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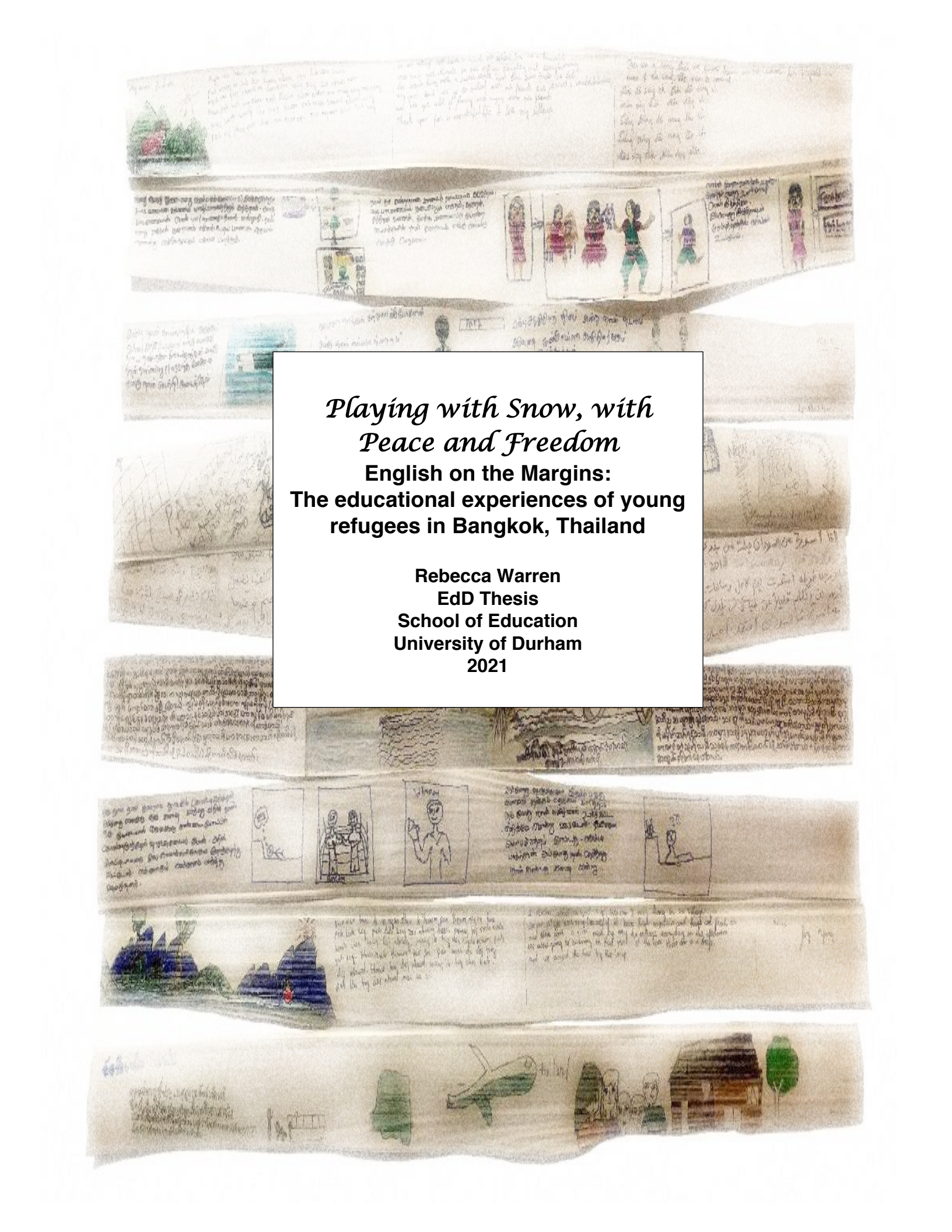
This thesis explores the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand. The aim of the research was to elicit and document the perspectives of young refugees, in order to inform educational policy and programming in Bangkok and the wider region. An ethnographically inspired method was used, using diary data, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews, and two visual narrative projects. The methodology demonstrates the value of an ethnographically inspired approach in seeking child-friendly, context-driven and culturally responsive solutions to issues facing marginalized populations. The research data and its subsequent analysis indicated a significant need for alternatives to be developed for young refugees living in extended exile, who were unable to access mainstream school due to financial and legal restrictions; age, language and cultural barriers; and curriculums inappropriate to their needs, backgrounds and aspirations. In addition, the research highlighted a conflict between policy and practice in Thailand, showing how international, top-down policies, espousing access to school for young refugees, migrants and other non-citizen children, need to be more efficiently monitored and effectively implemented; ensuring not just the right to school, but also to a quality education that is relevant to their needs and backgrounds, and provides opportunities for a meaningful future. Schools, organisations and initiatives addressing these solutions must be more adequately supported, and less restricted in their efforts, actions and advocacy. The theories of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum have been used to create a capability framework of recommendations for refugee education in Bangkok that addresses these needs; is culturally responsive and relevant to an urban refugee context; and builds on the experiences, perspectives, and aspirations expressed by the young research participants living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand.



Playing with Snow, with Peace and Freedom

English on the Margins: The educational experiences of young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand

Rebecca Warren
EdD Thesis
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University of Durham
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"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

Nelson Mandela

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Acknowledgements

I will never forget the first time I visited the community house where Courageous Kitchen, or what was then called ‘In Search of Sanouk’, had their Saturday school. I remember hearing the gentle murmurings of what I came to know as the Hmong language, the friendly smiles of the community elders, the smell of chilli and spices, and the happy, cheeky faces of the children. I felt then like my life had shifted and I was beginning a journey, but I had no idea at the time how significant that shift would be. Research is a journey and this one has taken me, not just to libraries and classrooms, but to living rooms, communities, schools, churches, and festive gatherings. It has been a journey of taste, smell, feel, touch, sound and sight. It has allowed me to glimpse the participants’ journeys, be a part of these for a while, capture and share them so that others can also get a glimpse. It is these glimpses that will sensitise people, reveal the humanity behind the politics. I hope you find learning from these experiences as rewarding as I have.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents for helping to make this journey possible. You have always believed in me and encouraged me to follow my dreams and achieve my ambitions. I could not have done this without your continued love and support. I would also like to thank my husband for patiently listening to me

bounce off my ideas and anecdotes. I would like to thank the many friends who have helped me through this journey, and always taken an active interest in the research. I would like to thank the various organisations and professionals that have made a significant contribution to this thesis, particularly Dr. Rajalakshmi Nadadur Kannan, Dr. Rosalia Sciortino at SEA Junction; artist Varsha Nair; Dwight Turner, Christy Thornton, Dew and Danielle Napattaloong at Courageous Kitchen; and Niroshan Anandaraja at CEDAR Learning Centre. I would like to thank my supervisors Oakleigh Welply and Alison Macmanus for their frank and insightful feedback and guidance. I would like to thank the Hmong, Urdu, Punjabi, Somali, Arabic and Tamil interpreters who have sat with me through endless interviews, reflected with me, counselled me through some tough situations, and occasionally lent me a tissue when these have been particularly overwhelming. Last and most importantly, I would like to thank the participants in this research that offered me their stories, hopes, experiences, despairs, dreams, and delicious food. I will never forget your courage, your strength, your kindness, your laughter and your tears. I only hope that this thesis has captured your voices and helped to reach these out to people that will listen, care, act and that this will help to change things for the better, because you all deserve better.

Finish

The story of my life has a lot of ups and downs. Life has taught me a lot of things. I wanna achieve so many things. I want my life to be simple and full of peace which I haven't gotten yet. I just feel like I'm stuck here. No way go, no hope, no door for us.

In Thailand, I'm refugee, It's been four years we're here. We live in one room. We feel exhausted, like I'm in jail and no way to go but still we pray and hope to go third country to have freedom there.

~~My~~ I know ~~one day~~ that day will come and we'll be in Canada, ~~we will~~ have big house; celebrating Christmas together and playing with snow with peace and freedom.

Part 1: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology

I. Introduction

The following thesis will explore the educational backgrounds, experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees living in Bangkok, Thailand. The research took place over a four-year period, from 2016-2020, and involved sixty urban refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok. The topic relates to wider investigations in Thailand and the Southeast Asian region surrounding the education of young refugees, migrants, and stateless children (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2015). There are concerns around the number of children from these backgrounds who are not accessing education, due to factors including exclusion and discrimination based on their ethnicity and citizenship; work, family and financial pressures; transient lifestyles; language, curriculum and economic barriers; and lack of information and support. Many of these out of school children in the Southeast Asia region are at risk of being exploited and engaging in 'the worst forms of child labour' (The Asia Foundation and The International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2015). It is crucial that these issues be addressed and for strategies to be developed that help children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Thailand, and the wider region, attain and succeed in school. In doing so, it is important to gather the views and perspectives of young people in order to develop strategies that respond to their needs and everyday realities. This thesis has

endeavoured to gather these views because failure to do so can result in unsuccessful approaches that do not engage young people in meaningful educational experiences (UNESCO, 2014b).

The literature review will examine international policies relating to educational inclusion, equality and accessibility, and how these are implemented in the context of Thailand. The empirical research will then explore this implementation through the perspectives of young urban refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand. These perspectives will include barriers and opportunities, experiences of education, needs and aspirations. Although there is substantial literature available monitoring educational developments and policies in Thailand (UNESCO, 2015), especially regarding refugees, migrants and stateless minorities living along the borders with Myanmar and Laos, there is very little specifically relating to the urban refugee population in Bangkok. This is a growing population and the lack of information about it represents a significant gap in the effective monitoring of international and national policies relating to educational inclusion. It is not enough however to simply record the number of urban refugees accessing education; more thorough research is required to elicit and document the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of this population so that more meaningful and relevant approaches can be put in place. This research has attempted to do this as well as provide a platform for the participants to share and explore their own perspectives about how their situation could be improved; and discuss and develop ideas from this that could affect practice. Lastly, this thesis

aims to raise awareness about a population who, due to their legal situation in Thailand, lives in the shadows and has very little voice and ability to impact services and policies affecting them. It is vital that this voice be heard and that channels be identified and developed for urban refugees to have more influence over their own lives.

The key research questions are as follows:

1) What are the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand?
2) How do young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand, perceive the educational services and opportunities that are available to them, and the factors affecting their accessibility and effectiveness?

A qualitative approach was used to elicit the perspectives of the young refugees involved in the research (Dutta, 2014; Lewis and Adeney, 2014). The participants were from Vietnam, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Iraq and Sudan, all nationalities that represent the urban make-up of the refugee population in Bangkok, Thailand. They ranged from the ages of four to thirty years old. Six interpreters were also involved in the research, and five professionals working with urban refugees. The experiences and perspectives of the participants were gathered through semi-structured focus group and individual interviews (Mears, 2013); a project in which young people created poems exploring their lives and identities and accompanied these with images and music; and

a visual narrative project where several families created story-boards and images of their memories and migration journeys on dried Talipot tree palm leaves. Some of these narratives included information that was prompted and directed, particularly in the interviews, whereas others emerged from the participants more freely, particularly through the poetry and story-board projects. This meant that information emerged from the research that was unexpected and unelicited and helped to enrich the data a great deal. Through the research, I was able to learn about the cultural backgrounds of the refugee communities involved, visit them, observe them, participate in their everyday lives and celebrations, and record my experiences in a journal which I kept over two years (Bhatti, 2013). This added depth to my knowledge and understanding of the young refugees, helped to develop more trusting relationships and networks with the communities, and has contributed to a more thorough and relevant account of the backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, needs and aspirations of the research participants (Holmes and O'Neill, 2012).

The motivation behind the research developed while I was volunteering as an English language teacher with a charity supporting refugees in Bangkok. I was working as a teacher in Bangkok at the time and volunteering for a Saturday school for young refugees, mainly Hmong refugees from Vietnam. Some of the students were attending local Thai schools, but most were either out of school or attending informal education providers. Through conversations with these young people, I developed a strong interest in their experiences, both in and out of school, their backgrounds, aspirations,

and the challenges they faced in accessing education. I wanted to record these experiences and perspectives more systematically and thoroughly, using interpreters in order to gain a more accurate account. During the initial stages of data collection, I mainly focused on the young people and families involved in the Saturday school, since these participants were more accessible due to my role as a teacher in their community. My position as a teacher in the community provided a level of familiarity and trust with the participants, which enabled them to open up more about their experiences. However, it also meant that my position as a researcher within the community was more subjective, since I developed emotional ties to the participants. This affected the lens with which I interpreted the data, since I was very close to it.

As the research progressed, I began reaching out to communities who I was less familiar with, in order to gain a wider perspective of the educational experiences of young refugees in the context of Bangkok, Thailand. This was also to investigate how experiences varied according to the location and cultural backgrounds of the participants. A key objective of the research was to inform organisations supporting urban refugees, in order to assist them in developing approaches and services that will respond to the backgrounds, needs and aspirations of young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand. The research findings were disseminated through conferences and public talks and integrated into the curriculum for an informal school for young refugees unable to access mainstream education.

Punch (2001) lived with a community in rural Bolivia over a number of months and gathered data through a mixed methods approach, including participant observation, interviews, diaries and photo-elicitation. She became a teaching assistant while living with the community, which had advantages in that it allowed her to become a more trusted member of the community, and drawbacks in that there were risks of power inequalities due to her position as a teacher, often perceived as an authority figure. I needed to be aware of these inequalities myself since I was a volunteer teacher for many of the refugees who I was researching. It is very important in qualitative research to reflect on the position of the researcher and how this affects the process (Smith, 2009). For example, I am a white female, British national, who was familiar to many of the respondents through being involved in their refugee community organisation on a voluntary basis. Although I was not being paid to teach them and did not have to carry out certain teaching responsibilities such as assessing students, there were still power relations to consider. These may be expressed simply in terms of participants feeling that they needed to demonstrate a level of respect and formality when they were around me, or they may go deeper than this. Although I did not represent an organisation that could provide direct support to refugee communities in Bangkok, I may still have been perceived as an opportunity for accessing certain resources and services, through my status as a member of the white European 'expatriate' community in Bangkok. This may have affected the responses of the interviewees involved in the research, in terms of wanting to engage my sympathy and support. Indeed, in one of the communities involved in the research, where a significant

number of children were not accessing education, I worked with a community leader to set up a small school, resourced by books and sponsorship from expatriate networks and organisations in Bangkok. Although this seemed like a positive outcome from the interviews, it may also have reinforced my position as a source of financial support within certain communities, thus compromising the objectivity of the research. This project also helped to give the research a degree of catalytic validity (Bryman, 2016) however, which will be discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter.

The thesis uses Amartya Sen's capabilities approach (Sen, 1999) for its theoretical underpinning, due to its emphasis on context and agency, two themes that emerged strongly from the data. The research also draws on the notion of social capital (Putnam, 2001) and its relevance to the lives of young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, particularly in terms of their efforts and ability to pursue and construct experiences and opportunities for themselves that they 'have reason to value' (Sen, 1999). The data has informed a 'capabilities framework' that is based on the backgrounds, experiences, needs, ideas and aspirations expressed by the research participants (Nussbaum, 2000). This is particularly relevant to young refugees of adolescent age who represented the most significant gap in terms of educational inclusion and accessibility in Bangkok, Thailand. The right to education needs to extend well beyond primary school age and basic education requirements. Adolescence is a critical period for learning and developing the necessary skills to survive and thrive in the world. It is no longer appropriate and sustainable to prioritise education for childhood

only. Data regarding the barriers preventing adolescents from accessing a quality education needs to be collected so that these barriers can be eliminated (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2006). It is equally important to gather the perspectives of adolescents, both in and out of school, on what they regard as a 'quality' education, and what opportunities they feel are most appropriate. In the case of this research, if access to mainstream Thai education does not target these needs, alternative solutions are required, within realistic parameters.

> *"Empowered adolescents, who have access to information, knowledge and skills, expression, decision-making, resources, services and the right to association, are able to better contribute to their own development and protection. Not empowering adolescents and failing to involve them in their own protection misses a key opportunity to develop and utilise their capabilities. It also denies them their rights."*
>
> (UNICEF, 2006, p. 2)

The capabilities framework developed through this thesis has therefore laid out a structure for alternative provision for young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand, that is grounded in the educational experiences expressed through the research. One of the key findings is the need for certification and the importance of peer education initiatives and online learning platforms in order to attain this. These peer learning networks and online education programmes are essential to utilize, encourage, facilitate and provide in whatever capacity is possible and appropriate. They require less in human and material resources, thus making them more cost-effective and realistic in a situation where resources are minimal. To date however, there is very little meaningful investment put into this approach by refugee agencies operating in

Bangkok, and those organisations attempting to do it have very little support. Therefore, the capabilities framework for refugee education in Bangkok, Thailand that has emerged from this research, places particular emphasis on strategies involving access to education and certification through online and peer learning networks.

II. The Socio-Political Situation and Backgrounds of Refugees in Thailand

This chapter examines some of the policies and laws affecting refugees in Thailand and the implications of these on their security, livelihoods and well-being. It explores the socio-cultural context of Thailand and its impact on migrants, both forced and voluntary, in the region. Lastly, it discusses the urban refugee context in Bangkok and the socio-political background of the refugee communities involved in this research.

1. Policies affecting refugees in Thailand and the Asia-Pacific region

The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and it's 1967 Protocol, defines a refugee as a person who:

> *"Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the*

> *country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."*
>
> (Convention and Protocol 1951/1996, as found in McBrien, 2005, p. 333)

Thailand has never ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention Related to the Status of Refugees, or its 1967 Protocol. Thailand does, however, host a large population of refugees and asylum seekers within its borders, most from nearby countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Pakistan. The Thai government prefers to call these people "displaced persons", or "persons of concern to the UNHCR" [United Nations Humanitarian Commission for Refugees] (UNESCO, 2014a). There is a large stateless population in Thailand, mainly ethnic minorities known as 'hill tribes.' A 2002 census identified half a million stateless minorities in Thailand (Engilbertsdottir, Evans, & Shrestha, 2013). This statistic has not changed very much, according to Thailand's most recent Migration Report (Smith and Lim, 2019), although, considering how difficult it can be to obtain accurate data concerning this population, the real number could be significantly higher. Most stateless people have no recourse to obtain Thai citizenship, due to strict regulations, lack of information, lack of resources and discriminatory structures and attitudes of the Thai government and Thai society. There is a large migrant population in Thailand, also from nearby countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. Due to the low socio-economic status of these countries, most migrants are assigned to low wage, 'low status', and often-exploitative working conditions. Since Thailand does not provide for refugee status determination, many

people who come to Thailand fleeing political persecution and seeking humanitarian protection are regarded as illegal and undocumented migrants (Sciortino and Punpuing, 2009).

Refugees in Thailand therefore have very little rights and access to proper services such as healthcare, education, and legal services. Since Thailand is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Refugees, refugees have no legal rights, and are unable to seek employment and citizenship (Palmgren, 2013). Many do work in the informal economy, which is quite prominent, where they are often exploited, mistreated and paid less than Thai people doing the same job (The Asia Foundation and the ILO, 2015). The only form of identification granted to refugees is an Identification card from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR]. However, these are not recognised as legal documents under Thai immigration law. Refugees are therefore subject to bullying and arrest from Thai police and military, and detention, with substantial fines being demanded in order to avoid or escape detention. Although Thailand is a signatory to the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child [UNCRC], this does not extend to the rights of refugee children. Therefore, children and young people are also vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and arrest at the hands of Thai authorities (UNICEF, 2011). There have been some recent policy implementations regarding banning the detention of children, but these have so far been enforced in a very ad hoc manner:

> *"Though consultations have been held on developing an alternative, long-term detention of migrant children continues to be a significant problem in Thailand. For the children of asylum-seekers who cannot be readily deported from the country, they often remain in over-crowded immigration detention centres until*

their cases are resolved. For some children, this has meant being detained for years under squalid conditions; without access to public education and separated from their parents based upon gender after reaching puberty."

(Harkins, 2019, p. XIV)

For these reasons, most refugees in Thailand prefer to stay hidden and invisible, living in marginalised and often cramped and run-down conditions. Many are supported by small local charities and religious organisations, and by refugee communities living in 'third countries', such as the United States or Australia (Huguet and Chamratrithirong, 2011). This sense of transnational identity and belonging is an important source of a refugee's economic livelihood and social well-being, as well as the ties they develop with refugees in their more immediate localities, and with the local community (Ball, Butt, Beazley and Fox, 2015). Jacobsen (2014) discusses how significant these ties are to refugee livelihoods, in environments where it is illegal for them to work and attempts to be self-sufficient are inhibited by bureaucratic procedures: 'Refugee livelihoods are therefore constrained by social exclusion mechanisms at all levels: by the state, in civil society and through institutions. Refugees seek to work around these constraints by drawing on the resources of their own communities." (p. 107)

Sciortino and Punpuing (2009, p. 82) describe the precarious situation that refugees face in Thailand:

"Thailand considers these groups to be illegal migrants who, being in breach of the immigration Act B.E. 2522, are subject to arbitrary arrest, detention, prosecution, and deportation. Yet, it permits UNHCR…and it allows international and local NGO's [non-governmental organisations] to provide humanitarian

> *assistance…Alternating between restrictive responses dictated by national security concerns and pragmatic tolerance of a refugee situation difficult to resolve geopolitically."*

Palmgren (2013, p. 24) also describes the vulnerable and insecure situation of urban refugees in the Bangkok metropolitan area:

> *"Under the Thai Immigration Act of 1979, refugees and asylum-seekers not admitted to the temporary camps are lumped in with all undocumented migrants – considered 'illegal economic migrants' – and subject to arrest, detention and deportation. The estimated two thousand or so urban refugees living in Bangkok fall into this category…living at or beyond the margins of society."*

2. Socio-cultural and historical context of Thailand

Thailand, or Siam as it was previously called, has a history of migration, like many of its neighbouring countries. The separate nation-states of Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Thailand were established relatively recently, during French and British colonial rule in the region, and do not reflect separate cultural boundaries. Indeed, many rural Thais living in the Northeast Isaan region, claim to identify themselves more with Laos, both culturally and linguistically, than with Thailand (Tan and Walker, 2008). Historically, the Chinese settled in Thailand and established strong social and economic links and networks all over the country. To this day, many of the powerful economic and political elite families in Thailand identify themselves as Thai-Chinese, and still maintain strong cultural and economic ties to China. Other cultural

influences in the country are the Khmer from Cambodia, the Malay speaking Muslim people from Malaysia, the hill-dwelling people in the north of the country, including the Hmong, the Akha and the Karen people, the sea gypsies in the south of Thailand, and Sikhs from India (UNESCO, 2014a). There has been a strong presence of Americans, Europeans, Australians and people from the Middle East and other parts of Asia. All of these international influences have served to make Thailand quite a culturally and linguistically diverse country and has helped to strengthen it economically and socially (ILO & ADB, 2014).

> *"Thailand has been a crossroads for migration within South East Asia for centuries. Long before formal systems were established to regulate cross-border movements, large numbers of people entered or were resettled into the country's territory. As a result, the population of Thailand today is more ethnically diverse than is typically acknowledged, including Chinese, Malay, Karen, Shan, Mon, Khmer, Lao, Indian and others. Nation-building efforts since the late nineteenth century led to systematic cultural and linguistic assimilation of many of these groups but the more recent arrivals of millions of migrant workers from neighbouring countries has been treated with a more mercurial policy response."*
>
> (Harkins, 2019, p. 1)

Despite these diverse influences however, or perhaps because of them, Thailand maintains quite a strong sense of 'Thai-ness', expressed through a monocultural sense of identity, as opposed to a multicultural one (Tan and Walker, 2008). This is emphasised through its educational culture, which fosters and prioritises Thai citizenship over global, or even regional citizenship, and through its strict immigration policies and attitudes towards migrants and refugees (Jones, 2014).

One of the most significant developments in recent years in the Southeast Asia region is the creation of ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ILO&ADB, 2014). This began as an economic trade network and has evolved into an organisation that aims for cultural, economic and political integration for the Southeast Asian nations, whilst still upholding and respecting the sovereignty and independence of the separate states, with its strict policies of non-interference. This has important implications for the future of Thai national identity, as it does for the other member states. Will it still be possible and indeed practical for Thailand to maintain its strong sense of national identity alongside a growing sense of regional identity? This is outside the scope of this paper, but it does have some bearing on the situation for migrants and refugees from ASEAN countries, such as Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam (UNESCO, 2014a). It also has implications for multicultural education in Thailand, and the appropriateness of discriminatory policies and attitudes towards people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Jones, 2014).

This section has discussed the socio-political situation for migrants, both forced and voluntary, in Thailand. The next section will explore the refugee population specifically in Bangkok, Thailand, and examine the socio-political background of the refugee communities involved in the research for this thesis.

3. The refugee population in Bangkok, Thailand

The refugee population in Bangkok is extremely diverse, consisting of people from a variety of different nationalities, geographical regions and ethnic groups. The population is referred to as urban refugees to distinguish it from refugees living in camps, towns and villages along the border of Thailand. Urban refugees in Thailand are under the remit of the UNHCR, whereas refugees living outside of Bangkok, specifically refugees from Myanmar, are dealt with directly by the Thai government (Saltsman, 2013). Refugees seek asylum in Thailand for a number of reasons. For some nationalities and ethnic groups, such as the Hmong from Vietnam and Laos, and the Khmer Krom from Vietnam and Cambodia, Thailand is the closest country where they can seek protection through the UNHCR, and register as asylum seekers (UNPO, 2012). The largest group of urban refugees in Bangkok however is from Pakistan, where they are seeking asylum from religious and political persecution, particularly if they belong to minorities such as the Ahmadiyya or the Christian faith. Refugees also come from Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, The Congo, Sri Lanka, to name but a few. One of the initial draws of Thailand, especially for people coming from far away, is the fact that it is easy to get an entry visa into Thailand. Most enter the

country on a tourist visa, register for asylum with the UNHCR, and hope to be resettled within months. This is rarely the case however and once the visa expires, asylum seekers and refugees are living illegally, with little access to a secure livelihood and education (Palmgren, 2013). These protracted situations can take years, even decades, during which time refugees are living liminal existences and under constant threat of police harassment, abuse, detention and deportation. If a case is refused and closed by the UNHCR, they are even more vulnerable (UNHCR, 2009). If a case is accepted and refugee status is granted by the UNHCR, refugees still have to wait for long periods of time for resettlement through the Institute of Overseas Migration [IOM], or sponsorship from people in third countries, such as Canada, the United States, or Australia.

The following three sections will examine the socio-political circumstances that have led the three main groups of research participants – those from Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Pakistan – to seek refuge outside of these countries. These three groups represent a significant proportion of the urban refugee population in Bangkok. The research also involved participants from Sudan, Iraq and Somalia, but not substantially; the rationale for this being that these groups are not strongly represented in the urban refugee population. However, it was still beneficial to include members of these groups in order to get a wider perspective and demonstrate the heterogeneity of experiences among the urban refugee population. This point will be further elaborated later in the thesis, but it was important to capture the nuance that exists in the refugee experience

and examine the impact of background, culture and ethnicity in order to develop recommendations that respond to this diversity appropriately and relevantly.

4. The Hmong in Vietnam

The Hmong are an ethnic group mainly living in mountainous areas of China, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam. There is also a substantial diaspora living in the United States, Canada and France. Due to their involvement in the Vietnam War and the secret war in Laos, and their affiliations with the American army, Central Intelligence Agency, and anti-Communist forces, the Hmong have experienced persecution in Laos and Vietnam, that manifests itself in a lack of land and economic rights; restrictions to their religious, linguistic, and cultural freedom; and limited access to education, employment opportunities and fair representation in government:

> *"The level of non-school attendance among the Hmong (48%) is approximately sixteen times higher than that enumerated among the Kinh (3%). As a consequence, data from 2009 show that the literacy rate among the Hmong is quite low (nearly 38%) while it is very high (enumerated at 94%) among larger ethnic groups such as the Kinh, Tay and Muong. Only 14.5% of the Hmong had obtained a primary education degree, with about 5% and 2% enumerated as having completed a lower secondary and upper secondary education."*
>
> (Luong and Nieke, 2013, p. 3-4)

Many Hmong in Vietnam have converted to Christianity in recent years (Yang, 2008). Over the past three decades, there has been a rapid and significant conversion from animists and ancestor worshippers to Evangelical Protestants (Than Tam, 2010). This was brought on by a Philippines based Christian broadcasting company and has been supported partly by the Hmong diaspora in the United States. These Christian groups have been placed under strict surveillance by the Vietnamese government due to their suspected affiliations with resistance groups based in Vietnam and abroad. Human Rights Watch (2011) produced a report about the religious repression of 'Montagnard' Christians in Vietnam. Montagnard is a term used to refer to highlanders such as the Hmong and other ethnic groups in Vietnam. Many Montagnards supported and fought alongside the Americans in the Vietnam War.

In 2001, Hmong and other Montagnard ethnic minority groups in Vietnam held a series of peaceful demonstrations calling for:

> *"Independence, return of ancestral land, and religious freedom…Highlanders have steadily lost land through the migration of hundreds of thousands of lowland Vietnamese, or Kinh, to the region. Some of the settlers came of their own initiative, but many came through state-sponsored transmigration programs that had both economic development and national security goals. Highlanders resentment over the loss of land was compounded by the fact that they found themselves losing out to the migrants in education, employment and other economic opportunities."*
>
> (Human Rights Watch, 2002, p. 8)

These demonstrations were ruthlessly suppressed; many were imprisoned, accused of being spies and placed under heavy surveillance. Although the demonstrations were peaceful, the Vietnamese authorities justified their response by accusing the protesters of being a threat to national security. This surveillance and repression have continued to this day and independent Christian house churches are targeted as a cover for the resistance movement (Human Rights Watch, 2011). In 2014, The Campaign to Abolish Torture published a report about the torture and abuse of political and religious prisoners in Vietnam (The Campaign to Abolish Torture, 2014). Although many incidents go unrecorded due to fear and secrecy on the part of the Vietnamese government, reports from refugees and those living outside of Vietnam who are in contact with those who have been imprisoned and detained, report how prisoners have been tortured and beaten to death while in custody, and asylum seekers forcibly returned to Vietnam are particularly at risk (The Campaign to Abolish Torture, 2014). Local thugs and prisoners are often commissioned to carry out beatings so that Vietnamese authorities are not held responsible.

These conditions, threats and dangers demonstrate how the situation for many Hmong, particularly Christian Hmong, in Vietnam has made them want to seek refuge in countries where they are able to practice their religion, and also peacefully campaign for more equality and access to economic opportunities, land rights, and the preservation of their cultural heritage, without the danger of imprisonment, detention and abuse at the hands of Vietnamese authorities. Although Human Rights Watch (2011) has called on

ASEAN to inspect the Vietnamese legal system and call for more transparency, there is still very much a real and perceived threat to Montagnard Christians in Vietnam. Not only do the Hmong represent a substantial proportion of the urban refugee population in Bangkok, but they also represent a substantial proportion of the stateless population in Thailand (UNPO, 2012). Their situation is quite unique therefore in that they are refugees though also belong to an ethnic group with a strong presence in Thailand, particularly in the North (Crooker, 2007). This affects their status and their sense of belonging in Thailand.

5. Religious Minorities in Pakistan

Nineteen of the research participants come from Pakistan, where they face persecution and discrimination based on their religious and political beliefs. Pakistan has experienced a number of violent attacks on schools and religious minorities, carried out by extremist groups. Many of the victims of these attacks do not receive justice and the government is not making strong attempts to prevent them (Human Rights Watch, 2017b). For example, accurate data on school attacks has not been collected in order to inform and help prevent future attacks. Pakistan still practices blasphemy laws, despite international pressure to abolish them. Human rights activists and journalists are

threatened and imprisoned. Gender discrimination is rife in Pakistan and it has the highest rate of out of school children in the region (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015), particularly for girls. The following section will address some of the issues in Pakistan that have forced many people from that country, mainly belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, though not all, to leave and seek refuge elsewhere.

