people, who is living below you, you know? <Hannah: mm> People without food, without anything, now, thanks, that, I am not sleeping rough [.]<Hannah: mm>, I am not sleeping without eating, I am not, I am not, I am having clothes, everything <Hannah: mmhmm>, sometimes I have to say that thank you, thank you God [773-777].

3.5 SUMMARY

This section suggests some broad commonalities that link the narratives employed by the four participants explored above, and thus what the most salient aspects of their accounts were. In doing so, consideration is given to how the present study contributes to the literature outlined in its opening chapter, and how the narratives here elevated might differ from those which are most often dominant, especially within a western mental health sphere. As discussed previously, this study is unique in terms of its combination of participant group and methodology; no previous research has used a qualitative or narrative framework within which to explore how individual refugee people from Ethiopia, now living in the UK, might narrate their experiences of extreme adversity.

3.5.1 Life in Ethiopia: Acceptance

One theme which was explicitly and repeatedly noted throughout the narrative accounts elicited was that of “acceptance” of adversity, which seemed to be linked in a number of ways to the context in which all four participants had lived, at least until their early adulthood. One clear message communicated through the narratives employed, was that life in Ethiopia had not been easy: despite all the participants having been raised initially with, or having been able to forge, relative wealth and associated social standing, all had lived against a backdrop of poverty, political unrest, persecution, oppression or disability, which had meant that what I had termed “adversity”, had characterised the whole of life, rather than isolated occurrences during it. Because life in Ethiopia was so difficult, or at least consistently uncertain, the construct of “coping” was apparently quite meaningless. Life, for all four participants, had been characterised by a relentless fight for survival, economically and physically, which had meant that conceptualising the personal impact of the hardship faced was difficult at best, if not entirely irrelevant. “Acceptance” in one sense, then, meant simply living; narrative accounts constructed comprised the performance of survival largely in terms of the persistent pursuit of goals, that were not based on emotional wellbeing, but that were instead oriented to achievement and accomplishment.

In this way, the adoption of a narrative of acceptance, by the four participants interviewed, did not confer any sense of defeatism; rather, in the construction of a life defined by engaging in a fight to survive, it achieved quite the opposite. This sense of (active, not passive) acceptance, rather than entitlement, was, at times, related to a belief in God, whose divine providence, as well as judgement, meant that life’s experiences were neither predictable nor necessarily deserved. Furthermore, the participants had all lived, at least for the duration of their early lives, within a collectivist society, which had not fostered a conception of individual rights and expectations, but had rather emphasised the necessity of sustenance and support, on a shared, communal basis. They had all also been subject to two successive authoritarian governmental regimes, since 1974 at least, which had been based on the (brutal and forceful) imposition of political governance, based on ideologies that did not incorporate democracy, meritocracy or capitalist individualism. As such, all four participants constructed, through their

narrative accounts, a need (and perhaps also an obligation) to fight and to survive rather than to give in or to give up.

3.5.2 Life in the UK: Disempowerment

As a function of the questions I asked (and thus of the construction of an enforced chronological narrative) each participant spoke about their experiences of moving from Ethiopia to seek asylum here. Much of the narration of their arrival in the UK was characterised by overwhelming disempowerment; firstly in terms of the asylum-seeking process, and secondly in terms of the way in which they were enabled (or not) to live their lives thereafter. Firstly, then, arrival in the UK was largely (and starkly) identified with an undermining and removal of all that had been acquired and valued in Ethiopia; social (and legal) status, autonomy, employment, the support of community, and the value of educational attainments were all lost (or taken) on entry to the UK. In addition, the capacity to pursue a means of subsistence in the face of adversity, which had been so central to the much of the participants' narration of life in Ethiopia, was also removed with the right to work, to earn money and to re-establish self-sufficiency. As such, participants described being maintained in a frustrating and dehumanising position of inert limbo; provided with just enough money to live, but prohibited from actively pursuing their own survival.

This idea, of being disempowered through the coerced receipt of state support (in the absence of familial or otherwise communal sustenance), also pervaded narratives employed to make sense of the way in which life seemed to be lived in the UK more generally. A pervasive theme, in these accounts, was that receipt of welfare support was a cause of "weakness"; that the message engendered by it (i.e. that you cannot, or are not permitted, to survive alone) erodes the capacity, and the inclination, to "fight". In parallel to this idea, was the narration of the prominence in the UK, in contrast to Ethiopia, of an expectation (and perhaps, by implication, entitlement) that life should reach a certain baseline level of comfort and satisfaction. Perhaps this reflects a more individualist, capitalist agenda in the UK - where the rights and contentment of the individual (consumer) are privileged and maintained – as well as a better general standard of living, within a relatively stable political climate. But it was also suggested to underpin the construct of

“depression”, whereby being so disarmed, and rendered incapacitated, entailed a particular sense of hopelessness and despair that epitomised, here, passivity and defeat, rather than a necessarily active fight, and a responsibility (to the wider community and perhaps also to God) to keep going.

3.5.3 The interview setting: Performance of power

Dialogic narrative analysis also takes into account the purpose of narratives, and the political work they do, not only as a function of the contexts which have influenced and shaped their construction, but also of the context in which they are (co-)constructed, as temporal artefacts of a specific exchange. In the case of the interviews as documented above, the context in which narratives were elicited was manufactured, but also multifaceted, and indeed unique for each participant interviewed. Thus, I focus here on the potential impact of the contextual setting of the interviews that were carried out, which may have served to threaten the power each interviewee retained, and in turn impact on the way they constructed themselves and the experiences they narrated.