In Bangkok, the Pakistani communities involved in this research identified themselves as Ahmadiyya Muslim and Christian: “In recent years, attacks on religious minorities – Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Ahmadis – have increased. There is greater insecurity among minorities in the country, which is fueling an image of Pakistan as an increasingly intolerant state.” (Ayaz, 2011) Since 2000, attacks on minority groups, and those perceived to be supporting them, such as lawyers, politicians and journalists, have increased due to the rise of militant Islamic groups, weak laws, a lack of credible accountability structures and political will, and the disempowerment of moderates and progressives due to fear of reprisals and being accused of blasphemy under Pakistan’s draconian ‘Blasphemy Laws’. Fuchs and Fuchs (2020) describe how minorities in Pakistan continually face:

> *“Every day experiences of violence, discrimination, and exclusion. Issues range from a lack of access to education, sanitation, transportation and healthcare, to occupational discrimination and more direct experiences of violence such as abductions and forced conversions, accusations of blasphemy, targeted killings,*

and frequent attacks on places of worship. This portrayal of religious minorities in Pakistan seems to suggest that little or no normal life is possible for them."

(Fuchs & Fuchs, 2020, p. 53)

Ahmadiyyah Muslims are under constant pressure to declare themselves 'non-Muslims' and those that do not lack basic human rights such as access to education and the right to vote (Bezhan & Khattak, 2020). Those in positions of power, civil servants, and those in administrative positions face losing their jobs if they do not comply. Pakistani school textbooks promote extremism by labeling Ahmadis 'kafir' (disbelievers) and students are discouraged from being friends with Ahmadiyyah Muslims (McDonagh, 2020):

"Ahmadi Muslim students of primary school age regularly face threats at school. Teachers, rather than maintaining discipline, turn a blind eye or worse, actively identify, denigrate and ridicule Ahmadi Muslim students in front of their class. Ahmadi Muslims face a constant risk of being denied access to education and those who secure a place are routinely targeted and stigmatized through physical and emotional abuse."

(McDonagh, 2020)

Reports such as these demonstrate the level of discrimination, both implicit and explicit, that affects those belonging to religious minorities from an early age. Those belonging to the Ahmadiyyah Muslim and Shia Muslim sects are regarded as an added threat

because of their similarities with Sunni beliefs, and their associations with middle-class and elite Islam (Devji, 2020).

Malik (2020) discusses how the narrative that identifies Pakistani Christians as outsiders began particularly during the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, where many Christians were accused of being spies for India. Their association with a 'Western' religion and Western ideologies linked them with colonialism and therefore imperialism. Historically however most Pakistani Christians came from low caste backgrounds and were converted to Christianity by missionaries in order to improve their status (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2020). "Christian missionizing is understood as being confined largely to lower castes, appealing to their desire for material goods like housing and education as well as dignity and self-respect." (Devji, 2020, p. 171) This narrative that places Pakistani Christians as the other continues today and manifests itself in subtle forms of discrimination, to more overt forms, such as denying access to government positions and education; to outright forms of persecution and danger, such as attacks on Christian communities and places of worship, murder, sexual violence, arbitrary arrests, accusations of blasphemy, imprisonment, torture and other human rights abuses. Due to their status as second-class citizens in a hegemonic Islam state, Christians and other religious minorities have limited recourse to justice (United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 2018).

6. Tamils in Sri Lanka

Four research participants are from Sri Lanka, where Tamils still suffer discrimination and abuse due to their perceived inferior status in the country. This manifests itself partly in a lack of equal rights to education and employment, and even worse in physical and sexual abuse, which women and girls are particularly vulnerable to. Tamils have little recourse to justice. If they complain they are at risk of being charged as terrorists and can be detained for an indefinite amount of time and tortured (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Sri Lanka is under increasing international pressure to abolish its draconian anti-terror law but has still not done so. The following section will examine the situation for ethnic Tamils in Sri Lanka, and some of the circumstances and conditions that have led many of them to seek refuge outside of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka experienced a brutal civil war which lasted thirty years and only finished as recently as 2009. The conflict was between the Sri Lankan state and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a militant group fighting for Tamil autonomy (Minority Rights Group, 2018). Although the war is technically over, with the Sri Lankan state being victorious over LTTE, the effects of the war on the people of Sri Lanka, particularly the Tamil population, are still incredibly raw, particularly since there is still no official recognition of the thousands of disappearances which happened during the war (Amnesty International, 2019). The conditions in Sri Lanka which led to the war, namely

the subjugation of Tamil language, culture and rights to the dominance of Sinhalese language and culture, are still very much prevalent in Sri Lanka. These are enshrined in laws such as the 'Sinhala Only' Act of 1956, which made Sinhala the national language (Wickrematunge, 2016), 'The Prevention of Terrorism Act' (Reporters Without Borders, 2019), and other policies and institutions designed to oppress Tamil rights and culture (Sriramrajan, 2020).

One of the most significant threats still facing ethnic Tamils in Sri Lanka is the continued military presence in Tamil areas, particularly in the Northeast of Sri Lanka (Minority Rights Group International, 2018):

> *"Despite the end of the conflict, the human rights environment continued to deteriorate in a climate of impunity. Serious human rights violations, such as abductions, arbitrary arrests and detention, torture and sexual violence were still reported from the country's former conflict zones. These areas remain heavily militarized; in addition to checkpoints blotting the region, the military also ran businesses, farming and development projects, and controlled civil society in these areas. As a result, freedom of expression or assembly in the country's north and east remained very limited. While there have been some improvements for the Tamil minority since 2015, many areas in the north and east are still dominated by the military presence, with continued barriers for justice for the victims of conflict-related violence and their families, as well as lack of accountability and continued abuses and impunity by security forces."*
>
> (International Religious Freedom Report, 2018)

Ethnic Tamil's are under constant surveillance and subject to abuse, harassment and violence from security forces, with very limited access to justice. Tamil journalists who attempt to report on these issues have been attacked and detained under the

'Prevention of Terrorism Act' (Reporters Without Borders, 2019). The use of torture against Tamils by security officials in Sri Lanka is still an ongoing issue, despite the government's promise to eliminate its use in 2015 (Freedom from Torture, 2019). Tamils continue to find their access to land and basic facilities such as housing, sanitation, water, healthcare and education eroded as they have to give way to land reforms and the in-migration policies that give preference to the Sinhalese majority (Pearl, 2019). Tamil religious shrines and places of worship are destroyed in what can only be viewed as acts of cultural genocide and are often replaced with Buddhist religious sites and symbols, even in areas where Buddhists are a minority (Minority Rights Group International, 2018). Civil Service Jobs and other high-ranking positions in Sri Lanka require Sinhala language proficiency, thus excluding ethnic Tamils from holding positions of power and influence. Tamils also have unequal access to tertiary education, thus limiting their opportunities to access high status professions (Sriramrajan, 2020).

7. Concluding Words

This section will examine why this thesis has focused on the three groups of urban refugees in Bangkok discussed in the previous sections. It will explore the individual contributions they have made to the research and why it is important to gather

the perspectives of diverse populations of urban refugees in developing programmes and policies that respond to the experiences of refugees in a meaningful way, rather than developing approaches that regard refugee populations as a blanket body with the same needs, identities, backgrounds and aspirations.

> *"Refugees who live in urban environments are…some of the world's most vulnerable citizens. Urban refugees are predominantly self-settled, living outside of formal assistance structures and often unable to access their rights of protection through either the UNHCR or through host governments. Their living conditions are overcrowded and squalid; and while usually they are not poorer or better off than the citizens in whose midst they live, they persist without legal status, without support networks, and often as victims of xenophobia. Due to their 'invisibility' in rapidly urbanizing spaces where their legal status is often undetermined, refugees in urban areas of the Global South are a particularly understudied population."*
>
> (Dryden-Peterson, 2006, p. 381)

As Dryden-Peterson (2006) describes above, urban refugees are an under-researched group. To date, most studies do not take into account the diversity within urban refugee populations (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016) and thus programmes and policies aimed at urban refugees do not respond appropriately to the individual and community needs as determined by culture, background, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status and other factors relevant to developing contextually-driven approaches and solutions (Crisp, 2017). While it is impossible to develop approaches that respond to the diverse needs in their entirety, for the purpose of this thesis it is important to highlight how the different perspectives expressed through the research require alternative solutions to the ones already in place, that respond to the different backgrounds and experiences in more relevant ways (Jacobsen and Landau, 2005).

Recent policy initiatives aimed at urban refugee populations emphasize the need to foster self-reliance and advocacy, on an individual and community level. In order to facilitate this however, the skills and attributes of the people in these communities need to be ascertained and empowered (Rosenberg, 2016). Tools need to be put in place that will activate and nurture these skill sets, so that refugees are better able to develop meaningful initiatives aimed at improving their own circumstances and those of their families and communities (Sanderson, 2020). Networks need to be created between urban refugees and their host communities that will enhance these initiatives and facilitate integration and agency. In order to do so however, the barriers to integration and agency must be identified and solutions developed to overcome these barriers (Anzellini and Leduc, 2020). It is imperative that these solutions take into account that urban refugees, like their non-refugee counterparts, seek more than just economic self-sufficiency; they also seek to engage in social and professional pursuits that utilise their skills and experience, nurture their aspirations, and bring fulfillment to their lives and communities (Field, Tiwari and Mookherjee, 2017).

Sanderson (2020) discusses the various approaches taken to programming with urban refugee populations among governmental and non-governmental organisations. One of these is the 'people-centred approach', which emphasizes utilizing the skills and attributes within these communities when creating meaningful initiatives:

> *"A people-centred approach focuses on aspects such as the use of 'assets' (skills, abilities, friendships and so on) that people build, use and sometimes lose*

> *at times of crisis. This reinforces the need for humanitarian action to focus foremost on people – something that risks getting lost in the mire of urban action."*
>
> (Sanderson, 2020, p. 9)

This approach is relevant to this thesis because it emphasizes the need to develop flexible initiatives that are responsive to the needs and capabilities of multiple ethnic groups and nationalities. Schell, Hilmi and Hirano also discuss the 'area-based approach' (ABA), which aims to engage neighbourhoods and local actors in developing responses to problems faced by refugee and host populations. These are both relatively recent approaches that have emerged out of a growing concern that while urban refugee populations are increasing, there is a scarcity of research around developing policy initiatives that respond adequately to diverse needs and capabilities within these populations:

> *"A growing consensus has emerged that humanitarian response requires a paradigm shift. Too often, humanitarian actors have been slow to adapt to the changing needs of affected communities in diverse contexts, and have been unable to effectively and consistently adopt the integrated multi-sectoral approaches that are considered essential in complex urban contexts."*
>
> (Schell, Hilmi and Hirano, 2020, p. 16)

Rosenburg (2016) explores how programmes aimed at enhancing 'community-based protection' must consider the individual rights, choices and identities within these communities. For example, refugees may choose to identify themselves as being part of a community that does not necessarily share the same status as they do. They may identify themselves more with people from non-refugee backgrounds and ethnicities,

whether these belong to host communities or are also from outside the country they are living in. This is true for the ethnic Hmong seeking refuge in Thailand, who identify themselves with other Hmong living in Thailand, who are not refugees but share the same language, culture and history. This applies to Christians from Pakistan who identify themselves with the wider Christian community in Bangkok, made up of Thais and other foreigners residing in Thailand. This can also be applied to Ahmadiyya Muslim refugees living in Eastern Bangkok, who expressed a sense of community identity that was very much tied to the school where many of them worked and studied. These communities were perceived as providing protection for their members, more so than many of the refugee agencies referred to, thus fostering a sense of identity associated with trust and empowerment:

> *"For some refugees, the aspect of their identity most relevant to their protection – both as a vulnerability factor, and as a shared characteristic around which networks of peers coalesce – is not their identity as refugees. Any number of identities (racial, ethnic, gender) or personal or environmental characteristics (the language they speak, the job they work at, the neighbourhood they live in) might weigh most heavily for an individual in terms of being important for them in accessing or forming a protective community."*
>
> (Rosenberg, 2016, p. 14)

It is important to elicit and recognise these community identities in developing meaningful strategies for urban refugee integration and empowerment. Chapter IV of this thesis will examine the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999) as a theoretical underpinning for developing recommendations for refugee education initiatives in Bangkok, Thailand, that respond to the needs, experiences and aspirations expressed through this research. The capabilities approach is relevant to the issues and

approaches discussed in this section, in aiming to develop programmes and strategies that build on the skills, backgrounds and identities of diverse communities that are embedded in the contexts they are serving. In this way, solutions are not just focused on economic self-sufficiency but take a more holistic approach by also engaging communities in developing alternatives and solutions that foster well-being, fulfillment and empowerment:

> *"The key problem in refugee self-reliance/livelihoods programming is that the 'freedom to work' is viewed only in terms of its (in)direct contribution to a sustainable income rather than as a core part of an interconnected set of freedoms – political participation, health and education – that are essential for development."*
>
> (Field, Tiwari and Mookherjee, 2017, p. 31)

The next chapter will focus on education for refugees in Thailand, and examine policies affecting refugee education. It will explore concepts, approaches and models that have been used in refugee education internationally. This will help to inform the practical recommendations that will emerge from the data, and how these can be applied to particular schools, organisations and initiatives facilitating education for the urban refugee population in Bangkok.

III. Policies and Practices Affecting Refugee Education in Thailand

> *"At the global level, there is no shortage of frameworks that enshrine the rights of children to have an education that is free of discrimination and responsive to their special educational and cultural needs. The 1949 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of a Child and The Dakar Education for All Framework affirms the rights of all children to quality education that recognises diversity and does not discriminate on the basis of gender, disability, national origin or the political affiliations of their parents. However, these and other statements of rights have had limited impact on provision and ended up having a symbolic function only."*
>
> (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012, p. 42)

This chapter will explore Sustainable Development Goal four [SDG4] and Education for All, both concerning the right to education. It will discuss to what extent they have been implemented in Thailand, barriers to their effective implementation, and their implications for refugees.

1. Sustainable Development Goal Four, Education for All and the right to education

SDG4 aims to: “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” (UNESCO/Sustainable Development Goals, 2016, p. i) It calls for universal completion of upper secondary education by 2030, strategies for which were discussed at the Incheon Declaration for Education in 2015:

> *“The Education 2030 Framework for Action has been adopted by the global education community to advance progress towards Sustainable Development Goal Four and its targets. The framework stresses the need to address all forms of exclusion and marginalisation. It specifically calls for addressing inequalities related to access, participation and learning processes and outcomes, paying particular attention to gender equality. This includes efforts to enable education systems to serve all learners, with a particular focus on those who have traditionally been excluded from educational opportunities. Excluded learners include those from the poorest households, ethnic and linguistic minorities, indigenous people, and persons with special needs and disabilities.”*
>
> (UNESCO, 2017, p. 12)

As of 2016, the secondary education completion rate in low-income countries was fourteen per cent (Education International, 2013). Irina Bokova, the Director General of UNESCO, discusses how meeting the target of universal education will not only help children and young people who are currently unable to access a quality education, but will have far wider effects on the global environment, population, health, poverty, hunger and security:

> *"If we are serious about SDG4, we must act with a sense of heightened urgency, and with long standing commitment. Failure to do so will not only adversely affect education but will hamper progress towards each and every development goal: poverty reduction, hunger eradication, improved health, gender equality and women's empowerment, sustainable production and consumption, resilient cities, and more equal and inclusive societies."*
>
> (UNESCO/Sustainable Development Goals, 2016, p. i)

The Sustainable Development Goals, while noble in ambition, have been criticised for focusing too much on net enrolment rates as a means of measuring attainment, and not enough on completion rates and educational outcomes (Barrett, 2011). Although the enrolment rates in many countries have risen, some quite impressively since 2000, these have been accompanied by repetition, absenteeism, and drop-out rates (Lathapipat and Sondergaard, 2015). This issue was addressed in the Incheon Declaration, where strategies for developing qualitative measures for universal education were discussed, rather than just focusing on quantitative outcomes, some of which could be easily fabricated due to lack of political will, lack of support, and pressure from aid donors (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2014). Kalyanpur (2008) explores the conflict between educational quality and quantity measures in the context of India:

> *"At base is the fact of culture and the realisation that any solution, to be effective, must emerge from an understanding of the historical, political and social context of a nation, of local beliefs and values, and the experiences of people… themselves. When external influences impose preconceived parameters for development based on assumptions of universal applicability, the outcome is a complex, often unnatural amalgam."*
>
> (Kalyanpur, 2008, p. 258)

Peter Grimes (2012) discusses how more attention needs to be paid to the socio-political and educational context of individual countries, and indeed communities, when developing strategies for implementing and measuring international policies. Uncritical and de-contextualised policy transfer runs the risk of being unsustainable, lacking local and indigenous knowledge, and reinforcing western - dominated and even colonial ideologies. He argues for an ethnographic approach to understanding and implementing effective educational reforms:

> *"I have come to believe that the only realistic way to work with schools in communities is through a long-term ethnographic approach which enables and encourages listening, cooperation and trust. Understanding cultural factors and local context are the bedrock for this practice, but the researcher must never assume that there is such a national culture or even identity. All culture is local and constructed by the individual's living and working within a setting or community."*
>
> (Grimes, 2012, p. 131)

Indeed, it is naïve and even dangerous to presume that by simply adopting international policies espousing universal education, countries will thereby ensure a quality experience for all their students. Truly effective change happens at a micro-level, and in terms of schooling, most positive outcomes can only be truly measured in the classroom or school, especially in terms of developing inclusive practice and eliminating barriers to learning (Maddox, 2010). These developments can be promoted by initiatives such as SDG4, but can never really be truly implemented, monitored, evaluated and sustained without whole school commitments, teacher development and support. Grimes (2011) reflected on this in his doctoral research into inclusive education in Thailand and Laos (2011). He used the UNICEF Child friendly schools' framework

(UNICEF, 2009) to act as a guide for the schools and teachers he worked with. Although most of the teachers were very committed to this approach, there were still many barriers to its implementation that they needed to work together to understand, adapt to the local context, and develop effectively. Ainscow, Howes, Farrell and Frankham (2003) discuss the necessity of teacher agency, dialogue and collaboration in bringing about inclusive practice in schools:

> *"It is argued that the development of such practices [inclusive practices] is not about adopting 'recipes' of the sort described in much of the existing literature. Rather, it involves social learning processes that occur within a given workplace. It is argued that the development of inclusive practices involves collaborative working arrangements; that they can be encouraged by engagement with various forms of evidence that interrupt ways of thinking; and that the space that is created through such interruptions can enable those involved to recognise overlooked or, indeed, new possibilities for moving practice forward."*
>
> (Ainscow, Howes, Farrell and Frankham, 2003, p. 227)

Another significant policy affecting the right to education in Thailand is the Education for All agenda, and its implications for young refugees in Thailand. In terms of providing education for refugees, or 'non-citizen' children, Thailand has a number of contradictory policies. Whereas Thailand has never ratified the UN Convention for the Protection of refugees, it has ratified the United Nations Convention for Children's Rights and the Education for All Policy (UNESCO, 2014b). According to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education: "The guiding principle that informs this framework is that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or

nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups." (UNESCO, 1994, p.6)

According to a World Bank Report, "Thailand has made good progress in reducing inequality and increasing access for all groups…Substantial progress has been made in increasing secondary net enrolment, which rose impressively from 31% in 1990 to around 78% in 2011." (Lathapipat and Sondergaard, 2015, p.10). In addition to these improvements, the gender gap in education in Thailand is virtually non-existent (Thai Ministry of Education, 2008). However, there is still a wide inequality gap between cities and villages, with students in urban schools achieving far higher educational outcomes than students in rural schools. Many rural schools are allocated less qualified and experienced teachers and are poorly resourced. Socio-economic status is still a large determiner of educational success in Thailand and reading scores are falling significantly lower than neighbouring countries such as Vietnam (The Thai National Commission for UNESCO, 2015).

Although Thailand has made quite good progress in widening access to education and improving the quality of education for children with disabilities and children from disadvantaged backgrounds, it still has a long way to go before meeting its goals (Thai National Commission for UNESCO, 2015). According to a 2009 census, about 250,000 children were still out of school in Thailand. The majority of these children are stateless, migrant and refugee children (Thomas and Burnett, 2015):

> *"Despite Thailand's 2005 Education for All policies guaranteeing access to primary education for all children in Thailand regardless of nationality or registration, in 2010 The Ministry of Education reported that of the estimated 260,000 stateless children in the country, only 60,000 were enrolled in the public education system. World Education estimates that there are approximately 200,000-400,000 migrant children living in Thailand. Among these only 20-40% of them can access education."* (ILO, 2014, p.1).

According to a more recent migration report however, 164,000 migrant children are currently enrolled in school, while the number of out of school children is estimated to be at around 200,000 (Harkins, 2019), indicating a slight improvement over the past ten years. It is difficult to obtain fully accurate data, especially since many migrants here illegally will not attempt to be included in any official data. Certain more recent policies and initiatives have facilitated greater access for migrant children, such as the 2005 Cabinet Resolution on Education for Unregistered Persons, which states that schools no longer need proof of identification when enrolling students, although some schools still ask for it (Roman & Chuanprapun, 2019, p. 101):

> *"Under the aforementioned policy, all children are entitled to fifteen years of basic education. In March/April 2018, a Ministerial Proclamation was enacted to eliminate the obstacles that prevent irregular migrant children from being enrolled. Documentation is no longer required, and schools have the responsibility of admitting children and creating a thirteen-digit identification number for them if they do not already have one. Children are able to enroll in any public school certified by the Thai Ministry of Education and obtain an accredited certificate of education, with learning opportunities provided until tertiary level.'*

A number of reasons exist for children not accessing school, despite policies and initiatives aimed at encouraging disadvantaged and marginalised children to attend. Indirect school costs can prevent a barrier for poorer families, such as school uniforms, stationary, books, transport and food (ILO, 2015). Some children are needed more at home, to help with household and agricultural chores, or to help earn money for the family (Thomas and Burnett, 2015). Parents may be afraid to register their children at school if they are in Thailand illegally, or may not be informed as to how to go about it (UNICEF, 2012b). Schools might not allow non-Thai children to attend the school (Grimes, 2011), or may not be aware of policies allowing non-Thai children to attend school (Sciortino and Punpuing, 2009). Even if children do enroll at the school, certain conditions may encourage them to drop out such as: discrimination from their peers and teachers; bullying; lack of Thai language skills; a transient lifestyle; lack of curricular and content knowledge; and family or work commitments. Some young people may lack motivation due to limited employment opportunities beyond school; lack of encouragement from their family and community; and lack of access to resources to help them complete out of school studies and test preparation (Education International, 2015). Next, I will discuss some of the barriers that are specific to refugees and other forced migrants.

2. Refugee education in Thailand: barriers and opportunities

According to the Education for All policy, all children, regardless of their race, ethnicity, nationality, status or ability, have a legal right to attend school for a minimum of twelve years (Thai National Commission for UNESCO, 2015). Thai state schools therefore have a legal obligation to accommodate young refugees. In practice, however, there are many barriers to children, especially refugee and migrant children, attending school (The Asia Foundation and the ILO, 2015). The legal obligation that Thai schools have often goes unmonitored so is subject to the wishes of the administration and teachers at the school. Children are often excluded therefore, or actively discouraged from attending classes. Most refugees are reluctant to complain since they have no legal rights outside of their right to attend school (UNICEF, 2012b). They worry that any complaint will endanger their case. Refugee families are scared to send their children to school if they are living in Thailand illegally.

Thailand is by far not the only country where refugees experience these problems. They are common problems faced by refugees all over the world. However, they can be more of a problem in countries experiencing a lack of proper funding and resources for education. This is certainly the case for Thailand and refugees are of low priority when it comes to allocating resources and funding in services, due to discrimination and their lack of citizenship and legal rights (UNESCO, 2015). This is one of the main reasons why the Education for All agenda is not translated adequately into practice in so many countries. There are also beliefs that certain populations are kept

uneducated and oppressed in order to provide a cheap labour source (UNICEF, 2012b). This view is difficult to challenge when there is so much evidence that many out of school children engage in illegal labour, often being exploited and mistreated, and experiencing poor and harmful working conditions (ILO, 2015).

Since not all children and young people in Thailand are able to access mainstream education through the Thai curriculum and Royal Thai Government Schools, a large number of children attend informal schools such as migrant learning centres and private schools (UNICEF, 2011). Some of these schools are quite developed, well-resourced and formally accredited, but many are not. This often means that although many children receive an education through these schools, this education is not formally recognised by the Thai state (The Thai National Commission for UNESCO, 2015), or internationally. This severely limits opportunities for employment and further education, and often means that many migrants, refugees and stateless children are limited to the informal labour market when seeking employment upon finishing school (ILO, 2015):

> *"There are approximately 15-20,000 students in migrant learning centres, while higher numbers of unknown migrant children still do not access any form of education. Those unable to attend Thai schools and going to local learning centres run by NGOs also face challenges. As for future prospects, children graduated from learning centres cannot pursue higher education in Thai schools, and do not have any prospects of attending university, as their education is not officially recognised by the Thai Education Ministry."*
>
> (ILO, 2014, p. 7)

Since 2011, the Ministerial Regulation on the Right of Persons in Providing Basic Education Through Learning Centres (UNICEF, 2011) has made the management of migrant learning centres and their curriculums more systematic and officially recognised so that students can transfer more easily to secondary and higher education. This is still not completely widespread but demonstrates a certain level of commitment from the Thai Ministry of Education to address the problem of out of school children and young people with limited further education and employment opportunities due to the nature of their educational background (The Thai National Commission for UNESCO, 2015). Migrant learning centres can also upgrade to become private schools that are more formally accredited and recognised. However, this is a costly and complicated process and many poorly resourced learning centres lack the funds and knowledge to do so. There have been some successful examples of this happening, particularly along the Thai-Burmese border which has quite an advanced educational network due to the protracted nature of the refugee settlements there, and the strong presence of NGOs and humanitarian agencies (Horstmann, 2011). The Fourth Development Plan for Children and Youth Living in Remote Areas was also developed by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn to address the lack of educational opportunities along the borders of Thailand. Some of the schools developed from this royal project experimented with bilingual education (Karen/Thai) and created bilingual curricula and literacy materials (Thai Ministry of Education, 2008).

One severely limited educational opportunity available for refugees and migrants

in Thailand, and beyond, is access to further and higher education (ILO-IPEC, 2014). This poses a severe challenge to the effective implementation of the Education for All agenda. The UNHCR Education Strategy for 2012-2016 (2012) identified working with ministries of education and local institutions in order to provide opportunities for secondary, vocational and higher education as a key aim of their agenda. It also discussed the significance of engaging with international institutions and distance-learning programmes in order to enhance these opportunities. The significance of developing networks with local and international organisations, and utilising access to open and distance learning courses for refugees was further explored through research carried out by Teacher's College Columbia University (Mendenhall, Garnet-Russell and Buckner, 2017), recommendations from which were laid out in their important report on urban refugee education.

Zeus (2011) explores the lack of opportunity in protracted refugee situations, focusing on Burmese refugees in Thailand. Ninety per cent of refugees now live in protracted refugee situations, with the average length of stay for a displaced person being seventeen years in a host country or refugee camp. Zeus (2011) discusses the potential benefits for refugees during this time to have access to further educational and the attainment of vocational skills beyond a primary, or even a secondary education. This would also potentially make the transition to resettlement in a third country easier and more successful, if refugees already have skills and qualifications they can bring to their new situation. Zeus (2011) explores the idea of using 'indigenous knowledge' to

develop the ‘camp campus’ and also touches on the idea of utilising long-distance learning technology:

> *“Beside the recognition of education as an inalienable and enabling human right, a rationale for refugee education that is getting stronger within the international humanitarian community is its important role in psychosocial, but also physical and cognitive protection. In long-term crises, education efforts can play a role in helping communities understand and cope with their fate and can be a critical part of providing meaning in life. It is clear that this does not only apply to young refugee children but also to adolescents who are not yet able to take on adult roles and without access to further education can be easy targets for military recruiters, criminal gangs and the sex industry.”*
>
> (Zeus, 2011, p. 257-258)

This last point is an important aspect of research into improving access, quality and opportunity for refugee, migrant and stateless children in Thailand and elsewhere. From both a human right and a social security perspective, children and young people who are not able to attend school, or are excluded from school, are particularly vulnerable to being exploited, abused and drawn into the worst forms of child labour (The Asia Foundation & ILO, 2015). It is vital that Thailand and the international community make schools more accessible and inclusive for these children and young people or, “out of school children will continue to represent a lack of protection of fundamental human rights, an unconscionable underinvestment in human capital, and a costly barrier that prevents the region from reaching its full economic and social potential.” (Thomas and Burnett, 2015, p. 13)

The following section will examine approaches to refugee education in an international context. There are many different theories and ideas about what creates an inclusive and welcoming educational environment for refugees and asylum-seekers; what factors facilitate a refugees' positive acculturation into a new educational environment; what factors aid their cognitive, social and emotional healing and development within a school; and what impact external factors, such as family, community and society have on a refugees wellbeing and success in and outside of school. Some of these ideas will be explored next.

3. Issues, approaches and solutions to refugee education internationally

A significant barrier to the positive development and wellbeing of a refugee in a new environment is discrimination and prejudice from the host community, and even, in some cases, from other refugees or immigrants themselves (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). This is a recurring theme that emerges from much of the literature surrounding refugee education (McBrien, 2005). Discrimination can manifest itself in many different forms, from open hostility and sometimes violence, to more subtle and nuanced forms, often that the discriminator is not even aware of themselves. Pinson, Arnot and Candappa (2010) describe refugees as being regarded as 'the human waste of globalisation', 'the

other in our midst', 'physically and symbolically out of place' (p. 9). Schools, even schools that claim to have an open and welcoming ethos and embrace multiculturalism, will still consider refugees to be a strain on resources, and potentially affect the competitive standing of the school. It is important to consider also the fact that the vast majority of the world's refugees live in countries of first asylum that are often developing countries themselves, experiencing 'over-stretched' education systems and 'fragile political and economic institutions.' (Dryden-Peterson, 2015, p. 5)

Suarez-Orozco, Darbes, Dias and Sutin (2011) discuss the 'deficit model' that accompanies most refugee education initiatives and approaches, highlighting the negative aspects and neediness of refugee children and families, rather than the potential positive contributions they can make to a school. Schools are not completely to blame for these attitudes and approaches. They are responding to a wider socio-political representation of refugees and asylum-seekers as being economically detrimental, socially disruptive and potentially dangerous to the national security of a country (UNESCO, 2014a). In the following section, I will address strategies that some educators have used to overcome these stereotypes.

Pinson, Arnot and Candappa (2010) carried out their research in UK schools and local education authorities [LEA], examining the needs and approaches to the education of asylum seeker and refugee [ASR] children. They argue for a turnaround in the way refugees are viewed and accepted into schools and wider society. They should no

longer be the 'other in our midst' but an accepted part of globalisation and human nature itself. Migration, whether it's forced or voluntary, is a natural part of the human condition and should be responded to as such, rather than being viewed as negative and detrimental to a society. Pinson et al. (2010) differentiate between schools that adopt an integrative approach to refugee education, and schools that adopt an inclusive approach. The former places the expectation on the individual to conform and assimilate to the mainstream culture of the school and community, whereas the latter places the expectation on the school culture to adapt and create a sense of belonging for that child or young person. They call this the 'holistic' approach: "One of the strongest indicators that LEAs had started to adopt a different, more inclusive approach to ASR education was the fact that some eighteen out of fifty-eight authorities adopted a multi-agency, child centred policy framework which we called the holistic approach. This framework, as we have seen, encouraged the development of a separate comprehensive policy for ASR students. It also focused attention on the ethos of schools and the possibility that schools could, if sufficiently aware, challenge the negative effects of migration and displacement. The focus of this particularly discursive framework derives from a humanitarian and humanistic concern for the child on the one hand and the principle of social inclusion through the recognition of difference on the other." (Pinson et al., 2010, p.93).

The next chapter will explore the concept of social capital and its relevance to young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand; international conceptions

of childhood and their implications for research with young refugees; and the capabilities approach and why this theory has been chosen as the theoretical underpinning for this thesis.

IV. Migration, Social Capital and the Capabilities Approach

This chapter examines the significance of social capital to refugee communities, especially those with limited access to mainstream livelihood, educational and recreational resources. It discusses the importance of recognizing and facilitating children and young people's agency and autonomy in constructing their realities and developing this capital. Finally, it explores the 'capability approach', and why it has been chosen to theoretically frame the data.

1. The role of social capital in the livelihoods and well-being of refugee communities

There has been quite a lot of research put into the value of 'social capital' in recent years, especially with regards to the well-being and acculturation experiences of immigrant communities (Block, 2007; Ackroyd and Pilkington, 1999). The concept of social capital has been defined, measured and interpreted in various different ways.

Putnam drew attention to the different forms of social capital, highlighting the benefits and drawbacks of each:

> *"Of all the dimensions along which forms of social capital vary, perhaps the most important is the distinction between bridging (or inclusive) and bonding (or exclusive). Some forms of social capital are by choice or necessity, inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups…Bonding social capital is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity. Dense networks in ethnic enclaves, for example, provide crucial social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community, while furnishing start-up financing, markets and reliable labour for local entrepreneurs. Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for info-diffusion…Moreover, bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding capital bolsters our narrower selves."*
>
> (Putnam, 2000, p. 22-23)

Social capital in a refugee context consists of community and family networks that can help refugees cope with the isolation, language and cultural barriers they might experience when settling into a new country. Morrow (2001) described social capital as, "consisting of trust, networks of cooperation and reciprocity, civic engagement and strong community identity." (p. 255) According to Weller (2006), social capital consists of, "the resources individuals and collectives derive from their social networks; it is through social interaction that social capital is developed. In social capital theory, networks and relationships have value and meaning, and many of these connections are based around common norms, values, trust and reciprocity." (p. 558) There is a strong distinction made between the forms of social capital, the three main forms being 'bonding capital', 'bridging capital', and 'linking capital' (Putnam, 2000). This thesis will focus on the first two, as they are the most relevant to the refugee experience. Bonding

capital takes place between groups from similar backgrounds, belonging to the same ethnicity, geographical location or socio-economic situation, for example (Langston and Barrett, 2008). It is important for immigrants to develop these networks in order to develop a sense of place and belonging within a new context, and to preserve their cultural values and heritage. Bonding capital can also help to create economic ties, generate resources within a specific community, and has been known to help communities deal with stressors and recover from disasters more efficiently through cooperation (Aldrich and Meyer, 2015). These community and ethnic bonds are often apparent in immigrant communities, particularly where they face hostility from the host community, and are important contributors to their livelihoods and resilience (Dika and Singh, 2002). Jacobsen (2014) refers to the importance of these 'co-national' networks to refugees when they first arrive in a place.

Social capital also has significant value when it comes to refugee protection in host countries, one of the UNHCR's core mandates (Calhoun, 2010a). One of the advantages of refugees living close to each other in urban contexts is that they can organise more easily, thus making it easier for them to access essential services and share resources. Calhoun (2010b) discusses how organised refugee networks are easier for humanitarian organizations and agencies, such as the UNHCR, to work with because there is a greater certainty that benefits will affect a larger number of people and be distributed more easily, although this is far from being guaranteed:

> *"Some refugee communities have strong levels of both bridging and bonding capital. The refugees trust one another and their leadership structures; they*

> *organize themselves for mutual assistance; and they have strong networks with the host community. It is not difficult to implement a community-based approach with these populations, as UNHCR can support them in building on existing strengths. They will use any donation of materials for the benefit of the entire community. They can mobilize volunteers to look after children or vulnerable persons. They may need just a bit of training or equipment in order to solve a wide range of problems, including education, shelter and livelihoods."*
>
> (Calhoun, 2010b, p. 13)

Refugee community schools are also both a great source and creator of social capital for communities lacking access to more mainstream services. Bonfiglio (2010) discusses how once basic needs are met, refugees will organize themselves into self-help groups [SHG] that build on the capacities and skills of the refugees. These SHGs often take the form of non-formal learning centres, where education will be tailored to suit the specific needs of the refugee communities. Broadhead (2013) also explores these initiatives in her case study of refugee education in Bangkok, Thailand. Bonfiglio (2010) refers to the importance of refugees being involved in the planning and delivery of programmes affecting them because it makes the programmes more relevant and participatory, and also builds the social capital of the communities they are affecting:

> *"In addition to determining a format of NFE [non-formal education] that best impacts refugee capabilities in different hosting contexts, participatory methods of delivery also refer to creating a format of education that facilitates refugees engaging with one another. The creating and strengthening of social networks is important to the personal development of refugees because social networks act as channels through which they may receive financial assistance, income-generating opportunities, housing assistance, and emotional support, to name a few."*
>
> (Bonfiglio, 2010, p. 30)

The danger of bonding capital however is that too much reliance on strong ethnic ties, or ties defined by a particular location, interest group or socio-economic class, can isolate that community, and reinforce divisions within society (Bruegal and Warren, 2003). Whereas strong community ties and networks can help to include members of that group, they can also serve to exclude other members who are not seen as belonging to the same fixed identity. Bonding capital can create quite rigid communities that reinforce the same cycles, habits and hierarchies. Whereas reciprocity can be an important source of cohesion within a group, it can also manifest itself in obligation, coercion, a lack of autonomy (Mitchell and LaGory, 2002), and even dangerous, anti-social practices (Putnam, 2000).

'Bridging capital' occurs between groups rather than within them. Ferlander (2007) describes it as "cross-cutting ties" that, "improve the chances of having the right kind of contacts for various purposes, thus providing access to new information and resources, enhancing people's actual control, and improving their ability to solve various problems." (p. 122) Bridging capital is generally regarded as creating the necessary conditions in a society that help people 'get on' rather than just 'get by' (Holland, 2009). It diversifies networks and increases connections between communities so that people have increased access to resources and opportunities (Wood, Giles-Corti, Zubrick and Bulsara, 2011). This is not always guaranteed however and sometimes groups that have had negative experiences with another group can end up reverting to the protection of their community. However, in terms of creating more inclusive and

equitable societies, it is important for bridging capital to develop so that people from different groups within that society share resources and have equal access to those resources (Williams, 2003). Barriers to bridging capital come from many factors, such as resistance and hostility between groups; distrust of 'the other'; socio-cultural and economic inequalities; historical experiences; language and geographical differences; and perceived hierarchies within society (Westlund & Larsson, 2016). A healthy balance between bonding and bridging capital is ideal but is very difficult to achieve. Strong initiatives have been established to create these conditions however. I will discuss some of these and their implications for the refugee experience further.

Palmgren (2016) explores how bonding capital within refugee communities, and bridging capital between communities, are vital sources of social capital during protracted periods of 'stalled migration'. Palmgren refers to these periods as, "the intermediate period of protracted liminality…a stage in ongoing migrant trajectories characterised by prolonged periods of ambiguous legal status…along with tenuous security and temporal uncertainty of their stay." (p. 4) Almost all of the refugees involved in this research are experiencing this stage of liminality, uncertain where they will go next, and living on the margins of a society where they have no legal rights. Jacobsen (2014) explores how programmes targeting refugees living in protracted situations should be aimed at both refugee and local communities. Programmes that bring benefits to both populations can help to break down barriers, reduce resentment from the local community, and facilitate intercultural cooperation: "Inclusive programming can

build social capital with the host community and potentially reduce antagonism, both because refugees are seen to be bringing resources (in the form of programmes) and because working and learning together is good for social relations." (p. 109)

As this thesis focuses primarily on the experience of young refugees, the empirical research explored how young people navigate their lives through their protracted situations, and the role that social capital plays in the lives of young refugees living in Bangkok. Putnam (2000) refers to social capital as, "informal networks of generalized reciprocity" (p. 147). This research therefore examined how young refugees living in this context construct these networks for themselves, their families and their communities, and what support and opportunities they receive to do this (Morrow, 1999). Social capital is an important source of community cohesiveness and resilience for young people.

> *"Strengthened social networks and relationships as well as increased trust and sense of belonging in one's community will improve young people's quality of life and decrease their symptoms of stress. At the community level, social capital will increase participation in social and formal groups such as playgroups, youth and sports groups, after-school activities, and perhaps participation and/or membership in religious organisations."*
>
> (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004, p. 164)

The focus on educational experience is particularly key since this comprises such an important part of a young person's life (Leonard, 2005). Sanders and Munford (2003) explain how young people involved in their research into community and belonging felt particularly excluded if they were not at school: "The significance of school as a critical hub in young people's social networks and sense of place could be clearly seen.

Exclusion from school was often accompanied by exclusion from many other routine opportunities for young people to participate in." (p. 202)

The next section explores the active role that children and young people play in their migration experiences, negotiating their acculturation and constructing their identities in a new environment. It will draw on different conceptions of childhood and how these influence our interpretation and perspectives of children's experiences and realities. Similar to the deficit model that many educators use to approach refugee education is the model that many researchers take when approaching childhood migration research. This model tends to regard the refugee child as a passive victim of their migration and subsequent circumstances. While researchers should in no way ignore the vulnerability and precariousness of a young refugee's situation, and the implications this may have on the ethics and process of the research, it is equally important to take into consideration the child's role in constructing a reality for themselves that is resilient, adaptable, supportive and strong. Indeed, research has proven that in many ways children are far more capable of doing this than adults.

2. Children's agency and migration

Laoire, Carpena, Mendez, Tyrell and White (2010) discuss our tendency to associate migration with 'detachment' and a loss of home. This association with loss tends to give migration, especially forced migration, negative connotations, which indeed it can have, especially if people have lost close friends and family associated with that home. However, home can also be viewed as a fluid and evolving process, a process that is far more likely to be the case with children, who are still developing a sense of home and belonging connected to that home. Ball and Moselle (2015) explore this sense of fluidity of home and belonging in their research with refugee children living on the border between Thailand and Myanmar. While they do not deny the difficult circumstances that these 'circulating' children live in, they also emphasise the resilience, ingenuity and positive aspects of their lives, which many people would not consider when regarding children living such a liminal existence. Due to exposure to an international community of humanitarian workers and volunteers, "many have learned to speak multiple languages, work cooperatively and live in close quarters with a heterogeneous mix of people, learn new skills, solve problems creatively and eke out a living using ingenuity and persistence." (p. 431) In recognising the active role that children play in constructing meaningful lives for themselves, it is not about ignoring or denying the vulnerability of these lives, but about involving and empowering children in the further development of their realities. Langevang (2007) explores the importance of aspirations to the resilience of young people involved in migration in Ghana: "Many participants did indeed speak of futures that I could hardly imagine materialising. Nevertheless, it is important to explore such dreams since dreaming can be an

important life strategy for young people living in situations of economic hardship and uncertainty." (p. 275) By consulting with refugee children, and respecting their agency, researchers, policy makers, teachers, development workers, etc. are in a far better position to understand the communities they are working with, and work in partnership with the agents within these communities, including children and young people, to facilitate their improvement (Thoreson et. al., 2016).

The concept of 'inclusive development' is explored by Ball, Butt, Beazley and Fox (2015), in their research with stateless and undocumented people in the Asia Pacific region. According to their statistics, thirty per cent of children in the region are stateless and fifty to seventy five percent of children in Indonesia are undocumented. This situation tends to be viewed very negatively, as research has shown that stateless and undocumented children tend to be more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and have less access to education, healthcare and other services (UNESCO, 2015). However, Ball et al. (2015) discuss how it is important to consider that some populations may choose to remain stateless and undocumented. For example, in Indonesia, certain ethnic groups, especially those who are persecuted, choose to remain unregistered and invisible. There may also not be a tradition of registration, or it may involve costs and the need to travel. Scott (2010) explores the voluntary nature of statelessness among certain ethnic groups such as those living in the mountainous regions of Southeast Asia. Since they prefer to identify themselves as belonging to their specific ethnic group rather than belonging to a specific nation, they are spread

throughout four nation-states so find it difficult to associate themselves with one state without losing an aspect of their identity, heritage, and in some cases their livelihood. The same is true for sea gypsy people in Southeast Asia, who live nomadic fishing lives, spreading themselves throughout Thailand, Myanmar and Malaysia. At the risk of 'romanticising' statelessness, I am not denying the marginalisation that these populations experience, only that it is important as a researcher working with these populations to reflect on your assumptions about their lives (White, Laoire, Tyrell, Carpena-Mendez, 2011).

Hujismanns (2008) explores the lives and identities of children involved in migration between Laos and Thailand. There has been some effort on the part of the Laos and Thai governments to regulate this migration and install formal Memoranda of Understandings between the two countries to control it. Although this may seem like an effort to protect migrant workers, and indeed it may well have that outcome, many of the young people involved in migration are resistant to it. They take advantage of the fluidity between the two countries and would be denied this with more formal regulations. For example, some live in Laos but travel to Thailand, sometimes almost on a daily basis, to work or attend school. Laos has lower cost living expenses so young people do not mind earning less than Thai people. In this way, the fluidity of the borders benefits employers as well as employees. On the other hand, this fluidity is abused by criminal gangs and human traffickers which is why border controls are being more formalised. This situation shows how migration research and border

politics can have many different sides, and actors involved. Research done with street children in Indonesia (Beazley, 2003), Nepal (Baker, 1999) and Tanzania (Evans, 2006) has also revealed how often populations who tend to be pitied, victimised and regarded as needing protection, will often choose that way of life, prefer it, and find ways of utilising it for their own benefit.

Boyden (2003) discusses the need for more ethnographic research with cultures and communities before implementing policies and practices that may be naïve and even detrimental to their development. For example, young refugees from Somalia often demonstrate a huge capacity for resilience and autonomy due to the tradition of sending young boys away from home, often for long periods of time, to tend herds. In denying some young people the opportunity to work, this may have a detrimental impact on their sense of dignity and pride, especially if these emotions are associated with the contributions they make to their homes and communities (Van Blerk and Ansell, 2007). Some children choose to remain in potentially dangerous situations, such as the case with a group of Kosovan children after the war, who preferred to remain in an abandoned warehouse together than be separated. "Understanding that the culture in which children live shapes the way they are perceived and treated, the way they experience childhood, and the actual competencies they develop is an important departure from traditional policy based or universalist values, in which the process of growing up is perceived as the same for all

children." (Boyden, 2003, p.20)

One of the most important considerations when researching the experiences of children involved in forced migration is the significance of the roles that they take on within the family. Often children adapt to a new culture faster and more readily than their parents, especially if they are attending school (Rick and Forward, 1992). This makes it easier for them to acquire the language and an understanding of the cultural norms and expectations of the world around them (McMichael, Gifford, Correa-Vellez, 2011). Often children are welcomed and accepted more into that culture and are less resistant to change due to their age and experience (Moua and Lamborn, 2006). Refugee children can have more responsibility within their homes and take on the role of 'cultural and linguistic translators' for their parents and elder siblings or relatives (Gilhooly and Lee, 2016). This can sometimes be a source of pride for a young person and their families, but it can also be a source of conflict, as the parents lose their identity and position as the protector and teacher (Lee, 2002). "Typically, children adapt to a new cultural context – and achieve linguistic acculturation –more readily than their parents. This can create a complex range of tensions, especially if generational role-reversal occurs, where the gaps in cultural capital between the first and second generation require parents to rely on their children for guidance." (Marlowe et al., 2014, p. 61)

This concept of 'cultural dissonance' between the generations can also have

significant implications for adolescent identity development. Nguyen, Messe and Stollak (1999) explore the identity conflicts that Vietnamese youth experience in the United States. Vietnamese culture emphasises filial piety and the identity of the individual is developed around the family. In a more individualistic society like America however, this identity becomes conflicted, especially when the parents are struggling and unable to act as role models for the child. This is further explored by McBrien (2005) in her literature review of educational needs and barriers of refugee youth in the United States:

> *"All refugees encounter a crisis of identity when they leave behind their communities, lifestyles, livelihoods and ancestral places of worship. Thus, refugee teens may not have the traditional adult support on which to rely as they search for a sense of self, because adults with whom they live may be undergoing a similar search for self in their new host country. Because adults are anxious about finding jobs, and housing, and managing their own grief and cultural adjustment, they are often ill-equipped to provide their children with needed emotional support."*
>
> (McBrien, 2005, p. 346)

When researching the experiences of refugee adolescents therefore it is important to be aware of these identity changes, developments and conflicts. However, it is also important not to generalise and assume that all refugee teens are experiencing it to the same level. Some may struggle with these changes, and some may embrace it. Since children and adolescents are still developing in this sense, it is easier for them to adapt and change to assimilate into their new environments, than it is for older refugees. There are also dangers in making assumptions about the cultural patterns of the countries where refugees come from. Christensen and Prout (2005) make the point that

due to the globalization of youth cultures, children from a middle-class family in New Delhi and New York may have more in common than with children from a different class and background in their own city or country.

Seeking to understand and elicit the agency of the young participants in this thesis study will be an important aspect of the research approach. Not only will it be built into the methodology, but it will be explored with the young people regarding how they have constructed and co-constructed their lives and educational experiences, and how these impact on their families and communities. This emphasis on agency and co-construction is further developed in the final section of this chapter, where the 'capability approach' (Sen, 1999) is examined, and how it is relevant to refugee education, migration and social capital. The capability approach is very much driven by the context from which it is drawn, and the data in which it is embedded (Sen, 1999). In an educational sense, it encompasses more than just the learning that takes place in a classroom, but the life skills that are developed from education and the opportunities that are enhanced through it (Tikly and Barrett, 2011).

3. The capability approach

> *"Certainly, people have needs, but they also have values, and, in particular, they cherish their ability to reason, appraise, act and participate. Seeing people in*

> *terms only of their needs may give us rather a meagre view of humanity…we are not only patients, whose needs demand attention, but also agents whose freedom to decide what to value and how to pursue it can extend far beyond the fulfilment of our need."*
>
> (Sen, 2004, p. 10)

The capability approach was developed by Amartya Sen (1999) whose philosophical enquiry into the nature of poverty enriched the world of development economics. He unpacks how antidotes to poverty and indeed famine do not come from handouts and donations, but from creating societies where people can, 'choose the lives they have reason to value'. (p. 63) Although this seems idealistic, Sen argues the point by using examples such as the Indian state of Kerala: By national standards, it has a lower rate of economic growth, yet it has reduced income poverty through education, healthcare, and equitable land distribution (Sen, 1999). Gender equality is also greater in Kerala through better access to education and property rights. The capability approach, while not dismissing the importance of income when measuring well-being, also includes other criteria that hold equal merit: "The capability approach therefore argues for well-being and quality of life, not only income generation – a person's well-being is not simply a matter of how rich he or she is. The focus is not solely on income or consumption; instead, resources create opportunities, rather than being an end in themselves." (Walker, 2005, p. 104)

The capability approach builds on both the human development approach (Gale and Molla, 2015) and the human rights approach (Nussbaum, 2011) to development.

The former measures development through life expectancy, educational achievement and gross domestic product [GDP] per capita. The human rights approach recognizes that all people have the same basic entitlements to certain freedoms, such as: “political liberties, the freedom of association, the free choice of occupation.” (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 36). Both of these approaches have contributed a great deal in terms of humanizing development economics. They can each be quite top-down practices however, operationalized in global policies such as the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights and the United Nations Human Development Index (Gale and Molla, 2015). The capability approach aims to be more contextually driven, informed by the people and environments where it is embedded: “General benchmarks based on utility or on resources turn out to be insensitive to contextual variation, to the way circumstances shape preferences and the ability of individuals to convert resources into meaningful human activity. Only a broad concern for functioning and capability can do justice to the complex interrelationships between human striving and its material and social context.” (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 70) The ‘functionings’ that Nussbaum refers to here are the, “various things a person may value doing or being”. (Sen, 1999, p. 75) Capabilities are therefore the freedoms to create these functionings. For example, a functioning may be an educational qualification and a capability would be the access and support necessary to achieve this qualification.

At the core of the capability approach is the idea of agency. As Sen (2004) identified above, quality education goes beyond just meeting someone’s needs, but

must empower a person with the ability to decide what those needs are, how to meet them, and what the best way to do so will be. In this way, agency is very much connected to individual choice, and the role of education is to enable someone to have choices and decide for themselves what the best ones will be. The language surrounding refugees tends to victimise them, however well-meaning, by reducing them to needs, and how those needs can be met by other people in a more powerful and privileged position to them (Fiddian-Qasmiyah, Loescher, Long, & Sigona, 2014). For example, Landau and Duponchel (2011, p. 3) state:

> *"Extending Sen and Nussbaum's pioneering work on capability expansion, it argues that intervention in urban areas should be premised on expanding agency – the ability to choose different ways of living – while ensuring that fundamental prerequisites for survival are not compromised. Rather than seeing people as an end – receivers of calories, blankets and other benefits – this approach asks us to help create the conditions under which people's aspirations and abilities allow them to secure their objectives. By emphasizing the need to ensure that refugees, as part of a broader and emerging urban community, can control their own environments, a capability approach to urban protection helps to avoid a kind of commodity fetishism characteristic of many humanitarian programmes and welfarist treatments of assistance."*

The capability approach also recognizes the significant role that aspiration can play in enhancing someone's life. Walker explores the significance of aspiration to the young South African women involved in her research:

> *"Aspiration produces new possibilities. Without the opportunities to go to school, and to complete twelve years of school, girls would find it difficult to imagine alternative futures to that of their parents, and harder still to realize those futures in their lives. In a country that for so long denied and diminished the aspirations of the majority of its population, and a country in which femaleness is still less valued than maleness, this is hugely important."*
>
> (Walker, 2007, p. 184)

Research is essential in order to identify what approaches to education, livelihoods and well-being are of value to people in various contexts. A one size fits all approach is inappropriate when developing a capabilities framework. It needs to be inclusive and contextually driven in order to be effective and culturally reflective. For example, a framework developed in South Africa will not necessarily be relevant in the United Kingdom. Even within a country, a framework developed in rural Thailand for example will not necessarily be appropriate to apply to an urban context such as Bangkok. For such grassroots approaches, as opposed to top-down, research methods of a qualitative, ethnographic nature are particularly well-suited, a point further elaborated on in the following methodology chapter. Bonfiglio (2010) discusses this in relation to non-formal education programmes for refugees. She explores the benefits of these programmes in terms of developing approaches and content that are relevant and responsive to the needs of the refugee communities accessing and forming them. However, these initiatives need to be participant-led and in being so, help to strengthen and empower the communities driving them: “By creating and broadening the opportunities for learning, NFE [non-formal education] bolsters the central human capabilities of refugees and increases both what refugees are in a position to do and to be – this is the very definition of living and functioning in a truly human way.” (Bonfiglio, 2010, p. 31) This same ethos significantly underlies the aims and ambitions of this thesis.

The next chapter will discuss the research methodology used to gather data on the educational experiences of young refugees living in Bangkok, Thailand. It will provide a rationale for this method, examine the various tools used, and explore some of the issues experienced in using this approach.

V. Research Methodology

"Fieldwork is a personal experience rather than a mere academic pursuit."

(Abebe, 2009, p. 451)

The following chapter will examine the methodological approach used to research the educational experiences of young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand. An ethnographically inspired approach was chosen because this would be the most appropriate method of eliciting and understanding the deeper and more meaningful aspects of the educational experiences of the research participants (van Beurden and de Haan, 2019). This would not lead to a numerical calculation involving access and qualifications, but a more nuanced account of how this access occurs; what support the participants receive in regard to their education; what is their affective experience of education; and what agency they have in the choices they make and the services they receive. A mixed methods approach to the research was used, involving participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and visual narrative methods.

> *"Experience…cannot be viewed as something that is an attribute purely of the individual but involves the individual and the interpersonal and broader cultural and historical context in which that individual is situated."*

(Tudge and Hogan, 2005, p. 104)

Ethnography is most commonly associated with anthropological research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). In terms of research with children, it is influenced by a socio-cultural approach, placing importance on the role of culture, history and context in children's lives and development (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008). Ethnography involves the researcher observing and working with people in their natural settings, as well as learning about their cultural and historical backgrounds and the communities in which they live (Tudge and Hogan, 2005). An ethnographically inspired approach was chosen for the purposes of this thesis because, in working with refugee communities, the contextual understanding of the lived experience is particularly important. Ethnography also compliments a capabilities theoretical framework (Sen, 1999) because the research, and the recommendations and conclusions drawn from it, are embedded in specific socio-cultural, political, historical and environmental conditions (Walker, 2005). Ethnography is not suitable to top-down, prescriptive developments, but instead builds upon specific contexts, and the lived experiences that make up those contexts (Nussbaum, 2011). The research for this thesis was ethnographically inspired rather than being ethnographic in that observation and fieldnotes were incorporated into the methodological approach but did not form the core aspect of data collection. The researcher engaged in partial immersion into the communities under study, but this did not constitute enough of a basis to offer the 'thick description' of the participants that is a significant characteristic of the ethnographic method (Holmes, 2013).

1. The research context and participants

The research was carried out in a number of areas of Bangkok, specifically targeting communities with a large concentration of urban refugees. The nationalities included in this research represent the majority of the urban refugee population in Thailand, particularly those from Pakistan, Vietnam and Somalia. Perspectives of young people from a variety of different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds [Pakistani Christian and Ahmadiyyah; Vietnamese Christian Hmong; Sri Lankan Hindu Tamil; Sudanese Muslim; Somali Muslim; Iraqi Muslim] were included, in order to get a diverse range of experiences.

The communities involved in the research live mainly on the outskirts of metropolitan Bangkok, where housing is cheaper and migrant communities are less visible. The initial stage of the research was based in an area of Bangkok with a large concentration of Hmong refugees from Vietnam. A number of families live in this community. Since I had been working as a volunteer at a community school for refugees in this area for two years, I was already familiar to the participants and most of the interviews took place at the community school. The later stages of the research involved mainly Pakistani communities. These interviews took place in the homes of the participants, which I visited with an interpreter.

There were sixty participants involved in the research, most being young people under the age of eighteen years old, though parents were also included in the interviews and arts-based projects, and three professionals working with refugee organisations in Bangkok were interviewed. The participants were chosen through a selective sampling method, and then snowball sampling. The initial participants were twenty-seven ethnic Hmong from Vietnam, four ethnic Tamil from Sri Lanka, and three political refugees from Sudan. They all volunteered to be involved in the research. Other participants, particularly those from Pakistan (nineteen), Iraq (three) and Somalia (one), had to be sought out through approaching refugee organisations and gate-keepers. Once these communities were identified however, others approached wishing to be involved.

Participants were given five hundred baht (about ten British pounds) each for their time. Although there are ethical considerations around payment, in terms of whether it makes participation purely voluntary, I wanted to offer something in return for the help and effort the participants were giving to the research. The only incidence where this posed a visible problem was when someone in a community I visited questioned the interpreter why they were not asked to be interviewed. Although this may not have been a direct response to the payment involved, it may have caused problems in that some people felt excluded from the opportunity to be interviewed and to receive payment. I discussed the issue with the gatekeeper and we agreed that in the future we would only visit communities that were small enough for me to interview all the young participants who fell within the targeted age range. That way, the gatekeeper would not have the

responsibility of selecting certain interviewees over others, causing conflict within the community and hostility towards himself. As it turned out, this was the last community we visited together.

Below is a list of the participants involved in the research, including information about their age, gender, ethnicity, language, the type of interview conducted with them, the place and whether or not there was an interpreter present. The first table will list the key participants, those belonging to the Hmong, Tamil and Pakistani communities; the second table will list the more peripheral participants, including parents, professionals and those belonging to nationalities less significantly represented in the research. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Table 1.1: Primary Research Participants

Name	Age	Gender	Nationality/ Ethnicity	Language	Type of Interview	Date/ Place	Interpreter
Koob	16	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Individual/ Semi-structured	4/2/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Ntxhi	13	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus group/ Semi-structured	4/2/ 2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Lis	14	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus group/ Semi-	4/2/	Hmong-English

					structured	2017 – Community School	
Hawj	17	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Individual/ Semi-structured	11/2/ 2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Aaliyah	10	Female	Sudanese	Arabic	Focus group/ Semi-structured	28/1/2017 – interviewee's home	Arabic - English
Amani	9	Male	Sudanese	Arabic	Focus group/ Semi-structured	28/1/2017 – interviewee's home	Arabic - English
Adithi	13	Female	Sri Lankan Tamil	Tamil	Focus group/ Semi-structured	22/3/2017 – interviewee's home	Tamil-English
Naveesh	17	Male	Sri Lankan Tamil	Tamil	Focus group/ Semi-structured	22/3/2017 – interviewee's home	Tamil-English
Sadeera	20	Female	Sri Lankan Tamil	Tamil	Focus group/ Semi-structured	22/3/2017 – interviewee's home	Tamil-English
Chalani	22	Female	Sri Lankan Tamil	Tamil	Focus group/ Semi-structured	22/3/2017 – interviewee's home	Tamil-English
Tswaub	14	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Individua/ Semi-structured	18/2/2017 – Community School	Hmong - English
Lauj	16	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Individual/ Semi-structured	5/2/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English

Choj	14	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Individual/ Semi-structured	22/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Houa	13	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Individual/ Semi-structured	7/2/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Fwam	16	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong/ English	Individual/ Semi-structured	26/4/2017 – Community School	No interpreter present
Cai	20	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Individual/ Semi-structured	18/2/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Wang-Meng	14	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Individual/ Semi-structured	21/2/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Joud	16	Male	Pakistani	Punjabi	Focus group/ Semi-structured	5/8/2017 – Interpreter's home	Punjabi-English
Kader	15	Male	Pakistani	Punjabi	Focus group/ Semi-structured	5/8/2017 – Interpreter's home	Punjabi-English
Pakiza	16	Female	Pakistani	Punjabi	Individual/ Semi-structured	26/8/2017 – Interpreter's home	Punjabi-English
Eman	13	Male	Pakistani	Punjabi	Individual/ Semi-structured	26/8/2017 – Interpreter's home	Punjabi-English
Parvez	11	Male	Pakistani	Urdu	Focus group/ Semi-structured	2/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English
Ghulam	8	Male	Pakistani	Urdu	Focus group/ Semi-structured	2/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English

Najee	11	Female	Pakistani	Urdu	Individual/ Semi-structured	2/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English
Riaz	13	Male	Pakistani	Urdu	Focus group/ Semi-structured	2/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English
Kenzi	9	Female	Pakistani	Urdu	Focus group/ Semi-structured	2/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English
Parwej	11	Female	Pakistani	Urdu	Individual/ Semi-structured	2/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English
Rafsa	15	Female	Pakistani	Urdu	Focus group/ Semi-structured	19/8/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English
Emin	17	Male	Pakistani	Urdu	Focus group/ Semi-structured	19/8/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English
Ahd	20	Male	Pakistani	Urdu	Individual/ Semi-structured	16/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English
Wahaj	22	Male	Pakistani	Urdu	Individual/ Semi-structured	16/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English
Jannat	13	Female	Pakistani	Urdu	Individual/ Semi-structured	16/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English

Yasmin	15	Female	Pakistani	Urdu	Individual/ Semi-structured	16/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English
Abed	13	Male	Pakistani	Urdu	Individual/ Semi-structured	16/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Urdu-English

Table 1.2: Secondary Research Participants

Name	**Age**	**Gender**	**Nationality/ Ethnicity**	**Language**	**Type of Interview**	**Date/ Place**	**Interpreter**
Aaden	19	Male	Somali	Somali	Individual/ Semi-structured	26/1/2019 – Interviewer's home	None
Parisa	unknown	Female	Pakistani	Urdu	Arts-based project participant only	10/2017 – Bangkok Art and Culture Centre	None
Fahad	unknown	Male	Pakistani	Urdu	Arts-based project participant only	10/2017 – Bangkok Art and Culture Centre	None
Sabina	42	Female	Sudanese	Arabic	Arts-based project participant only	10/2017 – Bangkok Art and Culture Centre	None

Choj	unknown	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Foom	34	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Yang	17	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Taub	22	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Keej	15	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Maiv	unknown	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Suab	unknown	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Sua	unknown	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Daus	unknown	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Fuechy	unknown	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Nag	unknown	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English

Mos	15	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Focus Group/ Semi-structured	4/3/2017 – Community School	Hmong-English
Chue	16	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Arts-based project participant only	21/4/2017 – Community School	None
Ying	18	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Arts-based project participant only	21/4/2017 – Community School	None
Lig	unknown	Female	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Arts-based project participant only	21/4/2017 – Community School	None
Kim	16	Male	Viet-Hmong	Hmong	Arts-based project participant only	21/4/2017 – Community School	None
Evan Jones (real name)	unknown	Male	Australian	English	Individual/ Semi-structured/ professional	11/5/2017 – Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network office	None
Kornkaew Phimoei (real name)	unknown	Female	Thai	Thai/ English	Focus Group/Semi-structured/Professional	13/7/2017 – Jesuit Refugee Service	None
Wanatchaporn Paesukchuen (real name)	unknown	Female	Thai	Thai/ English	Focus Group/Semi-structured/Professional	13/7/2017 – Jesuit Refugee Service	None
Abner	13	Male	Iraqi	Arabic	Focus Group/Semi-structured	2/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Arabic-English

Abbas	11	Male	Iraqi	Arabic	Focus Group/Semi-structured	2/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Arabic-English
Abida	5	Male	Iraqi	Arabic	Focus Group/Semi-structured	2/9/2017 – Interviewee's home	Arabic-English

2.Ethical issues around research with young refugees

> *"Part of the process in developing questions in qualitative research is being reflective about how the questions will affect participants' lives and how the questions will position the researcher in relation to participants."*
>
> (Agee, 2009, p. 439)

There are a number of ethical issues to consider in research with refugees, particularly with children and young people. These issues needed to be referred to throughout the thesis because they were a fundamental aspect of the research process, its outcomes and validity. A very important consideration when working with refugee communities is their association between interviews and the asylum process (Mestheneos, 2006). Although the interviews in the research for this thesis focused on the educational experiences of refugees in Bangkok, rather than on their experience of persecution in their countries of origin, it can be difficult to disconnect these issues for many people. It was therefore very important to have an awareness of potentially

sensitive issues and to approach them in a way that the participants did not feel like they were being interrogated or needed to justify their response as if they were talking to an immigration committee (Shah, 2004). This required a certain level of trust between myself and the respondent, and also made the informed consent process that much more significant (Hopkins, 2008). If participants did not understand why I was asking them certain questions, what these questions were for, and what I planned to do with these questions, they were well within their rights not to respond, and even withdraw from the research process. Indeed, the participant may be aware of certain dangers to being involved in research that the researcher is not aware of themselves (Smith, 2009).