First, as the person asking questions of each participant, I am white, relatively young and also female, and someone whom they would never have met (let alone someone with whom they would have discussed personal matters), were it not for their participation in this study. I also introduced myself as a graduate psychology student, which may have conferred an assumption of power, perhaps along with an expectation that I would have preconceived ideas about their emotional vulnerability. Furthermore, I was told by the manager of the Ethiopian centre, whom I consulted throughout this study, that in prevailing Ethiopian culture it is usually men who speak, socialise and represent their families in public settings. As such, speaking to me, especially about “adversity”, would have represented, for the participants, an imbalance of expected gender roles, within an environment in which they may already have felt under scrutiny. Perhaps as a result, the participants were less likely to narrate their lives in terms of weakness or vulnerability - for fear of being judged negatively by me - and thus to maintain a sense of power and status. After all, I was asking them to speak about their experiences in English (my first language, but not theirs) which may have further

left them feeling exposed, and with restricted linguistic capacity to construct their narratives in the way they may otherwise have done.

The title of the study (and the information provided prior to the interviews) also positioned potential participants as “Ethiopian refugee people”, and thus as “other”, to me and to the general population of which I was a part. My opening question may have only further elicited narratives which focussed on strength and survival, whether individual, communal or national, in order to counteract the construction of them (i.e. as young, variously vulnerable and Ethiopian) that my question engendered. All four participants also referred to the treatment and representation of Ethiopia on a world stage. An awareness of a social and political hierarchy not just within the UK, but also internationally (and thus among groups of refugee people now living here) may well have added to the construction of disempowerment since arriving in the UK. Such an awareness may have prompted both nationalistic narratives, and those which emphasised social standing (or loss of it) both in Ethiopia and when living in the UK.

4.0 DISCUSSION

This section considers the potential implications of the preceding analysis, within three different domains: those of psychological theory (and narratives of “psychological trauma” in particular); the practice of clinical psychology; and UK policy affecting refugee people living in the UK. Following these considerations, I outline a critical reflection on the process of this study and in doing so, highlight its possible limitations. I close with consequent suggestions for the direction of future research, and some concluding reflections.

4.1 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Potential implications of this study are grouped below into three main areas, as follows.

4.1.1 Narratives of psychological trauma

The conclusions drawn at the close of the previous chapter have important implications for the prevalence of narratives of psychological trauma, and the epistemological assumptions that often underpin them. As outlined in the Introduction, dominant narratives within the field of mental health suggest that human beings (including refugee people from all over the world) are at risk, as a consequence of experiencing various forms of extreme adversity, of sustaining “psychological trauma” (e.g. Herman, 1992); a construct which confers lasting psychological injury, and which is used to explain the various emotional and behavioural sequelae of a “traumatic” event. The theory (or narrative) of trauma is also central to the construct of PTSD, a diagnostic category the universal validity of which has often been taken for granted, and which has thus been variously applied to refugee people from a vast range of backgrounds (see Roberts et al., 2009). However, the preceding analyses suggest that psychological trauma is not, as also argued in the introduction, the only narrative by which human beings make sense extreme adversity, and neither is it necessarily compatible with the way experiences were constructed by the participants in this study.

Firstly, the Ethiopian refugee people whom I interviewed did not, largely, make sense of experiences of extreme adversity (which had included torture,

persecution, and the sudden loss of loved ones), or the impact of them, in individual terms. The narrative of trauma often necessitates recourse to constructs including “emotion”, “mind”, and some form of “internal world”, which were, simply, absent from the narratives elicited in this study. Instead their accounts were situated within broader communal, historical, national and religious stories, whereby their hardship, and the survival of it, was narrated in terms of political, social and economic injustices, and within a conceptual framework that also incorporated a belief in the divine. As such, their accounts were void of the construction of experiences in terms of emotional or psychological damage, or the necessity of a process of healing, recovery or “working through” in any sense.

What might be revisited here, therefore, is the argument that dominant constructions of “psychological trauma” are a product of, and thus bear most meaning and relevance within, a more capitalist, individualist and perhaps largely secular social environment, where expectations for life are based on individual entitlement and emotional fulfilment (see Furedi, 2004). In this way, to assume their relevance among refugee people from all over the world (including those from Ethiopia) is to enforce an epistemological as well as ideological system which bears little or no correlation to the one within which they have reached an understanding of life and the experiences it comprises. Such cultural hegemony (Summerfield, 2001) could confer a framework of understanding which is irrelevant and impervious at best, if not wholly oppressive, in reinforcing the disempowerment, of which participants spoke, in relation to their move to the UK. Being considered injured or damaged in some way may further render them socially “other”, and deficient within a society that they had already constructed as frustratingly difficult to permeate (Patel, 2003). Clearly, this study adds to the weight of critique against the assumptions of predominant trauma narratives, and calls for an on-going exploration (and acceptance) of alternative frameworks that may be employed in the construction of extreme adversity, indeed both by people born in the UK, and all over the world.

4.1.2 The practice of clinical psychology

Through the practice of clinical psychology, the assumption has been maintained, that, due to the extreme adversity refugee people have often faced, some form of therapeutic intervention will be both relevant and beneficial if the lasting impact of their experiences is to be reduced or overcome. Even with consideration for the epistemological assumptions of the narratives on which it might be predicated (as above), the present study calls for a closer questioning of the presumption of the utility of psychological therapy, to refugee people from Ethiopia, and elsewhere. As outlined above, this is not to say that the participants in this study are considered representative of a wider population of refugee people, but rather that their narratives prompt an ongoing examination of the global applicability of dominant western mental health models. Areas for consideration are as follows.

Firstly, clinical psychology intervention has tended to maintain a focus on human emotional suffering and distress; formulating the reasons for it, and developing ways of alleviating it, forming its most prominent tenets (BPS, 2013). This extends even to “positive psychology” narratives of “post-traumatic growth” for example, which often suggest that survival (or personal development of some kind) is predicated on the impact of trauma having been successfully overcome (e.g. Powell et al., 2003). The Ethiopian refugee people whom I interviewed, however, instead frequently employed narratives of “acceptance” of adversity; maintaining a focus on survival *despite* suffering and hardship, rather than a management of the emotional impact of it. In so doing they seemed to narrate experiences of extreme adversity in terms of the on-going pursuit of goals; transcending (continual rather than discrete episodes of) adversity, rather than becoming distracted or damaged by it. This seems somewhat incompatible with the prevailing framework of current trauma therapy, which cites a processing and an integration of traumatic experiences into a coherent autobiographical narrative (e.g. Brewin, 2011) as a pre-requisite for “recovery”.

Thus, if clinical psychology is to be of relevance and utility to refugee people from other parts of the world, Ethiopia included, a consideration of the assumptions it engenders, and serves to maintain, is still extremely timely (Patel, 2003). An acknowledgment of, and adaptation to, the unique complexity of a refugee

person's context, both past and present, is vital, in taking into account the many, and interacting, cultural, political, societal, ideological and epistemological influences affecting the narratives they have adopted in making sense of life. This would necessitate a focus on detailed but client-led assessment, and perhaps a move away from cognitive and emotion-focussed models, to those which understand responses to extreme adversity within a communal and multi-systemic context.

One way in which clinical psychology could reconsider the support it offers to refugee people is by repositioning extreme adversity within a socio-political framework, rather than individualising and sanitising it through the adoption of a narrative of "psychological trauma" (Patel 2007; 2008). This may include acknowledging, as well as helping to address (through advocating, lobbying, campaigning and carrying out policy-related research) the causes of extreme adversity and, just as pertinently, the ways in which usual means of surviving it have been thwarted. It may also include work that (eschewing "neutrality") aims to seek justice and reparation on behalf of refugee people - in terms of their treatment in other countries, as well as their application for asylum here - and also to prevent on-going violations and abuses impacting the lives of refugee people from all over the world (see Patel, 2007). As such, creative and collaborative consideration is needed, to determine how, instead of pathologising and "psychologising" human suffering (Patel, 2011b), clinical psychologists might affirm the humanity, dignity and social position of refugee people, which their previous experiences have served to corrode.

Such a service would also need to consider the most ethical and appropriate means of providing support to a group of people which, as was explained to me and reflected in the various interactions I had, is typically neither familiar nor comfortable with speaking openly to people other than those they know well. This may be due to a cultural tendency towards keeping difficult experiences "hidden" or forgotten, and also a reflection of national as well as personal histories of (the resistance of) invasion, interrogation, scrutiny, oppression and the potential danger associated with voicing views or affiliations which may be politically inflammatory. Either way, the assumption that the offer (or, worse, imposition) of

psychological therapy, as traditionally conceptualised, will always be a helpful, welcome and thus ethical one to refugee people who have experienced extreme adversity, should be closely questioned. Perhaps, for example, psychology services for refugee people should focus more on building support within existing communities and social networks, rather than isolating individuals for therapeutic intervention. However, what this study also highlights is the importance of listening carefully to the nuances of the narratives employed by different people, developed in hugely differing settings, in determining what support, if any, would be most welcomed and valuable to the population it purports to help.

It is also important to remember that only a very small percentage of refugee people living in the UK ever present to mental health services, or explicitly request emotional support from statutory or non-statutory agencies. Whilst this may in part be due to the accessibility and relevance of such services (as discussed above), with consideration of the narratives explored in the present study, this likely also reflects an incongruence between the expected and actual responses of refugee people to the extreme adversity they have faced. Perhaps, therefore, clinical psychology services, along with others, might more helpfully focus on the provision of support that both accommodates and promotes communal, religious and multi-contextual means of surviving despite - rather than recovery from - experiences of extreme adversity. Whilst services that engender and promote these ideals (of building community support and economic security for example) have certainly existed around the world for many years (Patel, personal communication, 2013), very little documentation of them has been published, or has permeated mental health service provision in the UK.

4.1.3 Implications for Policy

One clear theme pervading the narrative accounts that were given by participants interviewed in this study, was that the asylum seeking process in the UK was not only completely disempowering and paralysing, in terms of the self-facilitation of ongoing survival, but also deeply frustrating, dehumanising, inaccurate and, on occasions at least, shockingly lengthy. It seems that an address of this system is of ongoing urgency (e.g. Amnesty International, 2010); the call for which might bear more impact if psychologists joined it, rather than focussed merely on

working with the aftermath of it. Specifically, participants spoke about the demoralising impact of not being able to work whilst seeking asylum; a relatively recent stipulation (Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act, 2002), a re-consideration of which seems pertinent. Whilst it is acknowledged that such legislation is effected through multiple levels of jurisdiction, and thus will by no means be easily reversed, the need to continue to draw attention to the suffering it propagates for refugee people, seems particularly salient.

Secondly, all four participants spoke of the importance of being part of a community, in terms of feeling supported and provided for. In this case, the cutting of funding to community organisations seems especially short-sighted, and corrosive of the, already sparse, support available to refugee people living in the UK. Notwithstanding a full acknowledgement of the potential difficulties and complexities that community organisations face in providing a service to individual groups of refugee people, a closer consideration of the potential benefit that they confer seems necessary. Perhaps there is also a role for clinical psychologists here, in an on-going involvement and influence within a political sphere, but also in collaboratively facilitating social connectivity with refugee people themselves.

4.2 CRITICAL REFLECTION AND STUDY LIMITATIONS

What follows is an outline of the critical reflections which have been employed throughout the various stages of this research, in considering of the processes involved therein, and their potential limitations.

4.2.1 My position in relation to this study

I am a white, British female in my late 20s; I am neither a refugee person myself nor have I had much previous contact with people who have been forced to flee their country. In 2010 I spent two months volunteering and travelling in Ethiopia, and working with an organisation supporting street children. This organisation was keen to develop its understanding and provision of psychological services, but I was struck then by how incongruent dominant western narratives about mental health, and “psychological trauma” in particular, seemed in relation to the ways in which the children survived, despite experiencing loss, deprivation, abuse

and discrimination to an inconceivable degree. My observation was that, with the provision of safety, food, shelter and patient support, the children the organisation cared for often thrived, without any requisite recourse to psychological constructs or interventions of any kind.