One way that a researcher can investigate these issues beforehand, and build the research approach around these issues, in order to make it as ethical and valid as possible, is to consult with the respondents themselves about the approach, particularly community 'gate-keepers' who often act as leaders and spokespeople for the community. Kue, Thorburn and Keon (2015) discuss this in their health research with a Hmong community in the United States. They worked with a community advisory committee who helped with devising culturally appropriate materials, translation and recruitment. They also warned of the dangers however in too much familiarity between the advisors and the community. This can affect the confidentiality and anonymity of the research, and even prevent certain people from participating. It can also affect the response of participants and how these responses are interpreted (Edwards, 1998). When working with community advisors and gatekeepers for the purposes of this thesis

therefore it was important to consider their position within the community, and the ramifications of this (Saltsman, 2013). It was also important to consider the hierarchies that exist in a community, and the implications of this on the research process. O'Kane (2008, p. 126) discusses this in her research with street children:

> *"In undertaking research with groups of children it is also important to understand power relations amongst children, to ensure that the research work does not contribute to the creation or strengthening of hierarchies amongst children. Factors of age, gender, birth order, educational attainment, caste/class, ethnicity, (dis)ability, as well as individual personality and physical stature all play a role in shaping the power relations in childhood."*

The community gate-keepers who assisted in this research were mainly the interpreters and community leaders, who were also an important point of contact and source of information about the participants, their culture and their community. Some of these interpreters were unknown to the participants. This can be advantageous in that they may offer an objective perspective and interpretation of the participant's responses. The disadvantage is that the participants may not trust an unknown interpreter as much, may not feel comfortable around them, and may not open up as much as if they were around someone they knew and trusted (Gersch, 2001). An interpreter familiar to the participant however may be able to offer a greater insight into the experience and background of that participant and may encourage them to open up more. The disadvantage of an interpreter that is familiar to the participant is that there is an established relationship between the participant and interpreter that will affect the participant's responses, and the interpretation of them. There may also be issues and power relations present that will affect the objectivity of the situation (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). These are difficult to avoid but were important to consider and

incorporate into the analysis of the data. This point will be discussed further throughout the thesis.

Children and young people involved in research, especially where they may be taking a very active role, may end up having to neglect other duties and needs such as school and social life (Barker and Weller, 2003b). The researcher may assume that this is in the best interests of the young person but sometimes it is not. Beazley, Bessell, Ennew and Waterson (2009) explore this issue in 'the right to be properly researched', and emphasise that researchers need to be aware and sensitive to the pressures the children and young people are under. Often refugees will feel coerced into being involved in certain projects due to their desire to integrate and feel accepted by their new communities. They may not want to decline even if they have far more pressing needs and concerns to attend to. It is essential that researchers see this and do not expect participants to be involved, even if they see a perceived advantage to them being so. Although I sought consent from the community leaders and parents of the research participants, I consulted the young people themselves and informed them of the purposes of the research so that they also understood what they were agreeing to participate in. I conducted the interviews on a Saturday, so they were not missing school and asked them to choose a time most convenient for them.

A children's rights methodological approach was used for the purpose of this thesis, respecting the participant's right to be properly listened to (Beazley, Bessell,

Ennew & Waterson, 2009; Gersch, 2001) and contribute to the issues, services and policies affecting them (UNICEF Thailand, 2011; Leitch, 2008). This approach requires sensitivity, flexibility and reflexivity on the part of the researcher and is essential in order to address and meaningfully elicit the needs and experiences of vulnerable populations. The research respected the respondent's right to informed consent, withdrawal, anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and voluntary participation (Appendix 3) (Canella & Lincoln, 2011; Thompson, 2008). All participants signed consent forms agreeing to the terms and conditions of their involvement in the research, including their right to anonymity and withdrawal. For the participants under the age of eighteen, their parents also signed their consent forms. Alias names were used when referring to the participants in the analysis, for confidentiality and anonymity reasons. For example, pseudonyms were used when referring directly to participants. Documenting evidence of children's access to and achievement in education has been identified as a priority of the international agenda for inclusive and equitable education, particularly for those children most at risk of exclusion (UNESCO, 2017). It is therefore essential that it be carried out in a way that protects and empowers children and young people.

The next section examines the specific methods used to elicit the research participants' educational narratives. It will focus in particular on the use of semi-structured interviews and visual methods as a means to depict experience, especially in research with children and young people. Methodological and ethical issues around this approach will be discussed, and how these have affected the research into the

educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand.

3. Interview method

> *"An alternative view of narrative as outside of research is explored that rethinks research not as a scientific act but as a spiritual act, one that honours the sacredness of our stories and humanity."*
>
> (Hendry, 2007, p. 487)

A series of semi-structured interviews were used to elicit the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand (Scott & Morrison, 2007). Semi-structured interviews, as opposed to structured or unstructured, were chosen because they were the most appropriate approach for the nature of the interviews and the age group (Bryman, 2012). Structured interviews would be too rigid and regimented and would not allow room for elaboration and exploration (Mears, 2013). They could also be intimidating for a young age group. Similarly, the age of the participants would make unstructured interviews difficult, because allowing for too much freedom could translate into a lack of direction and support for the young participants (Greene & Hill, 2005). Bek-Peterson and Montgomery (2006) explored this in their research with young refugees, where they highlighted how the participants were too

young to be able to express extensive stories but were old enough to elaborate on some experiences that they attached more meaning to. The interviewers therefore let them decide when they wanted to do this:

> *"The intention was to let the informants tell their life stories, but this turned out to be a difficult task. Telling the story of their lives was not something informants could relate to since, as they said, they had not lived long lives to tell a story about. The interviews therefore became dialogical. Nevertheless, the informants were, to a great extent, directing the interviews by limiting their answers to some questions and going into great detail with others. Even though the interviews were leaning on a pre- constructed interview guide, they were open enough to let the informants define and talk about the experiences of greatest importance to them."*
>
> (Bek-Peterson & Montgomery, 2006, p. 98)

I had been working as a volunteer teacher at a Saturday school for young refugees in this community for two years prior to carrying out the research, so was familiar with the participants, their parents and the community leaders. I consulted one of these leaders about carrying out the interviews, as a way of gaining his consent, informing him about the purpose of the research, and also showing my respect for his authority within the community. Since I was familiar to him and the participants, there was a trusting relationship already in place, which made it easier to appeal to young people and parents in the community to be involved in the research. The interviews also lasted substantially longer in this community than in others where I was less familiar, perhaps because the participants felt more comfortable sharing their experiences with someone they already knew. I carried out one interview per week in this community for three months, usually after I had finished teaching on a Saturday. This took place

between January to April in 2017. The interviews were held in the community leader's house, where several families were living, and which was also used as a school. I was invited to attend the local church that the refugees in this community were involved in on days when they held religious and cultural gatherings. Two Hmong-English interpreters assisted me with the interviews, both American whose parents had migrated to the United States as refugees from Laos after the secret war. One was a student in Thailand, and the other a missionary.

The Sri Lankan and Sudanese participants in the research also lived in the same area as the Viet-Hmong community. I carried out the interviews in their homes just once over the course of the three months I based the research in this area. A friend of mine who speaks Tamil and English assisted with the interviews with the Sri Lankan family. The mother of the Sudanese family assisted as an interpreter. In May 2017 I began to visit an informal school in an area where a Punjabi-speaking Pakistani community lived. I had met the father of the teacher of the school while visiting Bangkok Immigration Detention Centre. I visited this school three times in May and June 2017, teaching the students in the morning and carrying out a focus group interview in the afternoon. The teacher of the school assisted as a Punjabi-English interpreter. The interviews were carried out in the living room of the teacher and interpreter, which was also used for the school. From July to September 2017, I worked with an Urdu-English interpreter and visited two Pakistani communities in Bangkok to conduct interviews. One community

were Ahmadiyya Muslim and the other Christian. The interviews took place in the living spaces of each family, usually comprised of just one room.

It was only possible to visit the interview respondents in their homes and schools since freedom of movement for urban refugees in Bangkok is very restricted. The location did have implications for the research however in that parents and teachers were present for the interviews, thus affecting the nature of the participants' responses. Part of the subjective experience of ethnographically inspired research is the importance of context to the way that participants respond to interview questions, the voice they use and the way that the data is interpreted. The place that the research is carried out is important to consider. This can affect what a participant includes in their response and what they choose not to include (Patterson, 2013). For example, if interviews are carried out in a school, often children will associate the researcher with being a teacher and respond in a way that they think the teacher-researcher wants, or that they feel sounds good in an academic sense (Greene and Hill, 2005). If research is carried out in a person's home, they might feel more comfortable, but they may also respond in a way that they think the family would wish, or the community. The participant may not be aware of how the environment affects their response, nor the researcher (Eastmond, 2007). Although it was impossible to find a completely neutral venue for the interviews, I did need to consider the impact of the location on the participant's responses.

These communities were accessed through the gatekeepers who acted as leaders, teachers and interpreters for the communities. There are a number of other refugee communities scattered throughout Bangkok, but most of these are very difficult to access without a trusted relationship with one of these leaders. As mentioned previously, I was familiar to the leader of the Viet-Hmong community through serving as a teacher for the community; the second leader I met through visiting Bangkok Immigration Centre, bringing food for detainees; the third community leader I met through Bangkok Asylum Support Service, where he volunteered as an interpreter. I will discuss the implications of using gatekeepers and interpreters later in this chapter.

There was a biographical process to the interviews, involving an exploration of the participants' experiences in chronological order, starting with educational experiences in their country of origin, then onto subsequent educational experiences, and finishing with their last or most recent (Mills & Birks, 2014). This was followed by future aspirations, experiences of migration, and life outside of school. The main topics of inquiry focused on friendships, teachers, subjects, environment, school, home, community activities, family, support, migration, affective experiences of education, and aspirations (Appendix 1). These topics were included in order to give a richer account of the educational experience than just focusing on issues of access; an understanding of one's experience of issues concerning inclusion, equality and opportunity also emerged. By inquiring into the participant's educational experiences in their countries of origin, I was able to understand how these affected their perception of education in Bangkok; their

expectations, capabilities and aspirations of education, particularly for the older participants (RS2). In order to develop a more detailed and accurate picture of the participant's educational experiences in Bangkok (RS1), I needed to gain an insight into their everyday realities by asking why they liked certain teachers more than others, or certain subjects more than others; what activities they participated in and enjoyed; what helped them make friends at their school and what they did with these friends. These were also easier questions for children and young people to answer than ones focusing on curriculum accessibility and inclusive practices in the school. Suarez-Ortega (2012) refers to biographical data as 'biograms' of the participants: "Biograms are a more global, complex technique that makes it possible to establish people's life paths, highlighting the most relevant events or occurrences, their chronology, and the interviewee's interpretations or evaluations of these events." (p. 193) Cannon (2012) used biographical narrative to research the educational trajectory of a refugee in America, in order to understand more about his perceptions of learning English and adapting to different educational systems. The interviewees in the research for this thesis were also asked about their aspirations for the future so that I could elicit not just what these aspirations were, if indeed they had any; but, also, what the interviewees identified as short-term goals as opposed to long-term; how achievable they perceived these goals as being; and what support they felt they needed in achieving them.

Individual and focus group interviews were used, depending on what the interviewee preferred (Beazley et al., 2009). Both can have equal merit. Focus groups

can be helpful in that the participants are in a more social environment, so may end up expressing ideas that would not be elicited in an individual interview (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). The young people may be more comfortable and more open if they are not alone with the interviewer. Chilisa and Tsheko (2014) explore how group interviews can be more culturally appropriate in certain contexts: “Conversational methods such as talking circles, storying and yarning, derived from indigenous worldviews, are preferred over the typical interview methods because they reflect the ideal of equality among participants” (p. 223) MacKenzie, McDowell and Pittaway (2007) however, warn of the dangers of researchers being unaware of power structures and hierarchies that may exist in communities. These will affect group interviews in that some participants may feel less inclined to talk, or more inclined to agree with others. Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) describe this as the “me too” effect in which, “individuals follow the line of thinking expressed by more assertive and compelling personalities.” (p. 119) Holland, Renold, Ross and Hillman (2010) discuss how some children may only feel comfortable talking about certain feelings and experiences if they are alone. Most of the participants in the research for this thesis chose to conduct them alone. The main exception to this were the parents who preferred a focus group interview. Part of the reason for this was because some of them had only recently arrived in Bangkok from Vietnam, so found it easier to relate a group experience than an individual one when discussing their children’s experiences of education.

Butler-Kisber (2002) emphasises the role of trust between the interviewer and interviewee, especially where sensitive issues and experiences are being discussed. Hendry (2007) also explores how critical trust is in enabling the researcher to really listen to the storyteller and for the storyteller to gain value from the experience of telling their story. Through observations and experience working with one particular community involved in the research over an extended period of time, I was able to gain a richer understanding of the context and experiences of these participant's lives (Swain, 2003). This experience also facilitated a more trusting relationship with some of the participants that was important, especially with such a vulnerable group (Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, Robinson, 2010). The interview data was much longer and more in depth with the participants that I knew and had a relationship with, than with participants who I only met on the day that I interviewed them. For example, the average interview length with one of the Viet-Hmong participants who I had known for over a year as their teacher was twice as long as an interview with a Pakistani interviewee who I met on the day of the interview. Butler-Kisber (2010) discusses the importance of trust in narrative research: "Rich and detailed accounts of lived experience are highly dependent on trusting relationships developed between the researcher and participants. This necessitates a prolonged and sustained interaction. Also, it requires attention to reflexivity and a great deal of sensitivity exercised by the researcher." (p. 69)

After each visit to the communities, I recorded my observations and reflections from the day in a research journal. Some of these records have been incorporated into the

research analysis, but mainly to support data from the interviews, rather than as a primary source of data. For example, in one of the church gatherings of the Viet-Hmong community that I visited, I observed that several young members of the community had quite important roles in the church ceremony. This observation thus fed into the analysis in a discussion of the importance of religion in many of the research participants' lives, and their capacity to take on leadership positions in their communities. This was then supported by subsequent interview data. It was impossible to be completely objective in the research, especially since I was a part of the people's lives who I was researching. Learning about their experiences often provoked an emotional response, which was important to be aware of and reflect on throughout the research process. Many qualitative researchers keep a diary for this reason, and these diaries can feed into the analysis and form part of the data (Swain, 2003). My research journal served a similar purpose and helped me to reflect and process the challenging experiences I listened to in the interviews and observed while visiting the communities.

4. Arts-Based Methods

> *"Visual narrative as we have chosen to name our method, enables the researcher to work in a number of ways. Images can be collected from both historical and everyday contexts – from video, digital photographs, multimedia improvisations – and they also can be threaded with other data sources such as interviews and focus*

groups. The participants can also be directly involved in the collection and elicitation of the visual sources."

(Moss, Deppeler, Astley & Pattison, 2007, p. 51)

This section will explore how arts-based methods were used to elicit the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees living in Bangkok, Thailand. I will discuss two arts-based methods that were used in the research for the purpose of this thesis, the first of which was a digital poetry project and the second a visual narrative story-board project.

Emert (2013) conducted what he called a 'Transpoemations project' to investigate the educational experiences of refugee boys in a school in The United States. This project combined methods of interviewing, including peer interviews, journaling, story boarding and making 'digital stories.' These are described as: "the art of combining personal narrative texts with media such as images and sound." (p. 364) This project was an action research project that aimed to help the educators involved to understand the participants' school experiences more, while also helping to improve their language, literacy and communication skills through a range of interactive multimodal activities. The students involved also worked collaboratively together, made friends and benefitted from increased confidence and social skills.

I found this idea very inspirational and it led me to do my own investigation into other projects similar to 'transpoemations', some of which were used for educational

purposes, and others for research purposes. What I particularly like about this approach is that it can be used for both and is a way of connecting with the digital literacies of young people and engaging these skills. Through my investigation, I found a poem called 'Where I'm from,' by George Ella Lyon (1999), an American poet. This poem is about all the experiences, people, places, feelings and memories that make us who we are, some mundane and some critical. Students, mainly in the United States, have adapted this poem to their own journey, and added photographs, drawings, images and music to create a visual depiction of the poem. Schratz-Hadwich, Walker and Egg (2004) refer to this process as 'digital ethnography'. This poem seemed like a creative and simple way to give a more personal account of the participants' lives, loves, memories, hopes and dreams, all the aspects that comprise our identity (Tedlock, 2011; Szto, Furman and Langer, 2005). It was an appropriate theme to use with young people who are displaced, since often the country that you are 'from' is not necessarily the place that you identify as home (Fassetta, 2014). Lastly, it was a culturally relevant method to use with the sample group since many of the participants come from a tradition of oral storytelling and poetry. Fadiman (1997) describes how, 'In Laos, a Hmong man was said to value two qualities most highly in a wife: her ability to sing poetry and her skill at *paj nataub* (embroidery).' (p. 102)

One of the most unique characteristics of the young refugees that are the participants in this research is their multilingualism. They will often switch between several different languages in a conversation and express themselves in different ways.

I wanted to find a way to help them convey this aspect of their identities in a creative and educational way, but one that was not too complex and could be easily adapted to different language abilities (Raffaelli, Koller, Reppold, Kuschick, Krum and Bandeira, 2001). Many of the young people also use social media on a regular basis so personalising their poem with digital images seemed like it would engage the young people in a medium that was relevant to their everyday lives (Young and Barrett, 2001). It would also provide an opportunity for young people to convey their story through images that they could create themselves (Kendrick and McKay, 2004), or images that they could photograph or download from the Internet. With the participant's consent, these poems have been showcased at conferences, and through refugee support networks in Thailand and internationally, as a way of raising awareness about young refugees' lives, aspirations and identities. It is important for people to understand the human face behind refugee politics in order to address the stigma, fear and sense of otherness that often accompanies the refugee experience, and people's attitudes towards refugees (Kelley, 2006). Butler-Kisber (2010) describes the emotive power of poetic inquiry, giving a more human face to academic research: "Qualitative poetic inquiry brings the image to life and provides the reader/listener with a sensory and embodied experience. Another is emotion. Descriptions, memories and experiences that evoke emotion contribute to the aesthetic quality of poems." (p. 97)

Visual narrative complements a rights-based, capabilities approach to educational research (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007) because it provides young people with an

alternative platform to express themselves, rather than relying completely on verbal data. It can help a young person explore and express their feelings and identities in a creative way. Clark (1999) discusses how verbal interviews can be challenging for children: “Young children seldom share information among themselves strictly through question and answer sessions. This places a strict question-and-answer interview outside their sociolinguistic repertoire.” (p. 40) Thompson (2008) calls on article twelve in the UNCRC (1989) to explain why it is so important to explore ways to give young people a voice: “Government and nations shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.” (p. 2) Leitch (2008) discusses the enabling young voices project and identified that one of the key issues to emerge from the study was that young people want more of a say in decisions that affect them. Visual data was used in this study to help the young participants express their views. Producing data visually can also give the research participant more control over what they want included in the research, and how they want to be represented. Green and Kloos (2009) used photo-voice to investigate protection problems experienced by young refugees in Northern Uganda. Although many of the images taken by the participants were ones of hardship, many were also intended to capture the positive aspects of their lives, sources of strength and resilience which they also wanted to convey. “We must pursue a research agenda that seeks to understand and describe important challenges while also taking a resilience and empowerment-oriented outlook in order to transcend the inherently

limited view of pathology." (p. 478) Clark (1999) discusses this aspect in her research with children with chronic illness:

> *"Children with chronic illness are wounded story-tellers also, although, like adults, they may sometimes want to forget or deny the harshest aspects of their illness experiences rather than tell about it. In interviewing children, I felt it was important to give them a chance to tell their own stories at their own pace, at a rate and depth of disclosure they controlled. For ethical reasons, I did not want to directly pursue issues of fear or pain unless such subjects were initiated by the child."*
>
> (Clark, 1999, p. 43)

In a similar way, the 'Where I'm From' digital poetry project provided a platform for the participants to control what aspects of their lives they wanted to explore and share, due to the open and undirected nature of the prompts. Interestingly, none of the participants mentioned the word 'refugee' in their poems; only one participant referred to their ethnic background, though quite a few included images of themselves in their ethnic dress.

The 'Where I'm From' digital poetry project took place over six days, spread out over a two week period in April, 2017, when children and young people were on school summer holiday. I chose this time to accommodate the availability of the participants. The project took place in a community house in an area of Bangkok with a high concentration of urban refugees, where they also have a Saturday school and host community activities. The ten participants were shown examples of digital poems made by young people around the world and given a template of the poem for them to start recording ideas (Appendix 2). Once they had written their poems, the participants began choosing images that they would put with the poem. Some chose to draw

images, while others downloaded them from the internet; some also brought in photographs and pictures from home or chose to use the disposable cameras provided as part of the project to take new photographs that would complement their poems, such as images of nature or places in their community, for example their local church. Last they chose music to go with their poems in the background. Each participant then put the images together, using an iMovie programme on my iPad, and narrated their poem. Common themes that emerged from the poems responded to certain elements of the research questions guiding this thesis: 'What are the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand?' (RS1) Most of the young people involved in the project included photos of their schools, particularly of friends and teachers that they liked, or special events such as awards ceremonies or sports days. These highlighted the more positive aspects of their educational experiences, either in Bangkok or in their countries of origin. The participants also included their aspirations in their poems, whether to do with specific career ambitions, or more general such as wanting to help their families. 'How do young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand, perceive the educational services and opportunities that are available to them, and the factors affecting their accessibility and effectiveness?' (RS2) Many of the participants referred to community education activities they are involved in, such as Courageous Kitchen which runs the Saturday school where they learn English and learn to cook, and the church where they take music lessons, attend Sunday school and take part in other community and religious activities. These themes complemented the interview data that informed this thesis by offering a more visual

response to the research questions. The themes did not feed into the interviews themselves, as most of the participants had already completed their interviews prior to the poetry project. Others chose only to participate in the poetry project, and not do an interview. An example of a ‘Where I’m From’ digital poem is provided in Appendix 5.

In addition to the 'Where I'm from' digital poetry project, twelve of the research participants participated in an arts-based project called 'Shift Maps'. We worked with artist Varsha Nair and an organisation called SEA Junction, based at Bangkok Art and Culture Museum (BACC) in September 2017, during a school holiday period in Thailand. This was therefore a separate project to my research but complimented my aims in terms of helping to engage refugees in community and educational activities and giving them a creative platform to express their experiences and raise awareness about issues facing urban refugees in Bangkok. The participants documented their experiences, both visually and verbally, first on paper, then on dried palm leaves from the Talipot tree. These palm leaves are a traditional form of paper used throughout Southeast Asia. The participants were encouraged to depict whatever aspect of their life trajectories they wished to share, such as places they have lived, people they have known, important memories and experiences they wished to share. Although the images did not necessarily respond to the research questions guiding this thesis, as I did not want to direct their work too much, some of them have helped to inform the data analysis. For example, in examining the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand (RS1), some of the

participants in the Shift Maps Project shared memories from school in Bangkok or their countries of origin where they had won awards or competitions; others wrote about their favourite subjects at school or just shared an image of walking to school accompanied by a simple explanation of how much they liked going to school. Some of the participants shared their aspirations on their palm leaves, such as wanting to be a lawyer, run an orphanage, or help other people. The project was inter-generational in order to capture a wider range of experiences and involved migrants from a variety of different cultures and backgrounds. The Talipot palm tree however is a plant common to many of these different countries and backgrounds, so the project aimed to also show the shared identities that many of these migrants have. One key element of the project was the freedom the participants had to share and explore aspects of their journey that they chose. They also chose the way that they would like to share these, for example through writing, drawing, poetry or even speaking. An example of the 'Shift Maps' Project poster is provided in Appendix 6.

5. Methods Overview

The following section will provide a sequence of the data collection process, including the multiple methods used, the timeline, and the number and population of the participants involved in each data collection method.

Type of data collection method	Dates of data collection method	Population involved in data collection method	Number of participants included in data collection method
Semi-structured focus group and individual interviews	January 2017 – April 2017	Vietnamese ethnic Hmong, Sri Lankan Tamil and Sudanese	29
Digital Poetry arts-based project	April 2017	Vietnamese ethnic Hmong, Sri Lankan Tamil	10
Semi-structured individual and focus group professional interviews	May 2017	Professionals working with organisations supporting refugees	3

Semi-structured focus group and individual interviews	May 2017 – September 2017	Pakistani Christian, Pakistani Ahmadiyyah Muslim, Iraqi, Somali	21
Shift Maps arts-based project	September 2017 - October 2017	Pakistani Christian, Vietnamese ethnic Hmong, Sri Lankan Tamil	12

6. Language and Interpreters

"Language is an important part of conceptualization, incorporating values and beliefs, not just a tool or technical label for conveying concepts. It carries accumulated and particular cultural, social and political meanings that cannot simply be read of through the process of translation, and organises and prepares the experience of its speakers. It speaks of a particular social reality that may not necessarily have a conceptual equivalence in the language in which it is to be translated."

(Temple and Edwards, 2002, p. 5)

This section will explore the issues surrounding conducting research in multilingual contexts, as the research for this thesis involved participants from a variety of different language backgrounds. I will also discuss the involvement of interpreters in the research, and some of the experiences that accompanied this involvement. Interpreters assisted with the interviews, even if the participant preferred to speak in English, so that interviewees were better able to ask questions and elaborate on certain ideas, experiences and feelings (Edwards, 1998). In addition, the presence of an interpreter can help to balance out power inequalities that might exist between the participant and researcher (Fassetta, 2014). An interpreter was also necessary to explain the research to the respondent, and obtain informed consent based on their right to withdrawal, anonymity and confidentiality (Cocks, 2006). MacKenzie et al. (2007) explain how they regard ethical consent as a, "process of negotiation, which aims to develop a shared understanding of what is involved at all stages of the research process." (p. 307) There are issues concerned when working with interpreters, which have been discussed previously and will be addressed again. It is difficult to completely eradicate these issues, but it is important to try to minimise them and be aware of how they may affect the research. One method used to minimise the risk of misinterpretation was to ask secondary interpreters to listen to some of the interviews and give feedback (see Appendix 4). These provided some very useful insights into the credibility of the interpretations. One in particular revealed how some of the questions and comments

during the interviews were misrepresented to the interviewees. This will be discussed further in this thesis.

One cannot deny the impact of language on the way that people's stories, attitudes, experiences, perspectives and feelings are communicated (Mears, 2013). Although using visual data can alleviate a reliance on verbal data, visual data is still communicated and interpreted through a language, even if the medium is photography or drawing (Prosser, 1998). Communication is not just carried out through the actual process of speaking, but also through body language, facial expressions, 'symbolic language' that can be a lot more difficult to transcribe and understand (Squire, 2013). Often silence can be more powerful than words and the meaning of silence can be interpreted in many different ways (Abebe & Bessell, 2014). Interpreters can help to alleviate more direct language barriers but are not necessarily able to convey all the diverse symbolic meanings behind communication; thus, there will always be the inevitable result of important, sometimes even crucial, information being 'lost in translation' (Shah, 2004). Mandal (2018) explains how it is more realistic for interpreters to aim for 'conceptual equivalence' when translating language, rather than a more detailed 'lexical equivalence'. Synthesising ideas into concepts however can be quite a complicated process, and some meaning may be lost or misunderstood. Even if the interpreters in this thesis research did try to convey all the different meanings, they would inevitably be an interpretation, shaped by their understanding of the language and the participants, and by their own experiences and subjectivities (Edwards, 1998).

Andrews (2013) discusses how interpreters need to be identified as a more transparent part of the research process, rather than being regarded as invisible conveyers of language only. Language can never be neutral, and it is therefore essential that the role of interpreters as conveyers of meaning as well as language is made explicit in the research and subsequent analysis (Martin-Jones, Andrews and Martin, 2017). This should form part of the reflexive process that is a key aspect of carrying out research in a rigorous and accountable way (Temple and Edwards, 2006, p. 45):

> *"Like researchers, interpreters bring their own assumptions and concerns to the interview and the research process. The research thus becomes subject to 'triple subjectivity (the interactions between research participant, researcher and interpreter) and this needs to be made explicit. Rigorous reflexivity in research where researchers are working with interpreters requires an exploration of the social location of the interpreter."*

Seven interpreters were involved in this thesis study, representing a variety of languages and backgrounds. Two interpreters assisted with the interviews with the Vietnamese Hmong participants. These assisted in separate interviews, depending on their availability. Both interpreters were second generation Hmong American, being the daughters of Hmong refugees from Laos who had gone to the United States as a result of the secret war fought in Laos by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). One interpreter was studying at a university in Bangkok and volunteering for a charity that supported refugees, mainly from the Vietnamese Hmong community. The other was in Bangkok as a Mormon missionary and was also volunteering with refugees, although not specifically the Vietnamese Hmong. I explained the purpose of the research to each interpreter thoroughly and they were present for all the interviews with the Hmong

participants, except for one who asked to conduct his interview without an interpreter. One also helped translate some of the data from the Shift Maps project, though neither were present for the "Where I'm From" poetry project. The student accepted payment (one thousand Thai Baht per hour), whereas the missionary did not, saying that she wanted to do it as part of her mission in Thailand, so she could not accept payment. This mission concerned me to a certain extent, in relation to the objectivity of this interpreter, and what she was hoping to achieve through assisting with the interviews. I explained that it would not be appropriate for the interviews to be used as an opportunity to promote her religion, and she accepted this. After seeing her giving a card with information about her church in Bangkok to one of the interviewees however, I chose to involve only the other interpreter, the student who apparently had less of an agenda.

A Tamil speaking woman from Southern India assisted with the interview with the Sri Lankan Tamil participants. This person was a friend of mine, working in Bangkok as a university lecturer. She was familiar with the aims of the research through numerous conversations with me about it. She was also familiar with the participants through volunteering with an educational charity that three of the participants were involved in, and a women's arts project that one of the participants was involved in. She was very much trusted by these participants and was helping them to write their second appeal to the UNHCR. Her role as interpreter may have impacted their responses therefore, in that they were mindful of this and partially presenting their case as well as responding to

the interview questions. This has been highlighted as an issue in research with refugees in that interviews can be perceived as opportunities for case construction and defense, even if the research purpose is far removed from this objective (Mestheneos, 2006). This possible agenda was taken into account in the analysis, and discussed with the interpreter, but the responses were still very relevant to the objectives of the research.