This experience, together with a long-standing interest in the philosophy of language, prompted me to consider further, to what extent the construct of “psychological trauma” could or should be translated, both for communities abroad, and for refugee people living in the UK. I acknowledge that, as such, I took a critical approach to the construct of “psychological trauma” from the outset of this study which inevitably and fundamentally coloured the way in which it was designed and data were analysed. Furthermore this study was undertaken in affiliation to a Western clinical doctorate course which is renowned for its critical stance towards clinical psychology, and under the supervision of an Asian female psychologist whose own work has focussed on a critical examination of the role of clinical psychology in relation to refugee survivors of torture.

4.2.2 Recruitment

I found the process of recruiting potential participants a challenge in various ways. Despite feeling welcomed into the community centre, and despite the many friendly encounters and conversations I had there, very few of the people that were told about this study agreed to be interviewed, and of those who initially expressed willingness, most subsequently told me they had decided otherwise, or stopped responding to my attempts to contact them. Apart from my short trip to Ethiopia, I had no other prior connection with any Ethiopian people, in London or elsewhere. As such, I was aware from the start of this study that I was an outsider in many senses, “parachuting” into a (largely male) community, with whom I had only made contact for the purposes of this study. I wondered about the impact of this, both in terms of the willingness of people to participate, and also of how coerced the final four participants felt, in agreeing to be interviewed.

Indeed, the (white, European) wife of Participant Two told me that I had chosen the “wrong community” if I wanted to find people willing to talk, relaying her observation that the Ethiopian people she had met in London had generally been

unwilling to disclose details about their lives, past or present, at least until a friendship had been much more fully established. As such, I was apparently attempting to contravene predominant social praxis, by promoting dialogue with a complete stranger, about potentially highly personal experiences. Indeed, two men who initially expressed an interest in this study withdrew their offer to be interviewed when they saw an outline of the proposed interview schedule. I suggest that the relatively similar demographic profiles of the four participants in this study (i.e. male, over 40, well-educated and articulate) is a reflection of those Ethiopian refugee people who were not only resourced adequately to have been able to travel to the UK, but were also most able (and willing) to narrate in English, the experiences of extreme adversity they had faced, and survived.

4.2.3 Interviews

The experience of interviewing participants was a new one for me, and I needed frequently to remind myself that it should not be conflated with that of carrying out any form of clinical assessment. As such I found the balance of questions, which were respectful yet sufficiently probing, difficult. I was aware of the exercise of my own power as the interviewer, in shaping the narratives that were constructed; for example I tended to focus on eliciting a chronological narration of participants' lives and experiences, which may have diverted from the complexities and idiosyncrasies of the ways in which they might otherwise have constructed their understanding of them. Listening to the interview recordings, I also became aware of just how many potential invitations to other avenues of dialogue I missed, often because my questions were being governed restrictively by the schedule I had developed. I wonder how the elicited narratives would have differed had I given participants more freedom to speak about their lives in ways which they more usually would have done. Furthermore, the participants in this study did not necessarily come to their interviews wanting to talk about the experiences they had survived (or having done so before); they had not asked to be interviewed, nor did they necessarily have an agenda in agreeing to participate. Accordingly, perhaps through the act of interviewing these participants, I was partaking of a practice the very relevance and ethicality of which I question above.

4.2.4 Analysis

Using a dialogic narrative approach to the analysis of my interview transcripts facilitated an exploration not only of what participants of this study said, but also of the social and political conditions that had led to their talking about experiences of adversity in the ways in which they did. This was particularly applicable to the present study, for which interviews were conducted in a setting entirely manufactured for this purpose. The interactions in the interviews carried out would not have happened were it not for this study, and thus a careful consideration of the impact of the dialogic environment, on the co-construction of narratives in the interview setting, was vital. In addition, for the people who participated in this study, many aspects of their social and political context, both in Ethiopia and in the UK, were so pertinent to the ways in which they spoke of their experiences of extreme adversity, that they necessitated centrality to the analysis of the narratives constructed to communicate them. However, these influences considered, there are still some aspects of the analysis which warrant further mention, as follows.

Firstly, my understanding of and appreciation for the context in which the Ethiopian people I interviewed had come to make sense of their experiences, was inherently hugely limited. I was not aware, further than a cursory academic overview, of the conditions in which the participants had lived, in particular in Ethiopia, or which narrative resources had been, or were currently, culturally available to - or imposed upon - them for the making sense of the experiences of which they spoke. I was also not aware of the extent of the influence of narratives, dominant in the UK, on the way that participants spoke about their lives. I was neither aware to what extent they had been invited to adopt them, nor that to which they aimed to purposively reject or counter them through the alternative stories they told (see Jones, 2002). Furthermore, I found myself reflecting on the narratives that I have been invited, expected and also chosen to adopt in relation to my own life and to the lives of others, and how these both affected the questions I asked, and the way in which data were analysed.

Secondly, largely due to the constraints of space, I was required to focus my analysis on particular sections of the four transcripts which I felt were (perhaps

arbitrarily and entirely subjectively) most pertinent. These passages were identified through a close and repeated reading of the transcripts, and consideration of which sections were most salient and relevant in terms of answering the research questions listed at the close of the first chapter. As such, although I treated the whole transcript as integral to the narrative each that participant constructed in their interview, vastly more material was available to my analysis than that to which I could respectfully do justice within the confines of this thesis; the entirety of which could easily have been concerned with any one of the interview transcripts generated. I can only hope that I have managed to represent, as well as bear witness to, the stories that were told, with adequate consideration and reverence.

4.3 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the implications of this study, as outlined above, as well as the critical reflection which follows it, several possible directions for future research arise. Although (and also because) the responses of the participants of this study are not considered as generalisable, affording an opportunity for other voices to be privileged, including those of women in particular, is pertinent. If, as argued above, the demographic profiles of the four participants in this study are (in part) a reflection of its particular design however, future research with refugee people (Ethiopian in particular) may need to consider alternative methodologies. If narrative accounts are to be elicited from a more diverse range of perspectives, interviews may need to be carried out by members of the Ethiopian community, or in a dialogic environment which is more familiar and less threatening. Narrative accounts could also be collected in other, perhaps more naturalistic ways, examining documented oral traditions, for example, or autobiographical accounts written for other purposes. Future research might also examine the influence of the language in which narratives are constructed, and of the way in which questions are asked, on how experiences are communicated.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

This study explores how Ethiopian refugee people living in the UK understand, make sense of and respond to their experiences of extreme adversity. The semi-

structured interviews carried out allow the elevation of four such voices, and of the stories of incredible hardship and survival that they construct, which otherwise would not have been heard within a clinical psychology sphere. The narrative accounts, here explored, demonstrate a focus not on emotional or psychological disruption, but rather on the importance of survival, agency, community, religion and attainment despite hardships that often colour - rather than punctuate - the way that life is lived. They also suggest that talking about and 'processing' experiences of extreme adversity may directly contravene cultural customs of forgetting hardships, accepting adversity, and keeping distress hidden. In this way, whilst not presumed to represent those of any wider community, the narrative accounts presented here demonstrate clearly that the construct of "psychological trauma" is certainly not the only organising principle by which people make sense of experiences of extreme adversity; neither is clinical intervention, as predominantly conceived, necessarily universally meaningful or welcomed. As such, this study joins others in a call for a close reflexive consideration of the assumptions and agendas that the practice of clinical psychology both imbibes and perpetuates. In so doing, this study suggests that it must seek to ensure that the services it provides - and the narratives under which they labour - promote the recovery, not only of psychological well-being, but also of justice, humanity, agency, and community, and the means by which the fight for on-going survival can flourish.

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APPENDIX 1

SEARCH TERMS USED IN LITERATURE REVIEW

Databases used: PsychARTICLES, PsychINFO, SAGE Journals Online and Science Direct

Dates published: 1993-2013

Dates searched: September 2001 to April 2013

Search terms entered:

- Ethiopia* AND refugee – changed to “Ethiopian refugee”
- Ethiopia* AND (adversity OR stress OR distress)
- Politic* AND Ethiopia
- Refugee AND “extreme adversity”
- Refugee AND distress
- Refugee AND trauma
- Refugee AND (psych* OR therap*)
- Refugee AND “posttraumatic growth”
- Refugee AND resilience
- Refugee AND (“human rights” OR justice)
- Refugee AND (UK OR Britain)

APPENDIX 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: PROCESS OF INCLUSION/EXCLUSION

1. Read summary/abstract of each article and make preliminary decision as to relevance/irrelevance to aims of present research.
2. Exclude articles whose content is not of relevance to the study title, including those which do not address either the experiences of refugee people in relation to extreme adversity, or give contextual information about Ethiopia.
3. Group relevant articles according to content, and note relative weighting within each category. Five main areas identified for present research:
 - Trauma/PTSD – diagnostic tools and prevalence
 - Critique of construct of Trauma/PTSD
 - Psychological intervention with refugee people
 - Post-traumatic growth/resilience
 - Political situation in Ethiopia
 - Ethiopian refugee experiences
 - Experiences of refugee people in the UK
4. Return to articles for critical appraisal by summarising content, methodology and implication. Take note of authors' standing, quality of publication and frequency of citation elsewhere.
5. Focus literature review according to most salient themes identified, including articles which confer most relevance and quality within each category.
6. Construct a coherent narrative account to synthesis and appraise the literature identified.

APPENDIX 3

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER



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Dear sir/madam,

I am looking for people who would be willing to participate in my study:

An exploration of the ways in which Ethiopian refugee people in the UK understand and respond to extreme adversity

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider, in deciding whether or not you would like to participate. The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate at the University of East London.

Why is this study being carried out?

The aim of this study is to find out how Ethiopian refugee people in the UK understand, talk about and respond to experiences of extreme hardship. I think it is important to listen to how people from different cultures make sense of their lives, and the ways in which they might respond when facing difficult situations. I am also interested in hearing about how settling in the UK has been, and what has been most helpful and unhelpful in this process.

What will the study involve?

I will be meeting with and talking to Ethiopian refugee people like yourself for an individual interview, which should last around one hour. If you choose to be involved with this study you may share as much or little of your own personal

story as you feel comfortable doing. It is not necessary for you to talk in detail about any difficult personal experiences you may have had.

Where will the interview take place?

I will arrange by telephone to meet you for an individual interview, either at the centre of the [NAME] or at your home, at a time of your convenience.

Will what participants say be kept confidential?

In order to analyse what participants say, I will need to record the individual interviews onto a digital voice recorder. However, if you choose to participate in this study, I will make sure that anything you tell me is kept strictly confidential. The only time I would need to pass on what you tell me is if you disclose information regarding current risk to yourself or another person. In such an event, you would be informed of the action that would be necessary in order to ensure the safety of the person in danger. Nothing that reveals who you are will be included in any documents that other people may read.

Is it ok to say no?

You are not obliged to take part in this study and should not feel in any way forced to do so. You are free to withdraw at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

Will this study be published?

This study will be written up into a doctoral thesis and submitted to the University of East London. As above, anything you may say as part of this study will remain confidential, and no identifying personal details will be included within any submitted work. This study may also be published in the future, or presented at a conference; the same confidentiality will apply.

Does this study have ethical approval?

This study has been given ethical approval by the University of East London. If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor Nimisha Patel, School of Psychology,

University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ, (Email: n.patel@uel.ac.uk) or Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Subcommittee: Dr. Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ (Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Any other questions?

Please feel free to ask me any questions. I can be contacted on the number/email address at the top of this letter. If you are happy to be interviewed you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to your participation. This information sheet is yours to keep.

Thank you very much for your interest. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Hannah Eades

University of East London

APPENDIX 4

PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a research study:

An exploration of the ways in which Ethiopian refugee people living in the UK understand and respond to extreme adversity

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in this study. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data in the write-up of the study and in any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

Researcher's Signature

Date:

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Thank you for your interest in this study.

I hope you have had the chance to read the information letter I gave to you.