The mother of the Sudanese family served as their Arabic – English interpreter. While the children did answer some questions directed at them, the mother tended to mainly speak for them, answering questions without consulting them first. I tried several times to shift the focus to the children, but they were very shy and seemed more comfortable letting their mother speak for them. While this was not ideal, I did not feel comfortable intervening too much in this process and saw it as an opportunity to document the views and experiences of the mother as well as the children, particularly in regards to her experience of helping her children to access the local Thai school, and her subsequent perceptions of and communications with the school. The other Arabic-English interpreter who assisted with an interview with an Iraqi family was recruited through a health event attended by refugees, where she was volunteering as an interpreter. She was also a refugee from Iraq and introduced me to the family. She was paid one thousand Thai Baht an hour. The father of the family also tried to act as an interpreter which presented a complicated situation, since I wanted the more objective interpreter to fulfill her role but did not want to offend the father by making this explicit. She also identified this as an issue, so we met up two weeks later to go over the

interview recording together so she could give her interpretation of how the children responded to my questions without interruption from the father.

Two interpreters assisted with the interviews with the Pakistani participants. One was Punjabi speaking and the other Urdu. I will discuss first the Punjabi-English interpreter. I met his father at the Bangkok Immigration Detention Centre, where I was visiting a detainee. The father invited me to visit his son's school, which he had set up for children and young people in his community who were not accessing any other educational services. I visited this school three times, teaching in the morning then carrying out interviews in the afternoon. The interpreter was paid one thousand baht per hour. This interpreter was very well respected and appreciated in his community for setting up the school, but I was aware that his position as teacher and community leader would affect the nature of the interviewee's responses, particularly when asked about their experience of the school where they were presently studying. As a result of this, I focused more on their educational experiences leading up to their present situation.

The last interpreter who assisted me with interviews was an Urdu-English interpreter. This man was a teacher and human rights activist in Pakistan and was also very involved in the Pakistani Christian refugee community in Bangkok. He worked as an interpreter for Bangkok Asylum Support Service, which is how I met him. Out of all

the interpreters I worked with, this became the most like a 'key informant', described by Temple and Edwards (2002, p. 12) in their research:

> *"The reflexive model RE developed for working with interpreters treated them as a form of 'key informant'. Key informants have been written about and utilised in qualitative research in varying ways, notably with researchers relying on professional and/or lay informants to provide a source of introduction to, information and discussion on the social world under investigation."*

This may have been as a result of meeting this interpreter after I had been carrying out interviews for a few months so was more experienced, aware of certain issues that may emerge, and able to discuss these with the interpreter more easily. It may have also been due to the fact that I was depending on this interpreter to introduce me to the communities I would be interviewing, so he served as a gate-keeper as well as an interpreter in this regard (Mestheneos, 2006). Some of these communities took a long time to travel to which gave the interpreter and I plenty of time to get to know each other, exchange ideas about the research, and reflect on the interviews together.

Although interpreters played a significant role in helping me to access certain key communities for the research; discuss and reflect on interviewees and their responses; and inform me about the backgrounds of the communities and any issues I should be aware of, none of the interpreters served as 'coresearchers' (Andrews, 2013) in the sense that they also assisted in the analysis of the data. The Urdu-English interpreter assisted partly in research dissemination, presenting the research with me at events such as Refugee Week 2018. For the purpose of a doctoral thesis however, I did not feel it was appropriate to engage interpreters in the analysis process. This would

however be a worthwhile exercise to do in future research of this kind but would need to involve a great deal of training and has been a useful tool in participatory research approaches engaging community researchers (Moran, Mohamed and Lovel, 2006).

In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss the method used to analyse the interview, shift maps, and poetry data.

6. Analysis

> "*The Hmong have a phrase, hais cuaj kaum txub, which means 'to speak of all things'. It is often used at the beginning of an oral narrative as a way of reminding the listeners that the world is full of things that may not seem to be connected but actually are; that no event occurs in isolation; that you can miss a lot by sticking to the point; and that the storyteller is likely to be rather long-winded."*
>
> (Fadiman, 1997, p. 13)

An applied thematic approach was used for the analysis of the data formed through the interviews, digital poems and shift maps (Bryman, 2016). Themes emerged through an inductive process rather than a deductive one (Saldana, 2016). "This approach, stemming from a more hermeneutic tradition, is most interested in interpreting deeper meaning in discourse and understanding multiple realities that are represented in a

collection of personal narratives or observed behaviours and attitudes." (Guest et al., 2012, p. 14). The interviews were transcribed verbatim from audio recordings. Where appropriate, notes were added recording tone of voice, long pauses or interruptions (Esin, Fathi and Squire, 2014). I started the data analysis process by open coding (Scott & Morrison, 2007), identifying factual and thematic categories in the data, such as the type of school the participants attend, or the ethnic group to which they belong (Kuckartz, 2004). I then moved on to deeper and more selective coding, where the themes and sub-themes became more evaluative and generated by the data such as sense of loss and gain, agency, isolation, peer support, and family dissonance (Charmaz, 2014). Maxwell and Chmiel (2014) refer to the former as 'organisational categories' and the latter as 'substantive categories', where themes start to become more abstract. In constructing themes, I looked for key words in context; co-occurrences in the data, for example if males and females had similar experiences; and conducted comparative analysis, such as identifying themes across different ethnic groups involved in the research (Guest et al., 2012). I included and analysed deviant cases and identified representative cases of each theme to present, including in vivo codes derived directly from the data (Bryman, 2016). Barbour (2014) refers to the significance of including deviant cases in analysis and how identifying these exceptions requires careful review of the data and the results drawn from it. In the research for this thesis, deviant cases were primarily those young refugees who were able to attend Thai secondary school. Until meeting these two participants, secondary education was identified as being inaccessible to refugees. They offered a new perspective of the

situation that required a reanalysis of the theme around access to Thai school. Due to the low numbers representing this deviant case however, it was not substantial enough to significantly alter the theme. Saldana (2016, p. 106) discusses how in vivo codes can help to give marginalised populations a voice and is therefore a relevant method to use in research that has that as an aim:

> *"In vivo coding is particularly useful in educational ethnographies with youth. The child and adolescent voices are often marginalized and coding with their actual words enhances and deepens an adult's understanding of their cultures and worldviews."*

I began to identify and separate the main themes I wanted to focus on and colour coded areas in the transcriptions which supported these themes. Next, I copied and pasted the different areas into separate sections for each theme, so that I could read through these and identify sub-themes. Roulston (2014) discusses the iterative nature of thematic analysis, explaining how, rather than being a linear process, the researcher reads through the data, reflects, identifies themes, writes, rereads the data, identifies sub-themes, records these new themes, and so on. Each time I read through the separated transcripts I kept notes and recorded ideas onto memos.

> *"Memo writing can be thought of as writing interpretive notes or journaling one's impressions of the data as they emerge. It is a process that takes place during both data collection and analysis. Memo writing documents your analytic ideas and facilitates the move from more superficial understanding of the data to a more textured and meaningful understanding."*
>
> (Liebenberg, Didkowsky & Ungar, 2012, p. 60)

I colour coded the sub-themes in each section and began writing up the analysis from the themes and memos.

The analysis was carried out manually, rather than using a CAQDAS programme. I felt this was the most appropriate method to use with my particular research because it helped me get closer to the data and give the time to the narratives that I thought they deserved. Because of the longitudinal nature of the research process, I also had the time to spend listening and rereading, so that I could identify themes that I was not able to perceive at first. I feared that using analysis software to categorise themes and record memos would decontextualize the data (Bryman, 2016). An analysis software programme would have been useful if I had a shorter timescale to work with, but this was not a challenge affecting this particular research project. I also felt that spending the time choosing the right analysis software and trying to understand how it works would distract me from the actual analysis itself. Saldana (2016, p. 29) refers to the problematic nature of CAQDAS software for first time researchers:

> *"Trying to learn the basics of coding and qualitative data analysis simultaneously with the sometimes complex instructions and multiple functions of CAQDAS programs can be overwhelming for some, if not most, researchers. Your mental energies may be more focused on the software than the data."*

Gibbs (2014) explores how the use of CAQDAS software has come to dominate analysis practice. Although I am sure it is a useful tool, especially when carrying out team research, for the reasons explained above, I preferred to use a more traditional data analysis approach. Smith (2010) also chose to manually code her data in her doctoral research into the identity issues of academics on probationary period at UK

higher education institutions. Loots, Coppens and Sermijn (2013) discuss the 'listening guide method' to narrative analysis, where they also used a manual coding process.

The same process of thematic analysis was applied to the shift maps and digital poetry data, although in this case visual images also formed part of data. Themes were identified through comparing the data produced by different participants and observing their similarities and differences (Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014). Thornburg and Charmaz (2014) refer to this as the 'constant comparative method'. For example, a common theme that emerged strongly from the shift maps was a sense of loss, expressed through memories of the participant's lives in their previous countries in comparison to their lives in Bangkok. One participant created a visual map of his life in Pakistan, his journey to Bangkok and his life in Bangkok. He depicted his home in Pakistan as being spacious and pleasant, in comparison to his home in Bangkok as being small and overcrowded. Another participant wrote an account of her school days in Sri Lanka where she was an elected leader and a top achiever and compared her previous situation to her current circumstances where she was unable to attend school at all. A common theme to emerge from the digital poetry data was the importance of religion in the participant's lives. This was indicated by a significant number of references, both visually and verbally, to the church or temple.

The following table presents an example of an interview transcript in which I interview a young Tamil woman from Sri Lanka about her educational experiences in

Sri Lanka, before she and her family moved to Bangkok. The interview was recorded and transcribed by the researcher after the interview took place. The interview took place in English and Tamil with the assistance of an English-Tamil interpreter. The left column is a copy of the transcript and the right column shows examples of the thematic codes which were identified during the transcript analysis (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014):

Transcript *Re – Rebecca – Interviewer* *Ra – Rajalakshmi – Interpreter* *Sa – Sadeera – Interviewee*	**Thematic Codes**
Re – okay, thank you. Jana, did you go to school in Sri Lanka? Sa – *nods* Re – and what kind of school was it, primary, secondary, government, private school? Sa – government school, my school have grade 1 to 13. Re – okay and how long did you attend this school for? How long did you go to school in Sri Lanka for? *Tamil* Ra – 12 years, 13 years Re – okay and when you left school in Sri Lanka, how old were you? *Tamil* Sa – 18 Re – 18? And what year group were you in when you left? Sa – 12 Re – so had you finished? Sa – yeah, 12 complete, 13 six months Re – so you had completed your school?	*Substantive educational background in country of origin.*

Ra – she finished the twelfth year and thirteenth year, she was six months into the thirteenth year, she left Re – oh okay, and how did you feel about leaving your school? *Tamil* Sa – very sad Re – and why were you sad? Sa – miss my friends and teachers and my school really like *Tamil* Ra – she liked her school very much Re – and did you leave with a qualification? Like a high school diploma or…? *Tamil* Sa – no Re – if you had stayed, if you had finished year 13, would you have a qualification? *Tamil* Sa – 13 then after university *Tamil* Ra – so when they finish the thirteenth year, depending on their marks, they go either to the university or they go to a college, so they don't actually get a qualification after 13, they just get like a high school finishing, but they have to sit an exam and if they get lower grade they go to a college *Tamil* Ra- so basically, they sit an exam after 11th grade and then when they go to 12 and 13, they sit another exam and depending on their marks, they either go to like vocational colleges or they go to university Re – so if you had stayed in Sri Lanka, would you have taken this exam to go to university? *Tamil* Ra – yes Re – so are there problems at all with Tamil people going to college or university? *Tamil* Ra – yes, if Sinhilese score just 35% they can go to university but for Tamils they have to score 85% to go to university	*Left school very close to completion; unable to attain leaving qualifications.* *Sense of loss* *Aspirations for further/higher education* *Institutional discrimination towards Tamil experienced through educational*

Tamil Re – and how does the government justify or explain this, do they just say what you have to do, or do they explain why, do they give a reason? *Tamil* Ra – the president is Sinhilese and so the government came up with this rule and basically they have to follow and that's it, they weren't given a particular reason but she said that this kind of discrimination, well she didn't use the term discrimination, she said this kind of rule has been there forever, that it's become the norm and that's how it is and nobody really questions it anymore Re – and what do you think, would anything happen if you did question it or complain about it, would that be a problem for you do you think? *Tamil* Ra – apparently there's no point in complaining because that's the rule and either you get in trouble with the police because you're complaining too much or they will just ask you to wait and apply and see what happens but nothing really happens because they just sort or bureaucratically they just deal with the whole thing and people who have money, Tamils who have money, they just pay for the university and they just go, they get a degree anyway, but people that don't have any money, they just give up and go for a lower labour intensive jobs so nobody really complains because they know what the situation is Re – what about with jobs? So if you do go to college or university, do you feel like um you can get a job as easily as a Sinhilese? *Tamil* Ra – the job opportunities are limited for Tamils and even if you do get a job you're always working under a Sinhilese boss, like going up the ladder with an organization is	*access and opportunities for higher education.* *Discrimination towards Tamil by the Sinhilese majority and the subsequent lack of voice experienced by the Tamil.* *Lack of equality experienced by Tamils and lived through education and access to employment.*

still difficult, it's hard to go into managerial positions Re – and so were you at a Tamil school, a school just for Tamil students? *Tamil* Ra – Tamil medium schools Re – and do you think that the Tamil schools got as many resources, were they the same as Sinhilese schools or do you feel like they were different from Sinhilese schools? *Tamil* Ra – yes, Sinhilese schools had more facilities and more support from the resources from the government. Were you specifically asking about government support or in general? Re – kind of in general, well government support and in general I guess *Tamil* Ra – yeah Sinhilese schools had more resources than Tamil schools. I am asking follow-up questions sometimes because it's just helpful to explain it Re – yeah yeah that's fine, yeah yeah no problem *Tamil* Re – okay so what language did you use at school Jana? Sa – Tamil Re – and what other languages did you learn? Sa – English Re – and what subjects did you learn? Sa – Tamil, geography and logic Re – and what subjects did you like? Sa – Tamil and logic Re – and why did you like those? Sa – Tamil is my language so I like Tamil and my ambition lawyer so logic Re – and what subjects were you good at? Sa – Tamil and logic Re – and why do you think you were good at those? *Tamil* Sa – I like Tamil and logic so	*Inequality in access to resources and quality education experiences by Tamils in Sri Lanka.* *Aspiration to be a lawyer*

Re – yeah yeah, and what other activities did you do at school? Sa – painting and sports, music Re – and dance, did you say? Sa – no Re – and what activities did you like doing? Sa – drawing Re – why did you like this? Sa – I like drawing Re – sometimes, uh, you don't have to have a good reason for everything, but sometimes it might be because you like the room or the teacher or something so that's why I ask why. And what teachers did you like at your school? Sa – teacher [unclear] Ra – do you need the name? Re – no probably not *Tamil* Re – and why did you like this teacher? *Tamil* Ra – she was a very good teacher, she taught really well, and she clarified her doubts and, yeah she was all in all a very good teacher [unclear] conversation Re – and were there any teachers that you didn't like so much? Sa – no Re – and did you like your school? Sa – yes Re – did you feel like you were treated well at your school? *Tamil* Re – and um do you miss it at all now? *Tamil* Ra – she said yes, she misses her school but she kind of gave a response to your next question as to why, she misses her friends, she used to be a school prefect, and that she was in a group, there used to be a religious faith based group in her school and she was the leader for it and they also had a sort of secret group that looked after any kind of disciplinary issues that the kids had and she	*Sense of pride associated with her previous educational experience and sense of loss associated with having to leave it before completion.*

was part of it and the existence of this group was very secretive and only the principal and police knew about it, not even the teachers, and she was in this group and to leave all of that and leave the place was very difficult Re – yeah, okay, and you said you went to a mixed school, boys and girls, do you feel that girls were given an equal, were treated equally to the boys at your school? Sa – yes Re – do you feel like with college and university, that girls have an equal chance of going to university *Tamil* Ra – yes, she said yes, as long as you get the required marks, anybody can	*Sense of equality experienced within school despite discrimination experienced in wider society towards Tamil.*

7. Trustworthiness of the research

This section will analyse the trustworthiness of the research, using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four tenets of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to assess the quality and rigour of the research approach, and the validity of the findings in relation to it. First, I will discuss credibility: *'How can one establish confidence in the "truth" of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?'* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 290) Stahl and King (2020) refer to environmental triangulation as 'using more than one situation or context to study the intended focus' (p. 27). The research carried out for the purposes of this thesis involved three key national and ethnic groups, Pakistani, Sri Lankan Tamil and Vietnamese Hmong, to represent the urban refugee population in Bangkok. The research was also carried out in five key areas of Bangkok, each with a community of refugees, but very spread out from each other. The purpose of this was to ensure that the findings did not only reflect the perspectives of young refugees in one particular context, since this could have a significant impact on some of the issues under investigation. By covering a more diverse area and demographic, the data included a wider range of experiences, thus more representative of the young urban refugee population in Bangkok, Thailand.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to carrying out 'prior ethnography' of a research setting as being important to academic rigour since it allows for the researcher to develop familiarity with the context, and an understanding of the culture and

community under investigation. Although I was an immigrant to Thailand whilst carrying out the research, I had been living in Bangkok for five years prior to starting and had been volunteering as a teacher for one of the key communities involved in the research for two years. This entailed visiting the community every other Saturday which helped me to develop an understanding of their culture and become familiar to the participants prior to starting the interviews. Rose and Johnson (2020) discuss the importance of 'prolonged engagement' with participants while conducting research, in order to develop familiarity and mutual understanding. I was able to do this with three of the communities involved in the research. The first was with the community referred to already, which included Vietnamese Hmong, Sri Lankan Tamil and Sudanese participants. I also visited a Punjabi speaking Pakistani Christian community over a period of two months, teaching the young refugees at their community school in the mornings and interviewing them in the afternoon. The third community were Urdu speaking Pakistani Christians who I visited over a period of three months, to interview them and help their community leader set up a small community school for them.

Through prior ethnography and prolonged engagement with three of the communities involved in the research, I was able to develop a certain degree of trust with the participants in these communities. Although I am unable to claim to what level this extended, since trust is a very subjective concept, the interviews carried out in these communities were significantly longer than interviews carried out in

communities that I only visited for a day. The young interviewees opened up more about their views and experiences, quite understandably so. They may have also felt that there was more reciprocity in my engagement with them, since I was there as a teacher as well as a researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the psychological need-based theory of trust: 'trust is built only in those cases in which respondents can see the inquiry as fulfilling some personal need.' (p. 256) My role as a teacher may have influenced a greater sense of trust in the participants, enough for them to respond to certain questions in greater depth than with participants to whom I was unfamiliar and who may have not understood or were skeptical of my agenda. This is an understandable reaction since some of the interview questions were quite personal and, due to the illegal status of refugees in Thailand, and the situations they have had to flee from, respondents are quite right in their hesitancy to reveal certain experiences and perspectives. My use of informants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) who were trusted members of the communities may have also assisted the process of trust in certain communities, particularly those where I was unfamiliar. Indeed, without the presence of these informants, accessing the interviewees and obtaining consent may have been impossible. Working closely with informants to initiate certain projects and activities within the communities also helped to give the research a level of 'catalytic authenticity'. Mertens (2014) describes this as when 'stakeholders view the results as having meaning for them and that they are presented in such a way that it engenders taking action to improve equity and justice in their lives or communities.' (p. 510) One example of this was a small informal school that I set up with a

community leader who was a former teacher in Pakistan. The school was resourced with materials and textbooks from the organisation I worked with in Bangkok at the time, and space rental was obtained through sponsorship and donations. This school was set up in response to a need identified through the research.

Next, I will discuss the transferability of the research: *'How can one determine the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (respondents)?'* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 290) Maxwell and Chmiel (2014) discuss the importance of the researcher making the details of the research context explicit so that readers can decide whether the findings would be applicable to a similar context. Without these detailed descriptions, it is unrealistic to assume that the findings would resonate adequately. Whereas some of the perspectives voiced by the participants in this research are quite personal, the findings could be transferred to a context with a similar socio-political, legal and educational framework as Thailand. This would need to be a context that granted certain educational rights to young refugees through national and international policies such as the UNCRC and Education for All. However, it would also need to mirror the conflict in Thailand between these policies and the illegal status of refugees, thus preventing many young refugees from accessing education due to the constant threat of detention; limited funds and resources due to barriers to work; and discriminatory attitudes from host communities and educational institutions. The illegal status of refugees in Thailand also means that they are unable to settle and therefore

see it as a transit country, demotivating them from learning Thai language and gaining Thai qualifications that would be meaningless outside of Thailand. Despite these conditions however, refugees end up in extended exile in Thailand for protracted periods of time, living liminal existences on the margins of society. Even in countries where refugees have legal status, they experience these same exclusionary processes, but the findings from this thesis research would be most applicable to a context with similar legal, socio-political and educational policies affecting refugees.

Next, I will discuss the dependability of the research findings: *'How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subjects (respondents) in the same (or similar) context?'* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 290) In order to ascertain the dependability of the findings for certain, the research would need to be carried out with the same participants, or participants from a similar age group, cultural and national background, and who were experiencing similar circumstances to those involved in this research. The research would also need to be conducted in Bangkok, or a context with similar conditions affecting refugees. For a doctoral study of this kind, a second study which met these standards would have been impossible since the researcher, being an immigrant to Thailand, was there on a limited stay basis, and the time constraints of a doctoral study did not allow it.

Finally, I will discuss the confirmability of the research: *'How can one establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects (respondents) and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer?'* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 290) The findings from this research were based on a combination of the needs, experiences and aspirations expressed by the research participants, and the perspectives, motivations and interests of the researcher. While I feel the voice of the young refugees involved in the research played the most essential role in influencing the findings, I do not want to deny the role of my own personal and professional experiences, perspectives and insights, as informed by the extensive literature review which formed part of this thesis, in interpreting the data and forming the recommendations that emerged from it. It is the combination of these perspectives, experiences, ideas and understandings that has created this thesis and to deny the influence of the researcher and claim neutrality would be irresponsible and inappropriate (Esin, Fathi and Squire, 2014).

Part 2: Research Findings

The following chapters will explore the themes that emerged from the research data. Some of these themes were directed through the semi-structured interviews and guided through the visual narrative projects, whereas others emerged and were very much grounded in the data itself (Charmaz, 2014). These themes and sub-themes will be analysed in greater detail, particularly regarding how they relate to the original research questions, and their implications for educational services, opportunities and policies affecting young refugees living in Bangkok, Thailand. Six key themes that emerged from the data will be examined: educational backgrounds, experiences of migration, life in Thailand, experiences of education in Thailand, agency and resourcefulness, and aspirations. These themes were drawn from the perspectives of the research participants, through the semi-structured interview data, the 'Where I'm from' digital poetry project, and the 'Shift Maps' visual narrative project. Pseudonyms have been used when quoting the participants directly, in order to protect their anonymity. The languages included were Urdu, Punjabi, Hmong, Arabic, Somali and Tamil. Interpreters were present during the interviews and were involved in translating the Shift Maps data.

VI. Educational Backgrounds of the Research Participants

This chapter will explore the educational backgrounds of the young refugees involved in the research. It is important to understand these backgrounds in order to develop educational approaches and alternatives for refugees that respond to their needs and abilities, that have been formed and influenced by their past experiences in and outside education (UNICEF, 2006). A capabilities approach is contextually driven so examining the backgrounds of the participants was necessary to develop a culturally responsive framework that is relevant to their skills and abilities (Walker, 2010). The interviewees who did attend school in their countries of origin had mixed experiences of school, as is to be expected considering the diversity of cultures and backgrounds represented in the sample group. Educational trajectories tend to be very mixed anyway, since one's experiences at school are comprised of so many different factors, including one's peers, teachers, subjects, successes, failures, interests, etc. Although these were all touched upon in the interviews, the analysis will focus only on the aspects of the participant's background that are relevant to their present educational experiences, their needs and aspirations. After exploring these, I will then examine how their background contributes to a sense of loss and/or gain experienced as a result of their family's forced migration, and how this is relevant to a wider investigation into the educational experiences of young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand.

1. Access to school

All of the interviewees, with the exception of seven, had attended school in their countries of origin. Three were too young to attend school, having left the country before school age. One has learning difficulties and said that his parents felt that attending school would be too difficult for him, and potentially dangerous. Two claimed that they were unable to attend school because the government in Vietnam was not pleased with their father. Two did not know the reason why, claiming that they were 'too young', although they were well over the school starting age when they left the country. The latter two were Hmong girls from Vietnam. One moved to Thailand when she was ten years old, the other twelve years old. As discussed in Chapter two, the rate of out of school children is quite high among the Hmong in Vietnam, particularly for girls (UNICEF, 2012a). All of these children were living rurally in the mountains so helped their families with farming and other chores at home.

2. Language and school

All of the interviewees from Vietnam who attended school learned in a language different from the one they spoke at home. At home they used the Hmong language,

whereas at school they learned in Vietnamese only, even if the student population at the school was comprised mainly of Hmong students. None claimed to have any Hmong or Hmong speaking teachers. This is an important aspect of the education system in Vietnam that I discussed in Chapter two. Although efforts have been made to make schools in Hmong areas of Vietnam bilingual, this still poses a barrier to decreasing the attainment gap between the Hmong in Vietnam and the majority Kinh (UNICEF, 2012a). The use of Vietnamese only in most schools, even in majority Hmong areas of Vietnam, also reflects the inferior status experienced by the Hmong, and the superiority of the Kinh ethnic group (UNPO, 2012).

Despite the wider implications of this linguistic hierarchy in Vietnam, as reflected through the use of Vietnamese only in schools, even if they are in majority Hmong areas, most of the interviewees seemed to appreciate learning Vietnamese in school. One participant talked about how learning in Vietnamese was sometimes confusing: “He doesn’t really mind it, he just said that sometimes because they switch back and forth he messed up things.” (Lauj, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017) Most of the responses used words such as ‘good’ and ‘okay’. No one expressed any real resentment towards learning Vietnamese, although this does not necessarily mean that there was not any. This may be because the participants were too young to really question the use of Vietnamese, and did not see it as unfair, just a part of life. Some of the participants went further than this to say that they were glad of the opportunity to learn another language. This shows how the politics surrounding a phenomenon is not always felt by the people

it is affecting in the same way. This is not to deny the wider implications of the use of Vietnamese only in schools, in terms of creating and reinforcing an ethnic and linguistic hierarchy in Vietnam. It is to point out the diversity of perspectives around an issue, and that sometimes what can seem like a disadvantage, can be used to an advantage. For example, one interviewee explained how she was happy to know Vietnamese because she wanted to be a translator and it would serve as an extra language, in addition to Hmong, English and Thai.

This multilingual background that many of the participants have forms an important part of their identities and can be a source of pride for many of them, especially if it is used to their advantage. From early diary data in my ethnographic study of the Hmong refugees in Bangkok, I noted how many languages they seemed to know and use on a regular basis. For example, in one conversation I overheard between a group of boys, they interchanged between Vietnamese, English, Hmong and Thai. When I questioned them about this, they laughed and commented that it was quite normal. I told them how impressed I was that they knew and could use all these languages and they were surprised by my response, not realising the value of their multilingual aptitude. One boy said that they did not use 'enough English', demonstrating his perception of the 'symbolic power' of the English language (Kramsch, 2008), and where their other languages fit into this. I attempted to challenge this perception, but it was difficult to do when my role there was as an English language teacher.

Language used and taught in school came up as an issue in some of the interviews with young people from Pakistan. Although Pakistan is a very linguistically diverse country, the main language used in schools is Urdu. This was in one interview referred to as the language used by 'Muslims'. Some of the participants explained how they found reading and writing Urdu difficult, and they felt that this gave Urdu speaking Muslims an advantage over them: "So the Muslims mostly using Urdu so that's why their children get easier, they will get easy than other students, those who cannot speak Urdu in their homes or in their society." (Eman, aged 13, Pakistani, 2017) The teaching of Arabic in schools in Pakistan emerged as an even greater issue however. Some of the Christian participants explained how they found this extremely challenging and were at an even greater disadvantage in comparison to Muslim students than they were with Urdu. Muslim children learn Arabic through their studies of the Quran; so Christian children are unable to achieve the standard that Muslim children can. This has affected test scores and national entrance examinations for colleges and universities, where Muslim students are more likely to be successful due to their knowledge of Arabic from a young age. These experiences indicated how many of the research participants had experienced discrimination in their home countries that was manifested through the education systems, particularly the use of language and the barriers and opportunities that this created (Herakova, 2009). The Tamil speaking Sri Lankans also referred to the language of power in Sri Lanka being Sinhalese and the difficulties this creates for Tamils.

The next section will explore the discrimination encountered by some of the interviewees further, both in school and in their wider societies. It will discuss how this affects their present situation, particularly the sense of gain and/or loss they felt upon coming to Thailand, and their needs and aspirations.

3. Discrimination at school

All of the interviewees from Vietnam, Pakistan and Sri Lanka referred to discrimination they encountered at school in their countries of origin, and in the wider society around them. This was mainly due to their ethnic and religious backgrounds, and manifested itself through treatment from teachers and peers, and lack of opportunities to further and higher education, training and employment. The Hmong refugees from Vietnam explained that the challenges they experienced there came when they had finished school and wanted to proceed onto higher education. Due to their religious affiliations with Christianity, they were denied further education and employment opportunities. They believed this was due to the government believing they would spread Western ideologies through their belief in Christianity (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

This lack of equal opportunities to further education and employment upon finishing school was also discussed by the participants from Sri Lanka, who explained how Tamils are required to get a much higher entrance examination score than the Sinhalese, in order to get into college or university. Even if they do manage to access higher education, Tamils are less likely than the Sinhalese to attain managerial positions. Certain laws in Sri Lanka, such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the recent history there, prevent Tamils from being able to challenge these policies (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Almost all of the Pakistani participants talked of discrimination they experienced in school due to their religious beliefs (Human Rights Watch, 2017b). They discussed how they were forced to learn about the Muslim religion in school through a subject called 'Islamia'. The Christian students found this challenging because they would have to repeat passages from the Quran, and behave in a certain way, as advocated through Islam. If they were unable to do this correctly, they would be scolded and sometimes beaten: "If you speak wrong word you will be called a blasphemer, this is one of the also reason, that this is scold children because teacher say no, if you will speak the wrong word, it means you are insulting." (Emin, aged 17, Pakistani, 2017) The Ahmadiyya Muslims also found this subject difficult because sometimes teachers and students at their school would talk badly about people from their Muslim sect, referring to their beliefs very negatively. "They were abusing or telling bad things about Ahmadi's so sometimes it was hard to learn." (Ahd, aged 20, Pakistani, 2017) Other students would

also bully children from religious minorities and the school staff generally ignored it if they were Muslim.

Thus, most of the research participants experienced discrimination and prejudice towards themselves and their families and communities from a young age. The older participants were more likely to discuss this since they had more experience of it and could understand it more. The younger participants did make some reference to it, but it was not quite as detailed. For example, one Hmong boy who left Vietnam when he was fourteen years old reported how some teachers in his school in Vietnam did not like the Hmong. He was unable to elaborate or explain why, but still demonstrated an awareness of prejudice based on his ethnic background. “He said that there’s a small amount of Vietnamese teachers that didn’t like the Hmong students and so it’s not that they were really bad but they don’t teach as well.” (Hawj, aged 17, Viet-Hmong, 2017) Another boy explained how he was unable to attend school in Vietnam because the government did not like his father: “I feel bad because why other children they can go to school but I cannot.” (Fwam, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017) Some of the Pakistani participants even claimed that they had been threatened with blasphemy laws in school if they did something that was considered un- Muslim (Human Rights Watch, 2017a, p. 3):

> *“In 2017, Pakistan witnessed an increase in blasphemy-related violence while the government continued to encourage discriminatory prosecutions and other forms of discrimination against vulnerable groups by failing to repeal discriminatory laws and using religious rhetoric inciting hatred against minority groups. In March, the interior minister described blasphemers as “enemies of humanity,”*

and stated he would take the issue to its "logical conclusion" in taking action against them."

Blasphemy laws, and other laws used in Pakistan to silence dissent and intimidate minorities, represent a very real and serious threat, evidently experienced by children and young people, as well as adults.