As a reminder, I will briefly outline the purpose of the study, and what your interview today would involve should you wish to go ahead with it:

I am studying for a doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of East London, for which I am carrying out this research. I am interested in the experiences of Ethiopian refugee people living in the UK, and in hearing some of the stories of people like you. I would like to hear about how life was for you in Ethiopia and how it has changed since arriving in the UK. I am particularly interested in what sense you may have made of the difficulties you have faced, and what has helped you to cope. I plan to interview around 4 or 5 Ethiopian refugee people in total. Each interview will last around one hour. I will need to record the interviews so that I can play them back and transcribe them onto a computer to analyse them. I will then write up the analysis into a thesis for my course, and maybe also write an article to be published in an academic journal. Everything you say will be kept confidential, and will not be identifiable. Nothing that reveals who you are will be included in any documents that other people may read, and recordings will be deleted after they have been transcribed. The only time I may need to tell someone else what you have said is if you tell me that you or someone else is in danger. This would be so that that person can be made as safe as possible.

Please remember that if you choose to go ahead with an interview, you do not have to speak about anything that you do not feel comfortable discussing. It is not necessary for you to talk in detail about any difficult personal experiences you may have had. It is fine to withdraw now, or to stop the interview at any time if you choose to participate.

Do you have any questions?

Would you be willing to participate in an interview with me today?

[Consent form]

1. Can you tell me a little about where you grew up and what this was like for you?

Prompts:

- Life in Ethiopia: family, community, education...
- Context at the time: social/political

2. Who and what would you say was most important to you at this time?

Prompts:

- Significant person
- Lifestyle
- Safety
- Important in what way/why?

3. Ethiopia has seen many struggles over the years, with war, political problems and drought, and people there have suffered many hardships. How did you/your family/community manage to cope when facing such situations?

Prompts:

- What happened, why?
- How would you describe how you/your family/community coped or survived this hardship?

4. Can you tell me a little about what led you to leave Ethiopia to come to the UK?

5. Can you tell me a little about what your journey to the UK was like?

Prompts:

- Who/ what would you say was most important to you throughout this journey?
- Describe the experience

6. How did you manage to cope with the difficulties you faced?

Prompts:

- During this journey/exile/in UK?
- What helped, or not? Why?

7. How would you describe your life in UK, and how it has changed since you lived in Ethiopia?

Prompts:

- Networks, relationships, support, family
- Work, school, priorities, ambitions
- Weather and impact
- Safety
- Culture, tradition, lifestyle

8. How have your ways of coping with very difficult situations/events changed since living in the UK?

Prompts:

- What have you found helpful in building your new life in the UK?
- What has been unhelpful/made life more difficult?
- Have you noticed differences in how people in the UK respond to/cope with adversity?

APPENDIX 6

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

[.]	Pause
[?]	Unknown name or place
[Inaudible]	Inaudible; approximate number of words specified
/	Speech is cut off abruptly
[Laugh]	Laughter
<Hannah: text>	Brief interjection
<u>Text</u>	Emphasised word
(Behaviour)	Non-verbal observation, or change in tone
...	Text removed, or incomplete sentence (in excerpts only)
[12-13]	Transcript line numbers (in excerpts only)

APPENDIX 7

EXAMPLE OF ANNOTATED TRANSCRIPT

- 1 **Hannah:** Ok, so erm, my first question really is, could you tell
2 me a little bit about where you grew up and, and what this
3 was like for you?
- 4 **P1:** Ah, yes, I grew up in, er, I was born in Ethiopia, Addis
5 Ababa, <Hannah: yes> er the town was not as uh
6 metropolitan as it is now <Hannah: uh huh> so I was born in
7 1942 in Addis Ababa [,] I grew up in Addis Ababa, and my
8 grandmother was living err, [?] 42 kilometres outside Addis
9 Ababa, on the way to [?] you know, uh near the lakes
10 <Hannah: uh huh> I was coming and going between these
11 two places, between my mother and my grandmother.
- 12 I was, uh, educated in Addis Ababa, then when I/ before I
13 finished my high school, I joined the **Ethiopian Air force**
14 <Hannah: ahmm> I, I was training as an accountant, er, then
15 as soon [,] I stayed there, I worked there for 13 years, in the
16 **Ethiopian Air force**. Then um, then when the **Emporer** was
17 overthrown, er, I was one of them, er, so I joined the **Junta**
18 <Hannah: uh huh> Ah, I work with the [,] **Mengistu's**
19 **government** <Hannah: mmm> for 17 years until he, it was
20 overthrown by the by the **KPLF** <Hannah: uh huh> ahhhh
21 then of course then, when er, when the **KPLF**, er [,]
- 22 (Louder) I was imprisoned for 3 years by the **KPLF**, <Hannah:
23 ahmm> as soon as the previous, **my government** is
24 overthrown <Hannah: uh huh> then they er released me, I
25 was released, **they** couldn't find, er, they couldn't [inaudible
26 3 words] they released me after 3 years, so then after 3 years
27 they wanted to just throw me back again into prison so, ah, I
28 was lucky, ahh [,] the **ambassador of Israel** in Ethiopia was
29 my friend, ah I mean I know him, he's not my friend.
30 <Hannah: uh huh> So I asked him for a visa to go to
31 Jerusalem <Hannah: mm> he, ah, readily gave me, ah, so I
32 **skipped**, so, so the airport for Jerusalem, er, I stayed there for
33 2 months in Jerusalem, ah I asked the British embassy in
34 Jerusalem to [inaudible 2 words] come here. Well, err, I
35 **cheated** [laugh] I, I said was an inventor/ investor and so
36 <Hannah: mmhmm> so hey, **he believed me**, and gave me
37 so err a visa, er, you know. Two merchants will not profit at
38 the same time. The, the visa officer lost the, uh, **I succeeded**
39 **you see?** The, the it's always like this <Hannah: ok> I asked
40 him if/ I, I was **well dressed** and said I want to go and see,
41 discover something in London. He said okay, he gave me
- Comment [HE1]:** Forcibly taking him back, rather than thinking about now. I am rooting their story in the past, and specifying the starting point. Which is also when he was young, and living in poverty.
- Comment [HE2]:** Milestones are attainment-oriented and confer status and power.
- Comment [HE3]:** Status
- Comment [HE4]:** Haillie Selassie
- Comment [HE5]:** 1975-1991 part of military force led by Mengistu, to overthrow HS
- Comment [HE6]:** Explained later: partly in the air force, and partly as a governor. Politician: fluent speech a reflection of that role?
- Comment [HE7]:** Factual recall of events that happened. No communication of emotion or response to injustice.
- Comment [HE8]:** Controversial topic, careful communication
- Comment [HE9]:** Resources
- Comment [HE10]:** Victory; strength. He was not beaten.
- Comment [HE11]:** Is he assuming a teacher role? Or is this a cultural inflection?
- Comment [HE12]:** Resource