4. Reflections on educational backgrounds

It is important to examine the educational backgrounds of the research participants because their past experiences are particularly relevant to their present experiences, their educational perspectives and future aspirations. Most people measure their present experience in relation to their past. Therefore, for the Hmong who had not been able to access school in their previous country, Thailand offered them a route into education, which most of the participants seemed grateful for. For most of the Pakistani, Iraqi and Sri Lankan participants however, they had been to school in their previous countries, and some had experienced a very high level of education. They inevitably compared their experience in Thailand to this previous experience, therefore feeling greater dissatisfaction at the lack of quality education they perceived in Thailand, particularly for the older participants, and those who spoke a high standard of English. Most of these participants however had experienced some level of discrimination in their

native country schools, and a sense of powerlessness in regard to this, so expressed an understanding of why their family had to leave. Their educational backgrounds were thus relevant to their present and future aspirations, in terms of seeking opportunities where they could access a level of education similar to what they had experienced previously and perceive greater equality and dignity within this.

The next chapter will explore the sense of loss and/or gain that was expressed through the interviews, as experienced by the participants through their migration to Thailand. It will discuss the factors contributing to a sense of loss and/or gain; how the participants expressed these; how they manifested themselves; and how they were dealt with.

VII. Experiences of Migration

This chapter will discuss the participant's experience of migration to Thailand and focus specifically on their sense of loss and/or gain upon leaving their countries of origin. The reason the two are examined together is because both feelings can be experienced, even though one is usually more dominant than the other. Experiences of migration are always unsettling, whether or not the choice is forced or voluntary, or a combination of both as is often the case. Children are not always aware of the reasons why they have to leave a place and, although it is usually easier for children to adapt to a new life and environment, it can still be difficult leaving the familiar behind and settling into a new culture, school and community (McBrien, 2005). For people seeking asylum, there are the added challenges of accessing school, healthcare, accommodation and employment; learning a new language and culture; and integrating into a community that is often hostile and distrustful of them, and where they are regarded as illegal and low in status (Palmgren, 2013). Refugees develop support networks with other refugees and people from a similar background. As discussed in chapter eight, these can be a great source of strength, in terms of developing the necessary bonding capital within a community to help them 'get by' (Putnam, 2001), but they also come with their own share of problems, related to power struggles, hierarchies and feelings of obligation. Too much bonding capital within a community can also make it seem insular and

disinterested in integrating outside of that community, even if it is often just a reaction to the overwhelming challenges of migration (Hope, 2011).

This chapter will discuss the participants' experiences of migration particularly related to their change in schooling. It will examine the factors that contribute to a perceived sense of loss and gain, or neither as the case may be, although this was uncommon. It will explore the significance of education to the participants' migration experiences, particularly to their feelings towards their new home (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004), and the wider implications of this significance to educational access and opportunities for young refugees.

1. Sense of gain

A perceived sense of gain due to migrating from their country of origin to Thailand was more apparent among young people who had not attended school in their country of origin. This was particularly the case for Hmong refugees from Vietnam, where many children from ethnic minorities are unable to access school due to discrimination, language and cultural barriers, transport and proximity, and economic costs of schooling (The World Bank, 2009). Girls are particularly vulnerable to these barriers, since boy's education is considered more valuable in circumstances of economic hardship. In Hmong culture, it is also more expected that women have

children and take care of the home, while men go out to farm or work (Fadiman, 1997). This is changing a great deal, especially in areas of Vietnam where tourism is prominent. However, it is still common that girls belonging to ethnic minorities in Vietnam do not attend school (Friedrichsen & Neef, 2010).

Tswaub, aged fourteen at the time of her interview, was one such girl. Her family moved to Bangkok from Vietnam when she was twelve. Her older brother, who was fourteen when they moved, also did not attend school. Tswaub was unsure why she did not go to school in Vietnam. Instead, she helped her mother with house chores and helped on the communal farm. Tswaub's first experience of school therefore was when she came to Thailand, and she still attends school now:

> *"She said when she first came here she was very happy like very excited so I asked her like why did she feel that way about coming here she said that well in Vietnam they lived in the mountains there's a lot to do, lots of gardening, there's so much work to do and so she said that there's a difference here there's not as much work to do, not the gardening up in the mountains, so it's kind of like a different lifestyle."*
>
> (Tswaub, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

A similar sense of gain due to moving to Thailand was expressed by Cai, who is originally from Vietnam but moved to Bangkok from China when he was sixteen. Cai has a disability and because of this, he was unable to go to school in Vietnam or China. Cai did not mention that his family lived in China from when he was twelve years old until sixteen years old. It is unclear whether he omitted this information because he did not feel it was relevant or possibly because he was unaware that he was in China. I only

know that he was because I interviewed his younger brother, who did attend school in China so would have been much more aware of which country he was in. If Cai was just spending his time helping at home and on the farm, still living in a Hmong community, it is quite understandable that he was unaware his family had moved to a different country. He may have purposely omitted this information however if he thought his father would not like him telling people. Either way, the focus of the interview was on his education, which he had not experienced a great deal of in Vietnam or in China. When Cai was twenty however he started going to school for the first time in Bangkok. A strong sense of having gained from moving to Thailand was apparent therefore, although he also expressed apprehension at going to school for the first time:

> *"Rebecca [interviewer] – okay and how did you feel before going to school?*
> *Mai-Err [interpreter] – he said that despite his disability he said that he always had hope that one day he could go to school with the other kids so that really helped him to wait*
> *Rebecca – yeah and how did you feel when you first started going to school?*
> *Mai Err – he said that he was very happy, but he also had concerns, he said that at his age he was afraid that people would look at him and judge him, so he had concerns that how can he help himself to learn the things that they're going to teach."*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Cai, aged 20, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

Cai attended school for one year and progressed onto a vocational training course, where he learned computer, English and Thai.

I also perceived a sense of gain from a fourteen-year-old boy who spoke of the hardship his family had experienced in Vietnam, due to being Hmong and being

Christians. Although he expressed sentimentality at the thought of his home there, he knew that his family had to leave:

> *"He's saying that when his family were still in Vietnam, they were having a really hard time, especially with the way that they were treated, especially for the Hmong people who were Christians and they were treated really badly because of the change of their religion and just like their properties were being taken from them house destroyed and also their farmland being destroyed and taken from them and just like everything and so he just wanted to share that it was a really hard time for not just him but for the Hmong people."*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Wang-Meng, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

Fwam, aged sixteen at the time of interview, also mentioned the freedom that he perceived in Thailand, referring to it as a 'freedom' country, and expressing a desire to stay and live in Thailand. He discussed how in Vietnam he was not allowed to go to school because, "the government was not pleased with my dad." Out of forty interviews however, this sentiment was rare. One participant from Pakistan, aged seventeen at the time of interview, expressed that he was pleased not to have to study the Islamia subject anymore. The majority of participants however did not express a strong sense of gain through having left their home country and coming to Thailand. Those that did were aware of their situation in their home country and felt that their lives had improved in Thailand. This was generally related to their being able to access schooling for the first time, although as mentioned above, it was also due to a greater perceived sense of safety in Thailand than in their home country. This demonstrates the significance of educational opportunities for young refugees in terms of helping them to experience a

greater sense of well-being and improvement in host and transit countries (Sanders and Munford, 2003). This will be discussed further in the following section.

2. Sense of loss

"Nco thumb yau kuv thiab kuv cov phoojywg,peb mub ntses, lub sijhawm ntaum

peb lomzem heev vim lub sijhawm ntaum peb cov phoojywwg nyiam kov ar heev li.Tiam sis tue siab tias haub no kuv nciam nej mus deb laum xyov puas muaj hnub peb rov tau uake ntxiv lawmso."

> *"I remember when I was a child, I and my friend we went to catch fish. On that time, we had a lot of fun, we like to play the soil. But so sad today I leave too far from you, I hope I will meet all my friends in future."*

(Cai, aged 20, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

Unfortunately, a sense of loss was far more prominent among the interviewees. This was particularly the case for participants who were unable to access education in Thailand, who had experienced long gaps in their education. Although this was not directly correlated with age, a sense of loss was more common among the older participants, mainly because there are more barriers to formal education for older refugees, and because they were old enough to have experienced schooling in their own countries, and form memories of it. These memories are likely to become more defined and poignant if their present circumstances do not compare positively. For the participants who were unable to access school, had experienced significant interruptions in their schooling, or who perceived a decrease in the quality of their schooling due to migration, their sense of loss was quite well defined. This has significant implications for the importance of providing young refugees with quality educational experiences (Pinson, Arnot and Candappa, 2010).

The greatest sense of loss however came from young people who were not able to access school at the time of interview, or who had experienced long gaps in their schooling. One boy, aged sixteen at the time of the interview, felt like he had fallen behind a great deal in his studies because it took his family a year to migrate to Thailand from Vietnam, and then they had been in the Immigration Detention Centre for

six months, where he was unable to attend school. Several other participants who had interrupted schooling also experienced this: “He’s saying that if I was in Pakistan I was (would be) in the tenth grade but now it’s four or five years have been lost like it’s finished, so I’m doing nothing but I’m still on the sixth.” (Interpreter’s translation of Joud, aged 16, Pakistani, 2017) One participant who had experienced much interrupted schooling also expressed an awareness of the impact of these interruptions on his education:

“Rebecca [Interviewer] – would you like to go to school now?
Emin [interviewee] – why not? Yes
Rebecca – what kind of school would you like to go to?
Emin – a big one
Rebecca – and how do you feel about not being at school?
Emin – uneducated”
(Emin, aged 17, Pakistani, 2017)

Participants from Pakistan in particular mentioned their disappointment in the quality of their schooling in Thailand, especially compared to the quality of the schooling they had experienced in their country of origin:

“At the first we were thinking very happy that at least after one year we found a school but then we went there and all the ages children they were in our same class so we see as even feel sad because there was no level of education what we expect to we will have that level and also sometimes school close because the immigration is coming and all things they were disturbing.”

(Rafsa, aged 15, Pakistani, 2017)

Older participants who were close to school finishing age but were unable to complete school and gain qualifications found it particularly difficult to adapt to a new educational culture, one that they felt was not appropriate to their level of education, and where they would not have the status that they had at their previous school:

> *"She said yes, she misses her school but she kind of gave a response to your next question as to why, she misses her friends, she used to be a school prefect, and that she was in a group, there used to be a religious faith based group in her school and she was the leader for it and they also had a sort of secret group that looked after any kind of disciplinary issues that the kids had and she was part of it and the existence of this group was very secretive and only the principal and police knew about it, not even the teachers, and she was in this group and to leave all of that and leave the place was very difficult."*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Sadeera, aged 20, Sri-Lankan Tamil, 2017)

One significant function of school is that it provides children and young people with a level of routine, safety and stability that is important for their development. Refugees often experience a great deal of turmoil in their lives, due to having to leave their countries and their homes, often very quickly, endure long and sometimes harsh journeys, and settle into new and potentially hostile environments with very little support (Block, Cross, Riggs and Gibbs, 2014). School can provide some comfort and stability from these changes, and the research participants who were not able to access school easily, discussed how difficult this was:

> *"I left my studies and all our daily system it was disturbed to get up in the morning, have breakfast, go to school, come back from school, it was disturbed."*
>
> (Rafsa, aged 15, Pakistani, 2017)

“Asad [Interpreter] – okay and about [Kader] he’s saying that I miss my friends and I miss like a proper study as we are going like in a proper school
Rebecca [Interviewer] – like the structure
Kader [Interviewee] – yes, so I miss that things”

(Interpreter’s translation of Kader, Aged 15, Pakistani, 2017)

Participants from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Iraq discussed how they missed the language and culture of their home countries, talking about the food, and cultural and religious celebrations such as Eid. Not being able to communicate easily with people was also identified as a problem, with one father mentioning that his son does not like to leave their home because he cannot understand anybody. More informal activities such as Sunday school and playing with their friends were also explored. Many of the participants, particularly those from Pakistan, expressed feeling restricted in Bangkok due to fear of the police; hostility from neighbours; and a lack of space and freedom to play, make noise and run around:

"Like the things we mostly talk about like freedom, there we have a full freedom, we can shout, we can do playing everywhere every how and no one can stop and uh we have too much issues about noise and we are not having a too much time here to shout or you know like noise or a little noise or play something like that.”

(Eman, aged 13, Pakistani, 2017)

All of the participants expressed that they missed their friends, teachers or neighbours in their countries of origin, those from Pakistan and Sri Lanka having attended school from the age of six. Participants from Vietnam, Pakistan and Sri Lanka talked about missing the environment of their school and their village or community, particularly places where they used to play, like a rooftop or a park. Three of the young refugees from Vietnam said they missed helping out on their farm and doing chores such as, “picking coffee and washing cows.” (Hawj, aged 17, Viet-Hmong, 2017) They spoke of how they wish they could do more things like that in Bangkok but were unable to. It would be interesting to find out if they really appreciated these chores when they were in Vietnam, or if it were something they appreciated more with hindsight (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber and Orr, 2010).

3. Reflections on experiences of migration

As emphasized previously, the sense of loss or gain experienced by the young refugees involved in this research was very much related to their perceptions of their present circumstances, as compared to their circumstances in their home country. For those participants from Vietnam who had not attended school in their countries of origin, but who were attending school in Thailand, they seemed to associate their migration

with improvement and progression in their lives. For participants from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Iraq however, this was not the case. The younger children who were too young to go to school in their countries of origin seemed more neutral, not feeling particularly nostalgic about their past lives or expressing much feeling about their present circumstances. The older participants however seemed to feel that their present circumstances did not measure up to their past experiences, particularly if they were unable to access school, or had experienced long gaps in their schooling. Since this was the case for many of the interviewees, particularly from Pakistan and Sri Lanka, a distinct sense of loss came through in the interviews. All of these interviewees mentioned missing 'friends' above anything else, showing that the school experience is just as much about social development and the opportunity to play and interact with others (Leonard, 2005). These participants also mentioned missing teachers a great deal, but again the use of this was more referring to their interactions with people that played an important role in guiding and supporting them, with elaborations focused on teachers that helped them through difficult situations, or who spent time with them outside of the classroom. The participants who had been to school also expressed missing routines, the structure and environment of their previous schools, indicating the important contribution that education makes to the stability and safety of young people (Bassani, 2007). The feeling of progression that schools can provide was also referred to, so that barriers and gaps in schooling can lead to feelings of stagnation, frustration, boredom and ignorance (Christensen and Prout, 2005). The lack of opportunity to complete qualifications was identified as a significant barrier, with one man calling his

experience of having to leave Pakistan six months before he could complete his A levels as ‘terrible’, partly because he could not find anywhere to complete them in Bangkok (Broadhead, 2013). Last of all, schools can provide a safe place for children to play and ‘be a child’. When children experience so many restrictions and are exposed to so much fear, they are unable to play, be happy and develop their well-being (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). It is important therefore that these barriers are identified, voiced and challenged. Listening to and documenting the voices and experiences of children and young people is therefore a key step in facilitating this process (Boyden, 2001).

The data revealed through this chapter indicated a substantial need among the research participants for education, not just in terms of providing learning opportunities, but also opportunities for socializing, recreation and structure (Bonfiglio, 2010). The networks that children and young people develop at school are essential to developing their well-being and resilience, and also help to bridge communities together, thus making them stronger (Calhoun, 2010b). This can lead to wider impacts such as better livelihoods, stability and safety, for local people and refugees, all significant elements of the social capital referred to in chapter four (Palmgren, 2016). The freedom to build these networks and capital is an essential element of a capabilities approach that enables people to ‘live lives they have reason to value.’ (Sen, 1999)

The next chapter will discuss the research participants’ perceptions of life in Thailand. It will explore the young people’s experiences of social, community,

recreational and employment activities; support services that facilitate access and enjoyment of these; and factors that prevent this access and enjoyment.

VIII. Life in Thailand

This chapter will examine the out of school experiences of the participants in Thailand, and how these contribute to their overall feelings and attitudes towards their new country. It will focus on their family, social networks, neighbours and community relations; their activities, hobbies and pastimes; and the support services and out of school opportunities available to them. Although this thesis is mainly focusing on educational experience, it is important to obtain a wider picture of the participants' lives in order to understand how the young people endeavour to construct lives that have meaning to them, how they attempt to overcome the obstacles they experience, and what services and opportunities are available to help them do so (Punch, 2007). This data will help inform a capabilities framework that responds to the participants' needs, aspirations and everyday realities more appropriately (Walker, 2005). It is also important to understand what responsibilities young people have outside of education, and how these may impact on their ability to access and succeed in school (Boyden, 2003). The first section will explore the out of school activities that the young refugees participate in; the support services and opportunities that assist these; and some of the barriers to participating in activities that are experienced by young refugees in Bangkok.

1. Out of school activities

In terms of the specific hobbies and pastimes that the participants enjoy, most of these are typical of children and teenagers anywhere in the world (Christenson and Prout, 2005). Activities such as using the internet, playing games, guitar, singing, football, swimming, cooking, reading, watching cartoons and movies, listening to music, and talking with friends. In terms of the support services that help to provide or facilitate these activities, the most mentioned institution was the church or mosque. Several of the Vietnamese participants discussed how they like to play music and sing with their friends at church. Two Pakistani refugees are part of a youth group at their church. Several expressed how they feel safe in their place of worship and identified it as an important part of their lives and community. Religious institutions are also significant sources of bridging capital, since they serve the community as a whole, and help to bring people together under a common belief (Ferlander, 2007). This bridging capital can develop important networks for refugees that contribute to their livelihoods, well-being and resilience (Morrow, 2001). These places of worship also provide one of the few places where refugees feel safe so food, advice and support are often distributed there (Calhoun, 2010a).

Many of the interviewees identified parks, playgrounds and public spaces as places where they like to spend time. Some talked about feeling safe in these places,

but the majority of the Pakistani expressed how they would feel too exposed and often excluded from public places by Thai people who would threaten to report them to the police:

> *"I do play cricket and basketball, that's what's also difficult for us, we need open area and sometimes we reach that open area and the Thai are complaining, they can't play in this area, they have to be, this is our area. There was a place near here, that side or that side, we went to play cricket because cricket we have to hit the ball in the air this and that and the Thai people they were very much disturbed and then we stopped. It's not the school it's open ground and some of my friends, we used to go there and play in the evening but Thais they were disturbed and we said okay because we are illegal and we are not Thai so whatever the case is they will just listen the police will listen to Thais they will say you are wrong they are right and then we will be in trouble."*
>
> (Wahaj, aged 22, Pakistani, 2017)

> *"We can't even go downstairs because the Thai people, they scold us, they don't feel good that we make noise there."*
>
> (Parwej, aged 11, Pakistani, 2017)

Hostility and exclusion from the host community can create significant barriers for refugees who want to spend time in public places and participate in their communities (Jacobsen, 2014). This exclusion however is exacerbated in Thailand because refugees experience the added threat of being harassed by police, charged heavy fines for not having the correct documentation and risk being arrested and detained if they are unable to pay these fines (Palmgren, 2016). Children and young people also experience this fear and, as Wahaj mentioned above, Thai people who do not want to include them in their public spaces, will threaten to report them to the police. The next section will

explain how this threat, and the subsequent exclusion from society experienced as a result, impacts on children's mental health and well-being and its implications for a capabilities framework for young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok.

2. Feelings of exclusion and isolation

Refugees who have had to leave their homes, families, schools and communities often experience isolation in the countries where they are seeking asylum (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). These feelings are intensified by language and cultural differences and a lack of knowledge of the local environment, services and facilities (McBrien, 2005). Many of the interviewees discussed how difficult it was at first for them to adjust to their new lives in Bangkok:

> *"they say that for the most part they can't really do anything or they are scared to do anything because they don't have the money and they don't really speak Thai yet so it's hard to go around, to even go to the store so for the most part they just and they also said that they don't have any idea of what to do and so it's basically just staying home."*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Emin, aged 17, Pakistani, 2017)

> *"It's hard, it's hard to live…Because you don't, because my family can't speak Thai and you cannot buy anything."*
>
> (Wang-Meng, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

The illegal status of refugees in Thailand means that these feelings of isolation are increased because they are terrified of being exposed to the authorities. Almost all of the research participants spoke of this fear, and the effect it had on their mental health and well-being:

> *"it's hard and it's very boring, and she's basically stuck in one room, back home she would be able to go round the city, she can't do that here…because of the police, they have to have UNHCR card but even if they do they will get into trouble with the police so they can't go out very much…she says that she's just at home she's not doing anything."*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Chalani, aged 22, Sri Lankan Tamil, 2017)

> *"I feel bad because we ran from there to save our lives and to feel free but when we are here so we're having the same problem it's stuck in one place, so I feel so much bad and sometimes I'm feeling too much aggressive as well."*
>
> (Joud, aged 16, Pakistani, 2017)

> *"He's saying that we never taught about this kind of situation here that we are facing now so we never taught about this when we there we feel that we feel free, we go outside and we're going somewhere, wherever you want to go, but still staying in one place the person gets so depressed and something like a mentally problem or do like that and that's why every person has some limits and if sometime cross our limits, we cannot go outside, we cannot have fun, we cannot have friends, we just sit in the rooms, so everyone has their limits so we're getting so depressed about this situation."*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Kader, aged 15, Pakistani, 2017)

The isolation experienced by young refugees in Bangkok, and the restrictions placed on their freedom of movement as a result of their illegal status, and fear of police harassment, poses a substantial barrier to their ability to construct meaningful lives, access education and develop the networks so essential to their communities, livelihoods, health, well-being and futures (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). Of all the barriers the participants reported experiencing, this seemed to be the most significant. Even if an opportunity became available to them, such as attending English language classes, once they heard that police were targeting that organisation, they had to stop going there. For children it was more likely that their parents would not allow them to go. Often community schools would be raided and shut down by police, and teachers arrested in front of their students. One participant was in the Bangkok Immigration Detention Centre [IDC] for six months when he was fourteen years old. His younger siblings were also in there. Bangkok IDC is an extremely over-crowded and inhumane facility (Amnesty International, 2017). As a result of these threats and incidents, many of the participants had to spend long periods at home with nothing to do. Some responded by self-studying, especially if they had access to the internet. This requires quite a lot of motivation and self-regulation however and does not provide the much-needed social interaction and support which children experience at school (Block, Cross, Riggs and Gibbs, 2014). The next section will focus on another out of school activity that some of the young participants discussed in their interviews – employment.

3. Employment

Several of the research participants had been or were currently engaged in paid employment at the time of the interviews. Although it is illegal for refugees to work in Thailand, there is a substantial informal economy sector that is powered by cheap, migrant labour (The Asia Foundation and the ILO, 2015). Most jobs are in factories, markets, restaurants, construction and cleaning. Two of the interviewees were working as teaching assistants which they described as quite meaningful. One interviewee was involved with a social enterprise which supports refugee women. They create cultural handicrafts which are sold in markets. Although some of the interviewees expressed frustration that they were not paid as much as Thai employees, they all spoke quite positively about their work experience:

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – okay so when you first came to Bangkok, how long did you have to wait before you could go to school?
Naveesh [Interviewee] – like two years
Rebecca – okay and what did you do during this time?
Naveesh – um, just do some work with my brother
Rebecca - and how did you feel during this time?
Naveesh – I feel it was good experience and so excited
Rebecca – good experience to work with your brother or…?
Naveesh – yeah because I something learned about the world
Rebecca – what kind of work were you doing?
Naveesh – like painting
Rebecca – house painting?
Naveesh – yeah house painting
Rebecca – and were you paid to do this?
Naveesh – no, they would give 200 baht per day {approx. $6}
Rebecca – and was that money given to you, or your brother, or your father, or…

Naveesh – yeah they give to me"

(Naveesh, aged 17, Sri Lankan Tamil, 2017)

Two of the research participants in paid employment were under the age of fifteen when they started working, which is the minimum working age in Thailand (Roman & Chuanprapun, 2019). The debate over whether young people under the age of fifteen should work is a contentious one. Some would argue that it infringes on a child's rights not to allow them to work, especially when they have to support themselves or their families (Kendall, 2008). Although the argument for this lies outside the remit of this thesis, it is worth addressing, especially in this context where some of the participants expressed pride in being able to help their families. It is also worth noting that neither of the young people were attending school during the two years that they were both working in the construction industry, even though all children in Thailand have a legal right to a minimum of ten years of education (Broadhead, 2013). Again, some would argue that legally forcing education on children who need to make a livelihood is infringing on their right to choose, and imposing a particular, if not ethnocentric, neo-colonial view of children's rights (Boyden, 2001). In terms of developing a capabilities framework from this data however, I would argue that the young people should not work if it impedes their educational access and development. If it does not do so, then having the freedom to work, earn a living, and help support your family is an essential functioning of the capabilities approach (Nussbaum, 2011). Employment is not only beneficial in terms of the financial reward, but also in terms of mental and physical

engagement, skills development and socialisation. It can provide a sense of structure and routine which so many people living in extended exile lack (Landau & Duponchel, 2011). However, it is rare that refugees living such a precarious existence will be able to access meaningful employment, where they are valued and rewarded fairly (Palmgren, 2013). There were some positive cases reported but also some negative ones. Working also makes refugees more vulnerable to police arrest (Harkins, 2019). Indeed, two of the young people involved in this research were arrested at their place of work and taken to the IDC indefinitely. The final section of this chapter will explore the positive out of school experiences expressed by the research participants, and what were the contributing factors to these.

4. Positive community experiences

Some of the research participants, particularly from Vietnam, talked about people from the host community who were friendly and helpful towards them. These were neighbours, and people they knew through church and community activities.

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – and what do you hope for your family in the future, you mentioned Canada, how do you feel about moving to Canada?*
> *Houa [Interviewee] – a little sad because we will leave this country*
> *Rebecca – and do you like Thailand?*
> *Houa – yes, but very hot.*

Rebecca – Canada is the opposite I think, very cold, so what do you think you will miss about Thailand, about your life here?
Houa – I will miss my friends and neighbours.
Rebecca – are your neighbours Thai?
Houa – yes
Rebecca – so they are friendly neighbours?
Houa – yes
Rebecca – how do you know them from church, how do you know them, just the street?
Houa – some the church, some they live near my house, they give many things, just being friendly.
Rebecca – what sort of things do they give?
Houa – sometimes they give, they have milk, they saw my little brother, they will give to he.
Rebecca – milk did you say? – anything else that they help you with?
Houa – when the police come they if they will know how to do that they will find a way to help us be safe.
Rebecca – okay, and how do they help you be safe, do they warn you or do they come and tell you that the police are coming
Houa – yes, they tell
Rebecca – and do they help hide you?
Houa – yes
Rebecca – in their house?
Houa – yes
Rebecca – okay, that's very nice, very kind of them, what about with any medicine like if you're sick do they help with the hospital?
Houa – sometimes they help with
Rebecca – okay well that's good to know, are there any neighbours that don't help you that you're a little bit scared of?
Houa – no, I think if they don't help it's okay because [unclear] it's okay.
Rebecca – and do you like the area where you live, do you feel safe here?
Houa – yes"

(Houa, aged 13, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

This demonstrates how significant local community support can be in helping refugees to feel safer and happier in their new homes (Morrow, 1999). It also shows

how local support networks can develop resilience and sometimes be a survival tool for people living in very difficult circumstances (Bonfiglio, 2010). It is important to bring attention to these small acts of kindness and how substantial they can be to a person's feelings towards, and memories of, a place. Houa has now resettled with her family in Canada, but she will probably look back on her time in Bangkok more fondly because of the kindness of her neighbours. Maiv, a mother who I interviewed, also talked about the support her family received from some neighbours, and of how helpful some organisations are to them:

> "Rebecca [*Interviewer] – is there anyone in this community that helps you, like neighbours?*
> *Maiv [Interviewee] – like what kind of help?*
> *Rebecca – like anyone that helps them to feel safer, maybe helps them kind of makes them feel welcome here, is nice to the children*
> *Mai Err [Interpreter] – yeah so there are some people in the neighbourhood who are nice to them, who greet them, if they have some food they give it to them and if they have leftover clothes they give it to them so there are some people*
> *Rebecca – and what other people or organisations help you to feel safe in Bangkok?*
> *Mai-Err – yeah so she included Courageous Kitchen, that makes them feel happy, just having people come here to teach the kids and also show that they care about the people here."*

(Interpreter's translation of Maiv, age unknown, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

5. Reflections on life in Thailand

Chapter four explored the significance of social capital to migrant communities, both forced and voluntary, particularly bonding and bridging capital (Putnam, 2001). The first is important because it can help form networks within migrant communities which act as sources of support and even livelihood (Calhoun, 2010a). The second is significant because it can link migrant communities together with other communities, which strengthens a society, and can also provide important sources of social and economic support (Marlowe, Bartley, and Hibtit, 2014). Often young people play an equal role in forming these networks (Weller, 2006). It is therefore essential that refugees are given the right to form these networks, and that barriers preventing them from doing so be addressed and lifted (Jacobsen, 2014). In the context of Bangkok, one of the major restrictions on movement is caused by fear of the police and hostility from local Thai people (Harkins, 2019). Other barriers are lack of transport, money and language differences, though these are easier to overcome. Community support, such as that voiced by Houa and Maiv, are an invaluable source of well-being, safety, livelihood and resilience (Palmgren, 2016).

The next chapter will draw on narratives of the educational experiences of young refugees in Bangkok, focusing on issues of access, challenges, curriculum, achievements, opportunities, needs and aspirations.

IX. Experiences of Education

This chapter will discuss the educational experiences of the research participants, while living in Bangkok. It will explore educational accessibility, looking at issues like location, transport, school fees, the support and information they receive, and their reason for attending, leaving and/or changing schools. It will examine the structure and content of the schools they attend, the subjects and languages they learn, the qualifications or certification they gain, and the activities they engage in at school. The participants' social experiences of school, their friends, their peers and their teachers will be discussed. In developing a capabilities framework for refugee education in the context of Bangkok, Thailand, it was important to elicit these experiences of school and the young refugees' perceptions of the opportunities available to them (Nussbaum, 2011). These experiences can then help to inform educational policies and practices that are relevant and responsive to their needs and everyday realities (Grimes, 2012).

1. Access to education in Bangkok

The experiences regarding access to education in Bangkok were varied, depending on the age of the participants; their language and culture; their needs, aspirations and educational backgrounds; and their living and legal situation, including their location. In terms of the level of support the interviewees received in accessing education, it was difficult to ascribe a particular reason to some of the variations without making judgements that were potentially invalid, being based on my own interpretation rather than evidence from the data. For example, there were cases where two young people were the same age when they tried to access Thai school, but one was refused whereas the other was not. This could be for a number of reasons which will be discussed further, but some of these reasons will be conjecture on my part, without solid evidence given in the data. Some of the reasons could also be conjecture on the part of the interviewees. These will still be important to address however since their perspectives are worthy of contemplation, even if they may not be based on solid fact.

The general process for young refugees in Bangkok is, after registering their asylum case with the UNHCR, children attend English and Thai classes at the Bangkok Refugee Centre [BRC] or the Good Shepherd School, the educational arms of the UNHCR. The purpose of these institutions is to prepare young people seeking asylum through the UNHCR for Royal Thai Government [RTG] schools, so that they have a

basic level of Thai language and understand a little about Thai culture. Children need to be at least six years of age before they can attend classes. They are unable to attend an RTG school without a certificate from the UNHCR affirming that they have completed a Thai language and culture course. Once they have this certificate, education officers at the UNHCR are expected to liaise with RTG schools within a reasonable distance to where the child lives. The UNHCR also provides financial assistance for school uniforms, school supplies, and travel expenses. This service is only provided however for children whose family has a case being processed with the UNHCR, or whose case has been recognised and the family are awaiting resettlement through the International Organisation for Migration [IOM]. For children whose case has been refused however, they do not receive financial assistance for school.

Twenty four out of forty-five young people interviewed for the purposes of this thesis attended classes at either BRC or the Good Shepherd, or both. I count young people as anyone below the age of twenty-five. The remaining twenty-one did not attend these classes for a variety of reasons. One was too young, being only five at the time of interview, while the minimum starting age at BRC is six. One young person is disabled, and his parents felt that it was unsafe for him to travel to the classes, even though his brother attended them. Two perceived the schools as being too far from where they lived and also unsafe due to their illegal status in Thailand. One interviewee was taking care of her father who was very ill when she was offered the classes. Four young people had only recently arrived in Thailand at the time of interview so were still

registering their case with the UNHCR. Six participants felt the classes were unsuited to their needs and educational backgrounds. Another two were actually removed for this reason by their parents. Two interviewees did not attend because they were moving around so much when they first arrived.

Two left the schools after only a few months because they perceived a police threat outside the schools. Two other community schools described in the interviews were closed down as a result of police harassment, with some of the teachers being arrested in front of the children and taken to the Immigration Detention Centre [IDC] in Bangkok. Ten participants referred to a perceived police threat as being one of the reasons why they were unable to access education, either because their community schools were raided and shut down, or because police were threatening to arrest people leaving the educational establishments:

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – okay so while you were waiting what did you do during this time, that you were waiting for school, that you didn't go to school?*
>
> *Asad [Interpreter] – Both have the same answer, just because they are afraid, because of the environment and the situation, they just stay in the rooms and not going anywhere and not doing anything, they just stuck in the rooms"*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Joud and Kader, aged 16 & 15, Pakistani, 2017)

This perceived threat was justified considering the sheer number of asylum seekers in IDC, some who have been there for years (Amnesty International, 2017). Inhibiting a

child's access to school, by police harassment and the resulting fear of arrest and detention, is a direct barrier to the effective implementation of the Education for All agenda and Sustainable Development Goal four agendas, with Thailand being a signatory to both (UNESCO, 2014b). In order to successfully meet its commitments to these international policies, the reasons for children not accessing school need to be identified and addressed. The Education for All policy and the Sustainable Development Goals clearly state that they apply to all children, regardless of their citizenship status, ethnicity or religion (UNESCO, 2017). The Thai government is therefore not meeting its responsibilities to these international protocols by allowing its police to threaten children and young people with arrest and detention, even if they are regarded as illegal.

The maximum amount of time a young refugee can attend classes at BRC or The Good Shepherd is two years, but some were asked to leave after only six months to a year. It is then the responsibility of the BRC education officers to help the young person find a place in an RTG school, usually one located near where they live. For the young people living in one area of Bangkok, who are of Hmong Vietnamese, Sri Lankan Tamil and Sudanese origin, this transfer seemed well facilitated, with almost all of the participants living in this area having accessed a local RTG school. One participant was told he was too old at first but was then granted a place the following year. One mother said that her children were denied access at one local school but then given a place at another, even closer to her family:

"Sabina [Interviewee] – I know, I saw this problem, because when I want to get my kids to school, I go to other school, she is very angry with me, she didn't like to give my kids the school, she said I have many refugees, I have a problem.
Rebecca [Interviewer] – what school is this? Is it near here?
Sabina – yes, a lot of refugees, I know that.
Rebecca – Refugees from Vietnam?
Sabina – yes, Sri Lanka and the Vietnamese. A lot, so I go in the middle of the year and they said class is full, and she not say is good, she says I have problems with refugees, so I not go to this school."

(Sabina, aged 39, Sudanese, 2017)

In another location in Bangkok however, where a large community of Pakistani refugees live, the situation was very different. Only two of the six young people I interviewed there were attending the local RTG School. The other four were told that they were too old to attend the school, even though all children in Thailand are entitled to a minimum of ten years of education (Thai National Commission for UNESCO, 2015). This was also the case with participants living in other parts of Bangkok. Two children who were under the age of ten when they tried to get in to Thai school were told that they were 'too high' to be allowed entry:

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – did BRC try to help you get into a Thai school?
Romail [Interpreter] – they say that your height is longer now
Rebecca – is it height or age?
Najee [interviewee] – height
Rebecca – okay so they say you're too tall?
Najee – yes
Rebecca – they didn't say anything about the age?
Romail – yeah BRC told her
Rebecca – so BRC said this or BRC said the Thai school said this?

Romail – exactly
Rebecca – BRC said what the Thai school had said?
Romail – yes, after the consultation, because they send some paper along
Rebecca – and was this the local school that they tried to get you into?
Romail – they said they will send you to Thai school, but no one is trying now
Rebecca – Is there anyone that you can talk to or…?
Romail – I don't know"

(Interpreter's translation of Najee, aged 11, Pakistani, 2017)

Another boy who was also ten when he applied to Thai school said that he was 'too long' but his brother was allowed entry:

"Romail [Interpreter] – after Good Shepherd we went to BRC and BRC and Good Shepherd also said that we will get admission to the Thai school, but they did not and then we went to BRC and they said we will do this for you, that we will get admission to Thai school, they didn't do for me but they did for him (referring to younger brother)
Rebecca [Interviewer] – right okay, do you know why they didn't for you?
Romail – because they said that his height is long, and they can't give him the minor class, if we will take him to the age what he is then he can't tell us speak Thai very well then, he can't understand, so they have given admission to the younger brother, but they did not give him.
Rebecca – and was this a school near here?
Romail – we used to take sonteow from here, so it is not far
Rebecca – and how did you feel about this, not being able to go to Thai school?
Romail – I feel bad because I'm not going to school now and all time I'm sitting in the house"

(Interpreter's translation of Parvez, aged 11, Pakistani, 2017)

Riaz, aged thirteen at the time of the interview, was also told that he was too old for the local Thai school, but was offered a place at a Thai school in the centre of Bangkok, far from where he lived. He was unable to go however because his parents were worried about him travelling there by himself. This school accepts a substantial number of refugees who are over the age of ten years. This demonstrates how it seems to be up to the discretion of the individual school in Thailand whether they will accept refugees, and on what terms. Grimes (2012) also experienced this in his research into inclusive education in Thailand. He wrote about a school principal who tried to accept local migrant children into the school. She was eventually fired by the Parent and Teacher Association (PTA) in the school who did not want these children attending school with their children. The PTA in many cases in Thailand can have more power than the school staff and administration so, depending on their attitudes towards non-Thai children, this can pose a significant barrier to schools becoming fully inclusive (Thai Ministry of Education, 2008). The Hmong children who attended their local Thai school were over the age of ten when they enrolled at the school. One participant from Sri Lanka was sixteen when he started at his local primary school. Although all Royal Thai Government schools have a responsibility to accept refugees, some will still refuse to, and this goes unmonitored and unchallenged (Lathapipat and Sondergaard, 2015).

Although the system of attending Thai language and culture classes, gaining a certificate, and going to an RTG school did seem to be working quite efficiently for some refugees, particularly those who had not attended school in their country of origin, it

clearly does not work for everyone, especially for young people who are in their teenage years, or who look older than they are. All of the children and young people I interviewed who were attending or had attended Thai primary school were older than their Thai class mates, some quite substantially. I will discuss this in a little more detail later but for many refugees in Bangkok, they were simply too old to attend a Thai primary school. Some were explicitly rejected for this reason, whereas others chose not to even try to enter a school because they did not want to be so much older than their peers. They also found the language and cultural differences very difficult to adjust to:

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – so how long did you go to the Thai school for?*
> *Abed [Interviewee] – I think we just go there one week or two weeks, then we didn't go*
> *Rebecca – okay and why didn't you want to study Thai?*
> *Abed – it was hard for us to study and then it was so far from our home and that's why*
> *Rebecca – do you know what school it was?*
> *Abed – I don't know the name*
> *Rebecca – do you know where?*
> *Abed – it's like near the BRC*
> *Romail [Interpreter] – but most of the problems with Thai school is the food, they want us to eat the food that is cooked there and we don't want to eat the food but they said you can't bring the food from your home, this is the food you have to eat and the second problem is transport, I told you before, and the third is how can he communicate with other students and how can they communicate with him, it's like*
> *Abed – alone*
> *Romail – alone in the Thai class, can't even tell the problem to the teacher"*
>
> (Translator's interpretation of Abed, aged 13, Pakistani, 2017)

The older interviewees had the most difficulty accessing and adjusting to a new educational environment. Unfortunately, there are very few educational alternatives available in Bangkok for refugees who are unable or reluctant to access a Royal Thai Government school. Out of all the young participants in this research, only two were attending a Thai secondary school. None of the other participants were either encouraged, able or wished to attend a Thai secondary school. Some felt that it would be too difficult to adjust to the language and culture of the school; two participants asked at their local RTG secondary school but were told that they were either too young or too old (one was fifteen at the time, the other sixteen); Most were simply not encouraged by their RTG primary schools, or given any information about attending these schools by the BRC, even though they had completed primary school and had the correct certification and language skills to attend a higher level school in Thailand. This indicates how even if access to mainstream education is available, it is not always the most appropriate solution and alternatives need to be developed that meet these gaps and provide a choice that is more responsive to the needs, backgrounds and aspirations of the young people (UNICEF, 2011).

Most of the research participants felt that an English medium school would be more relevant to their future needs and aspirations, since they were aware that they would not be allowed to remain in Thailand, and the hope for all of them was that they would be resettled to a country that was likely to be an English-speaking country. All of the English medium schools in Bangkok however are private institutions and require a

fee. This immediately presents a barrier to the majority of people seeking asylum through the UNHCR in Bangkok, since they are forbidden from working legally, so are either reliant on charitable donations or work illegally, earning substantially below the minimum wage (ILO, 2015). Whatever income they do have needs to be spent on living costs such as food and accommodation. Some international schools in Bangkok provide scholarships for refugees, but there are not enough for everyone and they need to demonstrate a good level of English in order to apply for these scholarships. Three of the interviewees were attending an international school on a scholarship and felt very fortunate for this opportunity. There are also a number of Christian schools in Bangkok, run by missionaries from the Philippines or Korea, and an Indian school. A number of the research participants attend these schools and pay a fee of between approximately $50-$300 a month, depending on the school. Many of these schools also provide a van pick-up and drop-off service. Some school places are sponsored, others are paid for by the families, either with savings or money earned through working illegally. If a family is unable to afford this however, or find a sponsor, then there are very few options for a young refugee if they are unable or unwilling to access a Thai government school (The Asia Foundation and the ILO, 2015). The only other option is to attend a community school, which are set up and run by refugees, usually in rooms in the apartment buildings where they live (UNICEF, 2011). These will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

2. Experience of Royal Thai Government School

Out of all the young participants involved in the research, eighteen had attended or were attending a Royal Thai Government School. Sixteen attended primary school and two were attending secondary school. All of the participants who attended an RTG school reported a mostly positive experience, with minimal reports of bullying, exclusion or discrimination. All of the participants were older than their Thai peers, and all said that they felt uncomfortable about this at first, but then got used to it. Three participants expressed liking it, and took on the role of the teacher's assistant or the 'older brother', a respected position in Thailand:

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – and are you the same age as other students in year one?*
> *Kenzi [Interviewee] – no because my class age is six and five and seven*
> *Romail [Interpreter] – I am the oldest because the other children they are from five and seven years*
> *Rebecca – and how do you feel about this being older?*
> *Romail – I feel happy because I'm the oldest and every time teacher told me please come here and help other children and also make them be silent, so I feel good"*
> (Interpreter's translation of Kenzi, aged 9, Pakistani, 2017)

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – and what helped you to make friends at the school?*
> *Fwam [Interviewee] – uh the way helped me to make friends is something Thai students right they don't understand about English, so*

they ask me, and I explain and help them so they say I'm the older right so they always need a help so if they say… they call me brother
Rebecca – so they called you P… (P a sign of respect)
Fwam – yeah"
(Fwam, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – you mentioned that sometimes you help the teachers with the class? I think you said that sometimes the teacher will, if the teacher needs to leave, they will ask you to help with the children, is this still, do you still help the teacher?
Naveesh [Interviewee] – yeah, sometimes they ask
Rebecca – okay, so how do you help the teacher?
Naveesh – it was, take something to, or bring the kids
Raji [interpreter] – so in the morning when they had the, when they distribute milk, because they're young children they can't lift the weight so the teachers ask him to help because he's older and he says that at the end of the day they have five groups in the class and they take turns to sweep the floor and mop the floor and if he has to mop the floor the other kids help him, things that they can help him, they do but other things (unclear)
Rebecca – and how do you feel about that, do you like helping the teacher?
Naveesh – yeah, I like, I always like
Rebecca – do the other, so you said that you sometimes help take children to another class, do the children listen to you?
Naveesh – laughs, yeah, sometimes they are playing, run around, you know about the kids
Rebecca – yeah yeah"
(Interpreter's translation of Naveesh, aged 17, Sri Lankan Tamil, 2017)

Although it was beneficial for the young people involved in this research to feel valued and respected at their school, I wonder how much of the help and assistance they gave was so that they could also feel accepted and appreciated. Some of the interviewees demonstrated an awareness of this, comparing their work ethic to the Thai students, and discussing how the teachers treated them differently as a result:

"Fwam [Interviewee] – the teacher teaching art he liked me he always invites me to help him
Rebecca [Interviewer] – okay were there any activities that you didn't like, so maybe not so much art, why do you think the teacher asked you to help him?
Fwam – because he said to me you are very diligent, I like you, you look good and can you always help me, I said if teacher need me to help, I will do my best to help teacher
Rebecca – what did you help him do?
Fwam – do all the paint the pictures do when you have a [unclear] at the school so clean his pen or I don't know how to call that one, is when it's like concert
Rebecca – and would other students help him also?
Fwam – no he just say he liked Vietnam yeah
Rebecca – so you would help him clean?
Fwam – yeah always
Rebecca – but the other the Thai students wouldn't help?
Fwam – no he said he don't like Thai because they're lazy"

(Fwam, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

"he said that the teachers that help out are the teachers that because he was saying that for them because they're new so they want to learn they want to know this language and how to help themselves, their family and their friends and so they're very obedient and so they listen to their teachers and he was saying that perhaps that's why the teachers they love them because they listen to the teacher and so they're good students"

(Interpreter's translation of Wang-Meng, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

Most of the participants who attended an RTG spoke fondly of their teachers and described them as being kind and helpful. They said it was difficult learning in Thai at first, but most felt they received a good level of support with this:

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – and what languages did you learn and use at the school?
Fwam [Interviewee] – we learned English and Thai
Rebecca – yeah, um, so how did you feel about learning Thai?

Fwam – I feel it's good but sometimes the effect is sometimes you don't understand right, so you are boring and sometimes you don't under stand
Rebecca – yeah, did the teachers help you if you didn't understand?
Fwam – yeah if you don't understand they say if you don't understand please raise your hand
Rebecca – yeah and would they explain it?
Fwam – yeah explain it
Rebecca – how would they explain in Thai or English?
Fwam – Thai Thai
Rebecca – would they explain by pointing or visual, how would they explain? Fwam - they explain like this one is…do the action like you say"

(Fwam, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – do the teachers help you if you don't understand something?
Naveesh [Interviewee] – yeah teachers ask do you understand so I say not sure, I didn't understand so she explain to me more than before or like Thai subjects so some words I don't understand so he have a translate on the phone so…
Rebecca – do the teachers speak English at all, do they speak English with you?
Naveesh – no, just only Thai, but some teachers can speak English
Rebecca – so they'll ask you if you understand and help you
Naveesh – yeah
Rebecca – do you feel like you can tell them when you don't understand, you can ask them questions?
Naveesh – yeah, I can"

(Naveesh, aged 17, Sri Lankan Tamil, 2017)

One interviewee explained how her teacher helped her make friends through asking a girl in her class to act as a buddy for her:

"Rebecca [Interviewer] -What helped you to make your friends? What helped you to make friends at school?
Aaliyah [Interviewee] – teacher
Rebecca – teacher helped you?

Aaliyah – yes
Rebecca – how did she help?
Sabina [Interpreter] – she give her one friends and she told her this be your friend

(Interpreter's translation of Aaliyah, aged 10, Sudanese, 2017)

When asked what helped the young participants make friends at school, they all responded that playing together helped because it broke down the language barriers and gave them common ground. When asked what kinds of games they played, most described children's playground games like hide and seek, pattycake, running around and football:

"she said that there was someone who was about her age as well, so they played together and [unclear] it's interesting that she said that they played first and then they communicated"

(Interpreter's translation of Tswaub, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

"he said that what really helped him was playing with them which really helped getting out of that unfamiliar because he said that for him it was hard at first but after just getting to know them through games and what not he was able to make friends with them"

(Interpreter's translation of Wang-Meng, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – okay and do you have friends at the school?
Kenzi [Interviewee] – yes
Rebecca – what helped you to make friends at the school?
Romail [Interpreter] – they were speaking to me in Thai and I can understand will you play to us and I said yes, and they spoke Thai to me and they were more comfortable and became my friends"

(Interpreter's translation of Kenzi, aged 9, Pakistani, 2017)

The social aspect of school is incredibly important for children and young people, and the interaction that children gain through play helps their well-being and development (Arnot & Pinson, 2005). The children and young people who I interviewed who are not able to access school described how much they missed this interaction.

"Abbas [Interviewee] – I want to go to school to learn English and have exercise
Tiba [Interpreter] – and he's seeking for a friend, new friends, want to communicate because he's so social, opposite of his brother, he's social, so social, he wants to mix with people but when he came here, after we came, he can't communicate
with others, so he because shy, not shy but…
Rebecca [interviewer] – isolated, because he could
not communicate?
Tiba – everyone talks, and he can't understand, he can't understand and reply to others, he can't mix with others
Rebecca – that's why he wants to learn English
Tiba – but his personality is social"

(Interpreter's translation of Abbas, aged 11, Iraqi, 2017)

In the 'Where I'm from' digital poems that nine of the young participants created, all referred to their friends and the games they played together as a significant part of their lives and memories. As described by Wang-Meng, play can also help to break down language and cultural barriers and provide a common focus. In developing a capabilities framework for refugee education, it is essential to incorporate these social aspects of the school experience, that children are very much denied if they are unable to access education (UNICEF, 2009). Play also has therapeutic qualities which can

significantly reduce the short and long-term effects of trauma and displacement (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009).

There were a few reports of bullying at the RTG schools, both from teachers and students. These could be quite obvious, involving insults and sometimes violence, but could also be subtle yet equally offensive:

> *"Fwam [Interviewee] – learn the national anthem, how to sing and just yeah very fun teacher said you must sing like this if you cannot sing they will punish you*
> *Rebecca [Interviewer] – yeah, what would they do if you couldn't sing it?*
> *Fwam – they said you from Vietnam, I said yes, they say if you cannot sing go back to your country [laughs] I say I will do my best"*

(Fwam, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

> *"he said that there are a couple of teachers who like will not assist or help and it's because they don't like them because they're refugees or because they're from Vietnam"*

(Interpreter's translation of Wang-Meng, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

The participants perceived this as people 'not liking refugees' or 'not liking Vietnamese', but some of the reasoning was more detailed. Wang-Meng also described how the older students bullied the Vietnamese children at his school because they were jealous of how hard they worked and how well they did at school:

> *"he's saying that the older kids their younger siblings will be learning with them and um one of the things is he said it's out of jealousy because they're the younger siblings will be in the same grade as they are and so for them like he doesn't know about the younger siblings but he knows that for him and for his friends they study*

hard and they work hard but then once they say if they take a test or say that they do really well on certain subjects or certain things then the younger siblings will go and tell the older siblings and say that they accuse them like they're hitting us or what not like they're unfair to us and so like their older siblings will not ask them what happened with this situation, or what is this situation, instead they just like listen to their siblings and will want to like hurt them"

(Interpreter's translation of Wang-Meng, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

Adithi explained how the teachers would help her deal with the bullying she experienced but then it would recur:

"Raji [Interpreter] – the kids, the level 6 kids, they actually beat her, and she doesn't like that about them, they push her and intimidate her when she's playing, she doesn't like that about that school
Rebecca [Interviewer] – and they do this to lots of kids, Thai kids also? And you can talk to the teachers about it and the teachers help you?
Raji – okay, so these kids, the bullies get punished, the problem goes away and then it recurs, the next time they make them do sit-ups in front of the assembly as a punishment, as a form of punishment. It's more common back home to do that, as a form of punishment
Rebecca – right
Raji – and then the same thing, it goes away and then it recurs"

(Interpreter's translation of Adithi, aged 13, Sri Lankan Tamil, 2017)

All of the young participants who attended Thai school, or who were attending Thai school, with the exception of two, fast tracked through primary school, meaning they completed two academic years in one year, some completing three. They did not go into too much detail as to how this worked exactly, whether there was a special curriculum set up for the refugees at the school, or whether they just attended classes with one-year group in the first half of the year, and then joined a higher year group for

the second half. They all liked this approach however, saying that it suited them because they were older than everyone in their year so wanted to complete primary school faster.

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – okay and how did you find that? How did you find doing P1 and P2 in one year?*
> *Mai-Err [Interpreter] – she said that like because she's older then she likes that one year two instead of one year one because just considering like her age as well*
> *Rebecca – was it difficult? Did you think it was difficult doing two years in one?*
> *Mai Err – she said it wasn't hard, she actually likes it*
> *Rebecca – do you do well in school, do you think?*
> *Mai Err – she said that they really use everything that you have, and so she thinks that she did good"*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Tswaub, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

Although these experiences only relate to a handful of mainstream schools in Bangkok that are willing to accept refugees, they reveal how some of these schools have approaches in place to accommodate children of different ages, abilities and backgrounds, but these approaches are very ad hoc and up to the discretion of the teachers and school administrations (Grimes, 2011). The schools adopt a more integrative approach than an inclusive one, where the children are expected to adapt to the mainstream culture of the school, as opposed to the school adapting to a more multicultural student population (Pinson, Arnot and Candappa, 2010). This is evidenced by pressure on Muslim students to eat pork and threats against students who are unable to sing the Thai national anthem. This reflects the monocultural nature of Thai society, with its emphasis on a single Thai national identity, despite the many cultures

and ethnic groups that live within its borders (Tan and Walker, 2008). Even though there were many positive experiences of school reported by the participants in this research, indicating a strong capacity for mainstream Thai schools to respond appropriately to the needs of refugees and migrants, there is very little policy documentation in place to embed these positive approaches more systematically (Harkins, 2019). This leads to situations, as evidenced in the data reported from this research, where some children and young people are being denied access or excluded from school completely, whereas others living in the same city are feeling welcomed and supported at their schools. As explained in Chapter three of this thesis, Thailand has clearly made substantial progress in meeting the targets of the Education for All and Sustainable Development Goal Four agendas (Lathapipat and Sondergaard, 2015), but statistics on the number of out of school children that still exist point to a need for more regulation and effective monitoring procedures to be put in place (Thomas and Burnett, 2015). This is extremely challenging however in a context where policies concerning educational equality and inclusion conflict so significantly with a legal framework which is intended to exclude and even criminalize non-citizens (Jones, 2014).

3. Experience of private international schools

Fourteen of the sixty participants involved in this research were attending, or had attended, a private international school in Bangkok. Three were receiving scholarships to attend and two were receiving sponsorship. Nine of the Hmong refugees were attending a small school run by Filipino missionaries. There are several schools in Bangkok run by missionaries. Many of the students that attend these schools are refugees or from non-Thai backgrounds, though not all. These schools charge a fee of between approximately $50-$300 a month, and they follow an international curriculum called Accelerated Christian Education [ACE]. The schools are not set up as classrooms, but more as offices where each student gets a desk and works through subject books on their own, calling on the teacher for help. The learning is quite autonomous and self-directed, where students work at their own pace (the modules are actually called 'paces') and take a test at the end of each unit. The set-up requires less in teacher resources, which can help keep the costs of the schools down. The students receive a certificate at the end of each year, but it is uncertain whether this links in with any formally recognised qualifications. The schools in Bangkok that I approached for information about this responded that they did not but were looking into it. ACE schools in other contexts, such as the United States and the Philippines, did however.

The young people attending this school seemed to perceive it as a positive step in their life. Most had attended Thai primary school and had either finished or transferred because they wanted to learn in an English medium school. Some said that it was difficult at first learning in English, but they felt that it would benefit them in the

future when they would move to a third country. They all described how they liked learning in a Christian environment because it related to their home lives and backgrounds, and they felt comfortable with the teachers and the pace of their learning. This was especially important for Cai who has a disability and had never been to school before attending his ACE school:

> *"he said that he is looking forward to learning from the same school again. I asked if like after they get the certificate are they allowed to go back and learn again and he said that they are allowed to and he said that one thing he really likes is that it doesn't matter if you're really good at learning English or what not it's like somewhere where he feels comfortable to go over and over again"*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Cai, aged 20, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

Some explained how they missed the traditional teacher and classroom structure of their previous schools and felt that sometimes the learning lacked aim. Wider literature concerning informal education for migrants and refugees has also described a lack of motivation experienced by students when there is little structure and opportunity to work towards formalised accreditation (Education International, 2015). Broadhead (2013) referred to this as the 'right to certification'. This concept will be explored further in this thesis.

The three young people from Pakistan who were awarded scholarships to attend an international school felt very fortunate for this opportunity. They explained how they found it difficult at first learning in an English-speaking environment, but they had been to English medium schools in their country of origin, so this gave them an advantage.

They were studying a British curriculum and working towards the IGCSE qualifications. All the teachers, teaching assistants and students at the school were from international or Thai backgrounds and they expressed how the diversity of the school was very much celebrated and respected.

4. Refugee community schools

The privately-run schools described in the previous section provide a much-needed alternative for refugees in Bangkok who are unable to attend a Royal Thai Government School. Unfortunately, however, not all refugees are able to access these schools due to the fees. There are other costs involved in attending school, even if the school is free, such as transport fares, school uniforms, books and stationary supplies (ILO, 2015). The UNHCR will help towards these if the refugee has a case still being processed. However, they will not pay for private tuition fees, and will cut off all financial help once a case is refused and closed. The only way that refugees can respond to this is to set up their own community schools, usually in the apartment buildings and homes where they live, pooling their resources and teaching their children themselves. Some of these schools are partially supported by NGOs, charities and church organisations, though not all (Sciortino and Punpuing, 2009). They run on minimal resources, are at risk of getting shut down by the police and are often only able to run for a limited period

of time, or just for a few hours or days a week. The children and young people relying on these schools for their education therefore have quite low quality and transient experiences, with little opportunity to work towards recognised qualifications that will benefit their future (UNICEF, 2011). Despite these challenges however, there are some positive examples of migrant learning centres, particularly along the borders of Thailand and Myanmar, that are achieving formally recognised accreditation and providing students with opportunities to gain qualifications that will enable them to access further education and meaningful employment (The Thai National Commission for UNESCO, 2015). This indicates that there is the capacity in Thailand to achieve these goals.

One community school I visited was set up in the living room of a family, by a man in his twenties who completed school and college in Pakistan before leaving. Eight students attended the school. They had no textbooks or resources and learned through being assigned project work which they needed to research on their phones and then teach the class. The teacher was therefore more of a facilitator, teaching in both Punjabi and English. All of the students attending this school had experienced long gaps in their education since leaving Pakistan, so were grateful for the opportunity to learn with each other. It was limited how much they could actually express about this school however, since their teacher was also the interpreter.

A brother and sister interviewed were both unable to attend an RTG school or an international school, so were reliant on refugee community schools for their education.

They expressed disappointment at the quality of these schools, saying they wished for more space and challenge. Their first school was closed by the police and they had to wait a year and a half before finding another one. At the time of the interview, Rafsa was attending a school set up in an apartment building near where she was living. She said they had to be quiet or the Thai neighbours complained, and it often got cancelled because of police threats. The school was partially supported by missionaries who sometimes visited and took the students on trips.

5. Reflections on educational experiences

Chapter three discussed the significance of school to a young person's psycho-social well-being, as well as their educational development. It explored models and approaches to refugee education, such as 'healing classrooms' and the 'holistic' approach (Pinson, Arnot and Candappa, 2010), initiatives aimed at drawing on the strengths of diverse classrooms, and developing inclusive curriculums that are both responsive to, and build upon, the needs and experiences represented by diverse student populations. Many of the participants seemed to enjoy their experience at Royal Thai Government Schools and talked about friendships, peer help schemes, and programmes specifically targeted at refugees where they could fast track through the

system if they were older than other students. The most defining feature of these participants however, with the exception of two, was their age and, to a certain extent, background. It was significantly easier for children below the age of twelve to access Thai schools, and succeed in them. Almost all of the participants over this age were either restricted because of their age; dropped out due to language, curriculum and social barriers; or did not attend school because they did not perceive it as an appropriate choice for them.

RTG schools also follow an integrative approach to diversity, rather than an inclusive approach (Pinson et al., 2007). Students are encouraged to assimilate to the Thai language, curriculum and culture, rather than these changing to accommodate diverse student needs. This is perhaps due to limited resources, budgets and knowledge, but is also a result of the monocultural identity of mainstream schools, as emphasized through teaching 'Thainess', rather than raising awareness about Thailand's multicultural identity and membership of ASEAN, as discussed in chapter two (Harkins, 2019). This indicates how even if an education system is accessible, and policies are in place to ensure this, there can still be significant barriers to their effective implementation. Policies are either not put adequately into practice – as in the case with the respondents who were denied entry due to their height; there are too many barriers within the system – such as language and curriculum – to make the schools adequately accessible; or the particular education system in question is not regarded as relevant and appropriate to the young person and/or their family. This points to a

significant need for alternatives for young refugees, and research is required to elicit what these alternatives should be (Bonfiglio, 2010). It is important that this research be carried out through child-friendly methods (Punch, 2007), and that it is sensitive to the cultures and contexts that it is seeking to represent (Walker, 2006). These were the key aims of this thesis.

X. Agency and Resourcefulness

This chapter will explore the various ways that the research participants have exercised agency and resourcefulness, despite the many challenges they face. It will focus on five ways that they have demonstrated this: helping their families; seeking out activities; seeking out resources; seeking out learning opportunities; and peer support. This is an incredibly important theme to have emerged from the data because it shows how significant a role the young participants have played in building their communities, supporting their families and friends, and developing the much-needed social capital referred to in chapter seven (Putnam, 2001). This social capital, both bonding and bridging, is a great source of strength, resilience and sometimes even survival for refugee communities (Calhoun, 2010a). I will examine how the participants have exercised agency and resourcefulness in developing this capital, what barriers they have experienced, and what factors have helped to facilitate and support their achievement and success (Morrow, 1999). In developing a capability framework which is embedded and responsive to the needs, experiences and aspirations of young refugees, it is important to recognise and build upon this agency, both individual and community, in navigating and constructing their realities (Nussbaum, 2011). Opportunities and approaches can then be developed that utilise and maximise this agency, thus contributing to their success and relevance (Palmgren, 2016).

1. Helping their families

One of the most motivating factors for the participants, in terms of accessing education, skills and future employment, was the desire to help their family, both in their present circumstances and for the future. This was mainly expressed by the older participants, but was not differentiated by culture, gender or location. They demonstrated an awareness of the difficult circumstances their families were in, and a desire to help their families out of this in whatever way they could:

> *"She's saying that something that gives her motivation to continue on pursuing this is her family, she wants to help her family. She says that she has a brother who has a condition with his leg and she says her sister has a problem with her eyes as well [unclear] medical needs."*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Lis, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

The participants felt that learning languages would aid this process:

> *"He just wanted to add that learning as of right now is really good, he also adds that it's kind of like they're waiting to see if they can go to a different country and so he's saying that he feels like this is the only thing that he can do like learn as much as he can and especially the languages that he has already come to learn and so he's saying that say we don't get to go to a different country, he already knows how to speak Thai and he knows how to speak English as well, like he can work with that here in Thailand and so like these skills that he learns, from the activities that you guys provide, or from going to school, it will be easier to help him and his family."*

(Interpreter's translation of Wang-Meng, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

The participants from Vietnam and Sri Lanka actually took on the role of spokesperson for their family, either in Thai, particularly if they had attended a Thai school, or in English if they attended an English medium school. Most of the sample group had parents who were unable to communicate in Thai or English, and/or had younger siblings. They therefore had the added responsibility of being their family's cultural and linguistic translator, also dealing with immigration and housing issues, and educational services. None expressed any resentment of this, although this does not necessarily mean that there was not any. They did however express a certain pride in having this responsibility, and a strong awareness of their importance to the family. Role reversal situations such as these, where the child takes on key responsibilities within the family, are not uncommon for refugees (Gilhooly and Lee, 2016). Therefore, in developing policies and programmes for refugees, or populations including refugee communities, it is important to recognize children and young people as agents of change within those communities and consult with them appropriately (Thoresen, Fielding, Gilleatt, & Thoresen, 2016).