42 the visa and I came here and I asked/ immediately I asked
 43 for asylum <Hannah: uh huh> in this country. This was in uh,
 44 twenty/ 2011. <Hannah: ah, ok> so not too long, two
 45 thousand [.] yes, yes. [3] so, err, will that suffice? [laugh]

Comment [HE13]: Round up of events and movements; context is political and sparse. But also, conveying the idea that I need to be satisfied. Mirrored at the end.

46 **Hannah:** haha yes, well, that's, that's a great overview, well,
 47 and lots there to explore, lots of things that you've touched
 48 on <P1: right> I suppose, just thinking in sections about your
 49 story, so, so when you were growing up, would you be able
 50 to tell me a little bit more about, um, the early part of your
 51 life when you were, when you were growing up? <P1: Ah,
 52 yeah, yeah, very much so> in terms of your family, your
 53 community?

Comment [HE14]: My question is forcing him back again, to early life. Maybe this has no relevance or pertinence to his ideas about life or himself now? Enforced chronology.

54 **P1:** Yes, in fact my father is an Eritrean, he was a soldier of the
 55 invading force of err, you know, err, before the Italians
 56 invaded Ethiopia <Hannah: uh huh> they stayed in Eritrea
 57 for, for over 60 years <Hannah: uh huh> that, Eritrea was a
 58 stepping stone to, to invade Ethiopia. So, er, my father and
 59 the whole republic of Eritrea doesn't know much about
 60 Ethiopia, ah I mean er, they, because of them being in the
 61 Italian colony for 60 years, the umbilical cord, the er the
 62 relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea, er, <Hannah: uh
 63 huh> was cut. There was no communication between the
 64 people <Hannah: uh huh> So the, they disoriented them,
 65 they told them they are different, they, err, people living in
 66 Ethiopia are barbarian, and ah so on and so on.

Comment [HE15]: Identity is political/national

Comment [HE16]: Wide historical knowledge

Comment [HE17]: Very intimate and co-dependent image, that was corrupted.

Comment [HE18]: Uses this word again later: purpose? To shock, or invite reflection on relative power?

67 So in fact they are the first Ethiopians, the Axumite empire
 68 <Hannah: uh huh> it's uh [laugh] it's ah, 40, 40 miles air
 69 distance, the air distance is no more than 40 60 miles
 70 [inaudible 2 words] Axum, so so they were disoriented, they
 71 became er, err, bandi, they call them bandi - the er local
 72 soldiers were recruited by the Italians. So, he, when they
 73 started invading Ethiopia, he was a , er, err, part and parcel
 74 of the that campaign <Hannah: uh huh>. [5:55] And so he
 75 came to Ethiopia, he came to Addis Ababa, he met my
 76 mother. She's Amhara, he fell in love with her and er the, the
 77 Italians were kicked out of Ethiopia after 5 years. <Hannah:
 78 uhmm> He, he remained there because he saw, he saw that
 79 there was no difference, the whole story he was told was
 80 wrong[.]

Comment [HE19]: I asked him to talk about HIS childhood. And he situates it in a broad historical/geographical context. Is this important to him?

Comment [HE20]: I.e. this story shows that Ethiopians are not barbarian

81 **They** are Orthodox Christians <Hannah: mmhmm> Coptic
 82 church, you see, so the same, Ethiopians are member of the
 83 Coptic church. Coptic church is really Egyptian church
 84 <Hannah: mmhmm> we uh, differ a little bit from the [...] it's
 85 one **family**, but [...] <Hannah: uh huh>

Comment [HE21]: Identity is about affiliation and believing the same thing/the same history

86 So, err, so, errrr, my father stayed there and lived there and
 87 died there. Uh, in fact the name Eritrea was not, it was given
 88 by the Italians <Hannah: uh huh> it, it had another name
 89 before <Hannah: ok> So anyway he stayed there and he
 90 lived there. I have er three **siblings** <Hannah: uh huh>. All in
 91 all **we are**, ah, four. One is living/ she is married to an Italian,
 92 and she is living in Milano, the other one is living in er er
 93 Atlanta Georgia. One, my brother, has died. So we three
 94 are still living in this world <Hannah: mmhmm>

Comment [HE22]: Sense of being part of something wider than himself.

95 [7:39] So, uh, err, from this, err, relation from which I was born,
 96 he came from the military and my mother was there and er
 97 [...], he was erm a trader and him and my mother have got a
 98 plot of land in the countryside. <Hannah: ok> The, the, they,
 99 there are **servants**, people who farm and err care for the
 100 crop for her, you know, and uh, so life is/ depends on what
 101 we get from er the **peasants** in the countryside. <Hannah:
 102 Ok> And my father is working, uh, erm as a trader, in the
 103 town. Sometimes I travel to the countryside, I stay there,
 104 <Hannah: mmhmm> so, I was just shuttling from town to oh
 105 er [...]

Comment [HE23]: Again, deliberately shocking? Very stark in relation to the life he describes.

106 It was not easy, it was not **easy**, err I worked as a shepherd
 107 for my family, err I even tried my hands to farm er [...] There is
 108 no 3 meals a day, you know no three meals, I've never seen
 109 three meals a day in my life <Hannah: uh huh> err well. That
 110 was how we lived. <Hannah: uh huh>

Comment [HE24]: Poverty, and continual hardship/adversity. These were not isolated events, they defined his life.

111 So maybe, it's, it's as one **Iranian philosopher** said, err, err,
 112 **sometimes the poverty could be a source of strength to you,**
 113 **understand?** <Hannah: mmhmm, mmhmm>, it can harden
 114 yourselves, you pass through hardships [...] For example if you
 115 see the whole religious leaders, ah **Jesus, or prophet**
 116 **Mohammed, or Gautama Buddha**, ahh, all this has come
 117 from, err, poverty. Jesus was born, we say, in the manger
 118 <Hannah: mmhmm> in the, in the cattle yard <Hannah:
 119 mmhmm> he lived as a poor man with his mother Joseph/ with

Comment [HE25]: Narrative theme: poverty and suffering make you strong

Comment [HE26]: These are important figures whom he is using to illustrate his story/align himself with. Also throughout: a demonstration of education and broad literary knowledge.

APPENDIX 8

QUESTIONS USED FOR DIALOGIC NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Adapted from Frank (2012)

Audience and Setting

- What kind of talk is appropriate, permitted, elicited or expected in this setting and why?
- Who is this narrative for? Who would immediately understand it and who would not?
- Are there some people whom you wouldn't tell that story to? Why not?
- What stakes does the storyteller have riding on telling this story, at this time, to these listeners?
- What purpose does this narrative serve for the participant? Why did they agree to participate?

Resources:

- What resources shape how the story is being told? What narratives are available to draw on?
- How are narrative resources distributed between different groups? Who has access to which resources, and who is under what form of constraint in the resources they utilise?
- What particular capacities of stories does the storyteller seek to utilise?

Identity

- What form of life is reflected in this narrative?
- What multiple voices can be heard in any single speaker's voice; how do these voices merge, and when do they contest each other?
- How does the story teach people who they are, and how do people tell stories to explore whom they might become?
- How are they seeking to sustain the value of their life or sense of identity in response to whatever threatens to diminish it?

Affiliation

- Who will be affiliated into a group of those who share a common understanding of a particular story?
- Whom does the story render external or other to that group? Who is excluded from the “we” who share the story?

APPENDIX 9

ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR THIS STUDY (UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON)

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBIOL.

UEL
University of
East London
www.uel.ac.uk

School of Psychology
Professional Doctorate Programmes

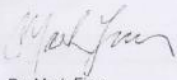
To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the Professional Doctorate candidate named in the attached ethics approval is conducting research as part of the requirements of the Professional Doctorate programme on which he/she is enrolled.



The Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of East London, has approved this candidate's research ethics application and he/she is therefore covered by the University's indemnity insurance policy while conducting the research. This policy should normally cover for any untoward event. The University does not offer 'no fault' cover, so in the event of an untoward occurrence leading to a claim against the institution, the claimant would be obliged to bring an action against the University and seek compensation through the courts.

As the candidate is a student of the University of East London, the University will act as the sponsor of his/her research. UEL will also fund expenses arising from the research, such as photocopying and postage.

Yours faithfully,


Dr. Mark Finn
Chair of the School of Psychology Ethics Sub-Committee

Stratford Campus, Water Lane, Stratford, London E15 4LZ
tel: +44 (0)20 8223 4966 fax: +44 (0)20 8223 4937
e-mail: mno.davies@uel.ac.uk web: www.uel.ac.uk/psychology

The University of East London has campuses at London Docklands and Stratford
If you have any special access or communication requirements for your visit, please let us know. MINICOM 020 8223 2653

ETHICAL PRACTICE CHECKLIST (Professional Doctorates)

SUPERVISOR: Niimisha Patel

ASSESSOR: Carla Gibbes

STUDENT: Hannah Eades

DATE (sent to assessor): 25/02/2012

Proposed research topic: An exploration of the ways in which Ethiopian refugee people in the UK understand extreme adversity

Course: Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

1. Will free and informed consent of participants be obtained? YES /
2. If there is any deception is it justified? / N/A
3. Will information obtained remain confidential? YES /
4. Will participants be made aware of their right to withdraw at any time? YES /
5. Will participants be adequately debriefed? YES
6. If this study involves observation does it respect participants' privacy? / NA
7. If the proposal involves participants whose free and informed consent may be in question (e.g. for reasons of age, mental or emotional incapacity), are they treated ethically? / NA
8. Is procedure that might cause distress to participants ethical? / NO /
9. If there are inducements to take part in the project is this ethical? / NO /
10. If there are any other ethical issues involved, are they a problem? / NO /

APPROVED

YES		
-----	--	--

MINOR CONDITIONS:

REASONS FOR NON APPROVAL:

Assessor initials: CG Date: 29/2/12

RESEARCHER RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST (BSc/MSc/MA)

SUPERVISOR: Niimisha Patel

ASSESSOR: Carla Gibbes

STUDENT: Hannah Eades

DATE (sent to assessor): 25/02/2012

Proposed research topic: An exploration of the ways in which Ethiopian refugee people in the UK understand extreme adversity

Course: Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Would the proposed project expose the researcher to any of the following kinds of hazard?

- 1 Emotional YES
2. Physical / NO
3. Other / NO
(e.g. health & safety issues)

If you've answered YES to any of the above please estimate the chance of the researcher being harmed as: / LOW

APPROVED

YES		
-----	--	--

MINOR CONDITIONS:

REASONS FOR NON APPROVAL:

Assessor initials: **CG** Date: 29/2/12

Please return the completed checklists by e-mail to the Helpdesk within 1 week.

APPENDIX 10

Emailed confirmation of consent to support this study, from the manager of the centre mentioned above. Text has been copied and pasted in order to protect anonymity.

Dear +++,

This email is to confirm that I, as the manager of the +++, was happy to help you to recruit participants for your study. I understood the rationale for your research and what your interviews would involve. I was happy to recommend people to you who I thought would be willing and able to participate, and to speak to visitors to the centre about your study. I was also happy to meet with you over the course of your research and to give my support to your work, in terms of guidance and suggestions about how to make it as appropriate as possible. I am happy for you to use this email as confirmation that I gave my approval to your study and considered it to be adequately ethical.

With best wishes.

+++