2. Seeking out activities

All of the young research participants demonstrated agency in seeking out activities, for themselves and their friends. They met with various degrees of challenge to this, as explored in Chapter eight, where often young people met with hostility from the local community, and sometimes threats if they attempted to use public spaces. These barriers were particularly experienced by young Pakistani refugees, who are more vulnerable to harassment due to their physical appearance, which is clearly different from Thais (Saltsman, 2013). The Vietnamese Hmong refugees have the advantage of blending in to the host community more, though this does not in any way shield them completely from police threats (Broadhead, 2013). Despite these challenges, however, and sometimes because of them, young people would often seek out activities, or create them within their living confines. This section will explore some of the ways in which they did this. This has implications for the construction of social capital for refugee communities, which can be a significant source of well-being, resilience and livelihood (Jacobsen, 2014).

Many of the research participants, particularly those belonging to the Hmong population, and the Sudanese and Sri Lankan families, were active members of Courageous Kitchen, a charitable social enterprise in Bangkok that raises money for refugee communities through international fundraising and local cooking classes and street food tours for tourists. They attended the Saturday school regularly and took part in the cooking activities and other extracurricular activities organised for them, such as the Shift Maps community arts project at Bangkok Art and Culture Centre. Two were even

involved in Courageous Kitchen on a leadership level, training to become teaching assistants and cooking instructors for the tourists. Young people from the Sri Lankan community set up their own Saturday school, where they could teach English, Thai and Tamil, in order to preserve their first language. They approached their local church for a venue and sought advice from myself and other teachers involved in community activities. Two of the young participants were involved in a Bangkok-wide refugee youth group which organises activities and events for young refugees, and advocates on their behalf. They work in partnership with refugee support networks, organisations, churches, schools and universities.

The participants travelled quite far to access activities, such as gym facilities, swimming pools, basketball courts, football pitches, and cricket greens. Two young people were involved in a social enterprise called Chamaliin, where they created cultural handicrafts to sell to tourists and at markets in Bangkok. The money goes back to their families and communities. One participant was particularly active in this and has helped the organisation develop new ideas such as an illustrated story book, a calendar and a therapeutic colouring book. Chamaliin has a strong presence at arts and cultural events in Bangkok, where the artists also do henna tattooing and provide food.

3. Seeking out learning opportunities

Young refugees in Bangkok, often with little help from their parents due to lack of knowledge, education and language skills, have to seek out learning opportunities themselves, and in some cases even create them. This demonstrates an incredible amount of agency and resourcefulness that is so essential to their communities (Boyden, 2001).

Wang-Meng, aged fourteen at the time of his interview, decided that he wanted to attend an English medium school run by Filipino missionaries in Bangkok, rather than his local Thai school. He felt that the English language skills would be more beneficial to his future, since his family are unable to stay in Thailand. He had to appeal to his father to let him do this, since the Filipino school would charge a small monthly fee:

> *"There was a place where they could learn English and so he really wanted to go to learn English because it would be able to help him future wise if they move to an area that speaks English and so he said that he talked with his dad about it and he expressed how he wanted to learn how to speak English to improve on his English and that he can help others and especially his family and then I'm guessing because he probably didn't have permission at first but then because he did that his dad gave him permission and so he was able to go and learn more English."*

(Interpreter's translation of Wang-Meng, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

Sadeera felt that school was not what she needed but wanted to pursue vocational training that would complement the level of schooling she had already achieved in her country of origin and help her pursue her dream of wanting to become a lawyer. She also wanted to learn a practical skill that would help her family in their

present circumstances. She went on to attend classes in tailoring and computers at The Jesuit Refugee Service in Bangkok:

> *"Raji [Interpreter] – so apparently they're going to start their college, so something similar to BRC they're going to start something called JRS, which will have all kinds of vocational degrees, nursing, pharmacy, sorry farming, computer engineering and all kinds of vocation based things and they will give admission to [Sadeera] but they called them three months ago, they put in an application, but they haven't started the college yet, they don't know what happened, so they haven't heard from them yet so that's it*
> *Rebecca [Interviewer] – hmm, I don't know anything about that*
> *Raji – and there are three levels of admissions, lower, middle and upper level*
> *Rebecca – okay, and what vocations would you like to learn at JRS, what subjects would you like to learn at this college?*
> *Sadeera [Interviewee] – law*
> *Rebecca – do they do law; will they offer law?*
> *Raji – so yes they had an option for law but basically in the application they had to check whatever they were interested in but depending on their level they will be put into a level to get to the college level degree, so I think the college has comprehensive admission"*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Sadeera, aged 22, Sri Lankan Tamil, 2017)

Tswab also expressed a level of self-awareness in terms of what schooling would be best for her in the interview:

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – and you want to stay at the Thai school, you don't want to go to a different school?*
> *Mai Err [Interpreter] – she said that actually she does want she would like to change the school. She said that at the other school there's like Pakistanis so like she wants to talk to them and practice her English with them*
> *Rebecca – at the other school, what does she mean?*
> *Mai Err – [name of school]*
> *Rebecca – okay, and is it a Thai school?*
> *Tswuab [Interviewee] – Thai, Pakistan*
> *Mai Err – she said that it's for Thai people, it's for Pakistan people, she said that there's already Hmong people going there as well*

Rebecca – okay and when you finish school, what would you like to do when you finish school, would you like to go to Mathayom [secondary] school?
Mai Err – she said that she wants to continue her learning but one of her focus is that she wants to focus on speaking and like learning English
Rebecca – so do you want to go to the English-speaking school?
Tswaub – yes
Rebecca– and why do you want to learn English?
Mai Err – she said that it really helps her family, she said that if they move to a different country, and say that the language is English [unclear] help communicate and help her family"

(Interpreter's translation of Tswaub, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

This demonstrates a level of awareness of one's future prospects and the steps one needs to take in order to achieve success that most young people do not need to exercise until they are quite a bit older (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). The young participants expressed this however, making similar choices to actively seek out an English medium school and find the funds or sponsorship to attend. Some were able to appeal to their parents or have found other means, such as working illegally on the weekends, or seeking out sponsors from their churches or other sources. The participants also shopped around for opportunities, trying out new learning venues and seeking out ones that work for them, either through the syllabus, the timing or the location. This means that education tends to be a lot more transient for the refugees involved in this research, than for your average teenager.

One of the most striking examples of agency and resourcefulness I observed was young people taking the initiative to seek out ways that they could achieve recognised

qualifications. Ahd, for example, had to leave Pakistan before he could finish secondary school. When he came to Bangkok, he found out that he could do the IGCSE's at The British Council. He was unable to attend classes that would help him prepare for the exams so prepared by himself, using the internet and books copied from friends and libraries. He then tutored others to prepare for the exams:

> *"Ahd [interviewee] – because I wanted to do O levels IGCSE, I wanted to do that, I was already with three subjects back in Pakistan, English, Urdu and Islamia, I got two As and one B, B in English, I wanted to do that so I search online and I found British Council and so I went there and he said this is the process and this is the fee structure so I try I prepared myself, no teachers, no nothing, I gathered the four books from the people, the one I told you who was going to school, I photocopied his book and then I studied myself and first I gave two exams and two later and I just get a C on my own*
> *Rebecca [interviewer] - okay so how long did it take you to prepare for the exams?*
> *Ahd – three months before the exam, because I only can study after I pay the money, I couldn't get I was not able to get the feeling like I have to study unless I pay them so when I paid them I had three months, there was a three month gap between the registration stuff and the exam so in that three months that's when I studied"*

(Ahd, aged 20, Pakistani, 2017)

Another young Pakistani refugee, aged seventeen at the time of the interview, was also preparing for the GED exam, an American high school equivalency diploma. He was collaborating with a group of other refugees who were helping each other. This is very impressive for a young man who had not had any formal schooling or preparation for the exam since leaving Pakistan four years prior to the interview. He was also helping his younger sister to prepare for the exam. These are incredible examples of young people who are unable to access school and certification through mainstream, conventional routes, taking their education and futures into their own hands and

developing opportunities and learning networks for themselves through whatever means available to them (Bonfiglio, 2010). It is essential therefore to reward and build upon this initiative when developing programmes aimed at young refugees and communities involving refugees (Mendenhall, Garnet-Russell & Buckner, 2017).

4. Seeking out learning resources

Often when learning opportunities, formal or informal, are unavailable or inaccessible, refugees will seek out learning resources through alternative means (UNHCR, 2016). The internet has opened up a world of opportunity in this regard, but unfortunately the internet, and the facilities to access the internet, are not always available to refugees with very limited funds (The Vodaphone Foundation, 2016). Refugees do not always possess the knowledge and language skills necessary to access online learning resources. It requires a certain level of computer literacy as well as text literacy in order to navigate the internet. However, in most of the cases I encountered, it was the older generation that lacked these skills. Most of the younger research participants did possess a decent level of computer literacy, whether self-taught, learned at school in Thailand or in their previous countries, or learned from friends and family. If individual families did not have access to Wi-Fi or the technology needed to access the internet, these resources would be shared communally, so often I

would see several people sharing a laptop or a phone or sharing a room that had Wi-Fi. This communal sharing of resources is essential to the strength and resilience of refugee communities (Calhoun, 2010b). Several of the young people involved in the research for example, spoke of how they would study, read, and play musical instruments together. Books, bibles and instruments would be shared and stored at their church or in a communal space.

Cai has a disability so is unable to write easily. He did not start going to school until he was eighteen years old so taught himself how to read and write, using English language books kept in a communal space where he was living. At the time of the interview however, he was attending school but found it difficult to keep up with writing. Instead when he got home, he copied everything onto a computer, which he found easier to use. Cai explained how he liked using computers for this reason so went on to take a vocational training course in computer technology. He also referred to using computers in his digital poem and insisted on creating his poem all by himself, with little technical assistance. He created the music for it himself, the only participant to do so:

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – so before you started going to school did you learn on your own?*
> *Mai Err [Interpreter] – he said that when it comes to learning or education wise he said that the only person that can help you is yourself and he said that he understands his disability and he prays a lot to help his understanding, so he taught himself to I guess read and write*
> *Rebecca– yeah because he can read and write, I've noticed that, and what helped you learn by yourself?*
> *Mai Err– he said that when it comes to reading the teacher helps him like develop his reading skills and then he said that when it comes to writing he said that at school they do the writing and he'll use both his hands to teach himself how to write*

and then when he comes home he will change it to the computer which helps him write."

(Interpreter's translation of Cai, aged 20, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

All of the young people who were unable to attend school, or who had experienced long gaps in their schooling, discussed how they used the internet to learn:

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – do you learn anything by yourself?
Romail [Interpreter] – in the condo school they give some paperwork, so I study there when I am free
Rebecca – and that's every Wednesday and Saturday?
Parvez [interviewee] – yes
Romail – we have Internet access and many of the things I'm concerned with are on the Internet and I learn from there
Rebecca – hmm, what about books?
Romail – I have my science book, I have my English book"

(Interpreter's translation of Parvez, aged 11, Pakistani, 2017)

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – um so are there any learning resources that you have here that you can use?
Romail [Interpreter] – On laptop there is a teacher there and he gives 50 words per week to learn and that we are doing
Rebecca – does he work for an organisation or…?
Romail – yes
Rebecca – what's the organisation?
Romail – it is in Urdu, it is on Youtube to learn English"

(Interpreter's translation of Riaz, aged 13, Pakistani, 2017)

"Tiba [Interpreter] – so he's saying that I watch the blogs on you tube
Rebecca [Interviewer] – hmm, interesting, okay, and why do you watch these? Why do you like watching these?

Tiba – because they speak in English, so I love to listen and then I think by this listening I improve my English"

(Interpreter's translation of Abner, aged 13, Iraqi, 2017)

"Asad [Interpreter] – yes, after the school I go home, and I use my mobile to just because of to seeking something new that I can learn, a new thing
Rebecca [Interviewer] – and what kind of things do you like to learn?
Pakiza [Interviewee] – okay especially English and after that DIY
Rebecca – like crafts?
Pakiza – yeah this is art, drawing like that"

(Interpreter's translation of Pakiza, aged 16, Pakistani, 2017)

Emin, who used online resources to prepare for the GED exams, discussed how certain programmes like the Khan Academy helped him a great deal:

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – when you say studying online, what sort of things were you studying?
Emin [Interviewee] – anything we could find
Rebecca – um, like English, or, do you remember what kind of websites you were studying?
Emin – Khan Academy, Khan Academy
Rebecca – I think I've heard about this actually, that's really interesting yeah, is that English?
Emin – it's run by an American
Rebecca – and is it free?
Emin – yes, but if you want to buy, you need to pay
Rebecca – and do you study like subjects or English grammar or?
Emin – like topics, the one you want to study

Rebecca – hmm, okay that's really interesting, and do you have a laptop here that you use, or did you go somewhere to use a laptop? Emin – I use my dad's"

(Emin, aged 17, Pakistani, 2017)

It is worth noting that none of the young interviewees expressed a preference for online learning over attending a school. All said they would like to attend school in order to have the interaction with teachers and other students. However, internet access enabled some form of learning while waiting for school and also helped some of the participants prepare for formal qualifications (Broadhead, 2013).

5. Peer support

Peer support is an essential ingredient for strong, resilient communities, especially where resources and access to education are limited (Ferlander, 2007). The communities involved in this research which facilitated peer support tended to be stronger and, in terms of educational access and achievement, more successful. This section will discuss some examples of peer support from the perspectives of the research participants, and from the ethnographic diary data.

Peer support would often take place between friends and siblings on a very informal level. For example, one participant explained how she liked to help her friends

and sisters learn English and Thai, and another discussed how his sister would help him learn. Three participants explained how they were learning how to play the guitar and drums from their friends and siblings. The Sri Lankan participants had actually set up their own class on a Saturday for other Sri Lankan refugees to learn Thai, English and Tamil. The participants who had achieved the IGCSE and the GED exams were helping other young people in their community to prepare for the exams:

> *"Ahd [Interviewee] – now I know, actually there are some students in this building that I tutor because there is no other teacher here and I did IGCSEs myself so I know a bit about it and the techniques and I'm teaching them I saw how to do it, I know things now that I didn't know when I was doing IGCSE but now I know a lot of it now*
> *Rebecca [Interviewer] – so you tutor another Ahmadi Pakistanis? And they're preparing for the IGCSE's?*
> *Ahd – some are, two actually*
> *Rebecca – and what age are the students that you tutor?*
> *Ahd – from 13 till 19, I also tutor students who are older than me, like 20-23 years old, GED*
> *Rebecca – all in this building?*
> *Ahd – yeah, many people here, it's easy to join the same building, I don't have to go out, it's safe and that's good"*
>
> (Ahd, aged 20, Pakistani, 2017)

At the time of their interview, Ahd and his older brother were also volunteering as teaching assistants at a school near their house that was providing sponsored education for their sister and some other young refugees. They were doing this in order to have something meaningful to do while they waited to be resettled, and to help others who might be struggling to learn English at their new school. They were also volunteering as interpreters at a monthly health clinic that provides free services for refugees.

6. Reflections on agency and resourcefulness

Many of these narratives indicated a strong desire among the research participants for attaining recognised qualifications through education, so that it would have some meaning beyond their present context and contribute to a better future. This aspiration is certainly not limited to refugees and is a key characteristic of education systems worldwide (Education International, 2015). Qualifications also help to give education structure and a sense of working towards a goal, something that a number of the research participants expressed a lack of, even if they were accessing learning. Broadhead (2013) referred to this as 'the right to certification', describing the opportunity to attain recognized qualifications not just as a significant aspect of a quality educational experience, but also as an educational right, that inevitably leads to accessing other rights and opportunities (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

Chapter four discussed the importance of social capital to migrant communities and the significant role that young people play in constructing community networks and support (Weller, 2006). This chapter examined how the young participants in this research have sought out and created opportunities, both for themselves, their families, and their friends, that make vital contributions to the strength and livelihoods of their

communities. Indeed, as I noted in a diary entry after one quite critical interview, the communities I visited in which young people were creating these active links, seemed significantly stronger and had greater access to outside resources such as schools and employment opportunities; thus, not only did they have the necessary 'bonding capital', developed through peer support networks and self-help groups, they also had 'bridging capital', connecting them to networks and activities outside their immediate communities (Putnam, 2001). Although these communities still faced a great deal of challenges, such as limited legal rights and access to adequate livelihoods, they were visibly stronger and more resilient to these challenges.

The vital role that young people play in creating these networks indicates how important it is to work with young people when developing policies and practices aimed at refugee communities and empower them with the skills and opportunities to act on their agency and initiative (White, Laoire, Tyrell, Carpena-Mendez, 2011). Capacity building projects that develop skills and leadership, such as Courageous Kitchen, are strong examples of this. Restrictive legal conditions and limited access to state power however can make it difficult for refugees to act on their agency and develop these networks (Palmgren, 2013). When they see their friends and elders arrested by the police for trying to do the same, their motivation is severely limited, and they resort to wanting to hide away, leading to feelings of isolation, exclusion and depression, which can be very difficult to emerge from (Hardgrove, 2009). The capability approach addresses the need for agency, in order for people to 'choose the lives they have

reason to value' (Sen, 1999, p. 63). Research that is contextually driven and culturally responsive can help to identify what these values are, how to pursue them, and what the challenges in overcoming them are.

XI. Aspirations

Thaum kuv laus kuv xuv wi ib tus neel uas pab tau lum tug."

"When I get to be old I want to be a person that can help one another."

(Cai, aged 20, 2017)

This chapter will explore some of the aspirations expressed by the research participants and discuss their needs in relation to achieving these. It will focus on educational, career, and personal aspirations for themselves and their families, friends and communities. It will examine their motivations behind these aspirations, and what they perceive to be the opportunities and barriers towards achieving them. Aspirations and hope can be a significant source of strength and resilience for refugees living in such precarious and challenging circumstances (Langevang, 2007). For some of the research participants, the idea that one day their situation would improve seemed to be the only element separating them from despair. Others struggled to envision a future and preferred not to place too much hope in it, accepting the protracted nature of their uncertain existence. It is critical to elicit the aspirations of young refugees, however far-fetched, in order to develop a capability framework for refugee education that responds to these meaningfully (Walker, 2006).

1. Educational aspirations

Particularly for the young people who were not able to access school at the time of the interviews, the main educational aspiration was simply to attend school. Some wished to attend a Thai school, an international or English medium school, whereas others did not specify what kind of school. For some of the interviewees attending an informal community school, they said that they would like to continue, but if given the opportunity to attend an international school, or a 'big' school, they would take it. When asked why, they expressed an understanding that these schools would bring more structure and progression to their educational lives:

> *"They are saying English international school and where we can get lots of different types of activities which make our brain more growing and we can get a chance to be more active in our future life as well."*

(Interpreter's translation of Joud and Kader, aged 16 & 15, Pakistani, 2017)

Some said that they missed the more formal and traditional dynamic of Thai school, or school that they experienced in their country of origin. Due to space issues, and minimal teacher resources, community schools are unable to adopt this approach, are informal and tend to require more student autonomy:

> *"Mai-Err [Interpreter] – so, uh, so he said that he likes the school and he would like to stay in school, but the only thing about that school is that the structure of it*

is you work individually so you do your own stuff and once you need help with something then you ask the teacher to come help you and once they're done helping you then they're off again and then you're back to doing your own thing
Rebecca [Interviewer] – and would you like to stay learning at your school, where you are now?
Mai-Err – okay, so he's saying that if he could find a different school then he would because he says that he likes it how when he was going to the Thai school where it's actually like the teacher teaching all the students together because with that with him doing his own stuff like if he doesn't understand it then it's kind of hard for him."

(Interpreter's translation of Koob, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

Participants related their educational situation to their wider living situation, in terms of waiting in limbo for a decision about where they would live, and being able to progress with their lives once they had more certainty:

"so, he just said that because of their condition right now, going to school is almost never-ending, there's not really anywhere to go in terms of schooling and so he was saying that hopefully if they do get to go to another country he wants to actually finish school and continue higher education."

(Interpreter's translation of Lauj, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

A need for more challenge was commonly expressed, and the opportunity to learn a wider variety of subjects, since, due to lack of resources and teacher knowledge and experience, most community schools tended to focus on basic English, math, Thai or first language, and science:

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – mmm, and is there anything that you would like to learn more of at school that you don't already learn?
Mai-Err [Interpreter] – okay so I guess there's not any subject in particular but then he wants to learn more advanced stuff because the things he learns at the school are a bit more basic and for beginners and so he wants to do more advanced stuff."

(Interpreter's translation of Hawj, aged 17, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

"Romail [Interpreter] – I want more advanced studies in science because what the teacher is teaching it is the younger science there and the math the same also. I want advanced things, but they are teaching the youngsters things…and geography and social studies and geometry we do not study because it is already four years
Rebecca [Interviewer] – what?
Romail – four years, we didn't study geometry, geography and art and social studies."

(Interpreter's translation of Rafsa, aged 15, Pakistani, 2017)

"Rebecca [Interviewer] – okay, what would you like to, is there anything that you would like to learn more of at school that you don't learn already?
Joud [Interviewee] – computer classes
Asad [Interpreter] – they both answer we are missing about the days as because this time is running very fastly, the world is going very fast so as they are learning over there in computer classes, so they want to learn like some computer activities as well, which they are not doing."

(Interpreter's translation of Joud and Kader, aged 16&15, Pakistani, 2017)

These responses suggested a desire among the participants for more challenge at school and a greater diversity of subject content. The participants from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Iraq in particular came from backgrounds where they had experienced this already so adapting to a more basic education was difficult for them and failed to meet their needs. Three withdrew from school as a result of this or were withdrawn by their parents. There are very few options available for refugees experiencing this however unless they are fortunate to obtain a scholarship or sponsorship for a private school.

2. Career aspirations

There were a wide range of career aspirations expressed, such as doctor, pilot, teacher, singer, musician, soldier, nutritionist, accountant, writer, pharmacist, translator, designer, artist, actor and engineer. Two participants were unsure what they wanted which is understandable, especially considering the uncertainty of their situation. When asked about the motivation behind their career aspirations, participants discussed how they wanted to help their families, communities and other refugees in the future:

> *"She says that once she's able to complete her purpose with singing she wants to help with the children here and so that they don't have to go and ask somebody else and so they don't lose a lot of money by paying someone to teach them [unclear] teach them to improve on their lifestyle."*

(Interpreter's translation of Lis, aged 14, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – and what do you think will help you to do this, what do you think you will need to do in order to become a translator?*
> *Fwam [Interviewee] – because it will be famous, and you get a lot of money to help your parents and your family and help the ones who in need of help, it's like a refugee*
> *Rebecca – so you want to help refugees, maybe work for the UN?*
> *Fwam – yeah*
> *Rebecca – okay, here in Thailand or anywhere?*
> *Fwam – anywhere"*

(Fwam, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

“okay he wants to be a teacher I think that’s like the route that he wants to go, and he also mentioned that he wants to be the kind of teacher where he can travel so he can go back to Vietnam to like teach the Hmong kids in Vietnam.”

(Interpreter’s translation of Hawj, aged 17, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

“he says back home in Sri Lanka the medical facilities aren’t that great, so he wants to become a heart surgeon and heart specialist in India or anywhere and he could help treat people who don’t have a lot of money and provide medical care for them.”

(Interpreter’s translation of Naveesh, aged 17, Sri Lankan Tamil, 2017)

“as far as she remembers, from first grade or second grade, she’s always wanted to become a lawyer, but also because she’s seen in the movies that you know innocent people who are innocent, they don’t get the justice because the lawyer [unclear] so seeing all of that she’s had this ambition to become a good lawyer and I guess save the innocent… I asked her about her hopes for the future and she said she wants to become a good lawyer and basically build an orphanage and look after people and she wants to teach and volunteer as teacher like you do and teach Tamil”

(Interpreter’s translation of Sadeera, aged 20, Sri Lankan Tamil, 2017)

3. Personal aspirations

This question focused on what kind of hobbies and activities the young participants would like to have more of an opportunity to pursue, and where they would like to live in the future. In terms of the activities, interviewees expressed a desire to have people that could teach them to dance, sing, cook or play a musical instrument; have more access to arts and crafts materials; exercise more, go on excursions and play sports like cricket:

> *"yes they like I just reminded them they always ask they are missing them playing games, like as Joud wants to be a cricketer so he's missing these kind of days where they just go outside and have fun, outside activities, we can say like that and Kader is saying about the music classes and as I told you we are trying to have so let's see what we can do"*
>
> (Interpreter's translation of Joud and Kader, aged 16&15, Pakistani, 2017)

When asked where the participants would like to live, countries such as Canada, the USA, Germany and Australia were specified. Others said they would like to stay in Thailand or return to their country of origin:

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] - Okay and where would you like to live in the future?*
> *Fwam [Interviewee] – live right, I want to live in Thailand*
> *Rebecca – and why do you want to live in Thailand?*
> *Fwam – because Thailand is a free country right, free zone country, and you can do the thing you want"*
>
> (Fwam, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

Their reasons were that these countries were beautiful, safe or they already had family there that they wanted to reunite with. Some of the participants however did not specify

a country and just expressed a desire to live somewhere where they could have peace, freedom, and rights:

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – where would you like to live in the future?*
> *Raji [Interpreter] – do you mean the country? any place is fine as long as it doesn't have any survival issues*
> *Rebecca – anywhere that is safe?*
> *Chalani [Interviewee] – yes, safe"*

(Interpreter's translation of Chalani, aged 22, Sri Lankan Tamil, 2017)

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – yeah, and where would you like to live in the future?*
> *Ahd [Interviewee] – anywhere, not in Thailand*
> *Rebecca – when you say not in Thailand, why not?*
> *Ahd – they don't give us any human rights like they should at least give the visa and stuff like I'm not a criminal, but you are chasing me down"*

(Ahd, aged 20, Pakistani, 2017)

> *"Rebecca [Interviewer] – and where would you like to live in the future?*
> *Emin [Interviewee]– anything big*
> *Rebecca – anywhere big, so not a small country, a big country*
> *Emin – yes*
> *Rebecca – okay, why a big*
> *country?*
> *Emin – more space"*

(Emin, aged 17, Pakistani, 2017)

"Rebecca [interviewer] – okay, thank you, anything else you'd like to say about your future, or your hopes for the future? Where would you like to live, is there a particular country where you would like to live in the future? Raji [Interpreter] – as long as they have freedom and are safe, freedom and safety, it doesn't matter where they live"

(Interpreter's translation of Sadeera, aged 20, Sri Lankan Tamil, 2017)

Some were even less specific than this and simply expressed a desire for what they perceived to be a 'normal' life, where they can work, have a home and make friends:

"he said that anywhere is fine as long as it's comfortable for you and easy for you, he said he wants to have a home that he can call his own, and kind of like what other people have, they have a house that's their house, they have a car that's their car so he understands that the living condition right now it's not like ideal that's not what he wants and wants to be just to have a home that's his home, a car that's his car"

(Interpreter's translation of Cai, aged 20, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

"Wanting to get into my car and go to working."

(Chue, aged 16, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

"she said that as a translator you can communicate with other people better [unclear] and so with that you know we [unclear] since they're going to be sent to a different country, so she said that communication will be better [unclear] so that way she'll be able to make friends"

(Interpreter's translation of Houa, aged 13, Viet-Hmong, 2017)

4. Reflections on aspirations

In order to develop educational opportunities that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the populations they are for, it is essential first to elicit and document them (Van Blerk & Ansell, 2007). This process goes beyond simply questioning what profession a person is interested in pursuing, but involves dialogue about one's short term and long-term goals, both personal and professional; one's skill set; their educational and cultural background; the expectations placed upon them, from their families and/or communities; and one's moral beliefs and ideologies are also important to consider (Thoreson et al., 2016). It can be helpful to elicit the ideas one has about how they plan to achieve their goals, what their needs are, what challenges they perceive, and what opportunities they aspire to have. With some of the interviews above, dialogue around their aspirations also involved informing the participants about what may help them to achieve their goals, and where they could seek support for this (Punch, 2001); for example, looking for ways and resources to help them achieve recognized certification; or joining an organization where they could train and develop their skills in a certain area. In this way, the interviews were exploratory in nature (Hones, 1998).

Part 3: Framing the Data and Conclusions

XII. Framing the Data:

a capabilities framework for young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand

> *"In assessing our lives, we have reason to be interested not only in the kinds of lives we manage to lead, but also in the freedom that we actually have to choose between different styles and ways of living. Indeed, the freedom to determine the nature of our lives is one of the valued aspects of living that we have reason to treasure."*
>
> (Sen, 2010, pp. 225)

This chapter will outline a capabilities framework for young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand. The framework will be contextually driven and build on the thoughts, ideas, perspectives, experiences, aspirations, needs and narratives of the participants involved in the research. I will discuss how the framework has been influenced by the work of Sen (2010), Nussbaum (2000) and particularly Walker (2007) and adapt Walker's list of educational capabilities to the context of urban refugee education in Thailand. The framework will also be derived from the background knowledge gained through the literature review conducted for the purpose of this thesis; from interviews with professionals working in refugee education in Bangkok; and from personal experience working with and observing refugee communities in Bangkok.

Chapter four discussed the capabilities approach and why it is relevant to the research for this thesis. A key aspect of the capabilities approach, as outlined by Sen (2010) is the notion of human agency, the idea that one's well-being and quality of life should be driven by choice and the ability to act on this choice. Choices should be informed and guided by careful reflection, hence the idea of choosing a life 'one has reason to value' (Sen, 1999). Capabilities are both driven by the individual and also created by the society in which that individual is situated. One requires enabling conditions in order to live a life they value. "The capabilities approach, as conceived by Sen, sees development in terms of freedom. This freedom, it is suggested, has at its heart human agency, that is, an ability to act as an individual and bring about change based on one's own values and objectives. According to Sen, agency work cannot be perceived in isolation. It is constrained by social, political and economic factors and these factors must be borne in mind when looking to develop and support agency." (Crosbie, 2014, p. 92)

Hence, there are three factors about the capabilities approach that made it an appropriate choice for framing the data and turning the research into meaningful recommendations: first, the emphasis on agency, as espoused by Sen (2010). This has been a strong theme running through the data, not just individual agency but also community agency. The level of agency that certain individuals and communities have demonstrated, particularly with regard to accessing and creating educational resources

and opportunities, has been substantial. This has manifested itself in initiatives such as peer education groups, community schools, networking with organisations in order to access materials and resources; engaging directly with Thai government schools and international schools in order to gain access, rather than relying only on refugee organizations such as the UNHCR for assistance. What is obvious through these initiatives is that individuals and communities that demonstrate this agency are stronger, more resilient, and more likely to be offered resources and opportunities because there is evidence that they will be utilized and maximized (Calhoun, 2010a). In short, there is social capital, both bonding and bridging, to invest in and build upon with these communities and individuals (Putnam, 2001).

The second reason for choosing a capability framework for the research recommendations is based on the approach's capacity to highlight some of the social, political, educational, economic and environmental conditions necessary for people to achieve the lives they have reason to value. Nussbaum (2000) refers to an individual's 'adapted preferences' as being factors in our social and political environments which influence the choices that we have, and the decisions that we make. If we are exposed to enabling factors that promote equal opportunities and rights, we adapt our sense of choice and aspirations to suit these. If we feel limited and disabled by factors in society however, we adapt our preferences to these constraints, often without even realising it. 'Such adapted preferences can limit individual aspirations and hopes for the future. We adjust our hopes to our probabilities, even if these are not in our best interests. In turn,

our agency and well-being are diminished rather than enhanced, even if we do not see it in this way.' (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007, pp. 6) This framework will therefore attempt to describe what these enabling conditions should be and why they are important to the participants involved in this research.

The emphasis on context is a third reason why the data in this thesis has been framed using a capabilities approach. The voices of the research participants have constructed the framework, and these voices are representative of the physical, social and political landscapes that they are situated in (Nussbaum, 2000). Walker (2006b) embedded her capabilities framework in the educational needs, experiences and aspirations of young women in South Africa. Although inspired by the work of Nussbaum (2003), whose framework applied to women in India, and Robeyns (2003), whose framework was derived from research with women in post-industrial societies, Walker developed certain key capabilities that were very much influenced by the particular geo-political conditions of South Africa at that time. Sen (2010) emphasised that a capability approach should aim to represent and reflect the needs, aspirations and conditions expressed by the individuals and communities it is responding to. For this reason, he avoided prescribing any specific capabilities and advocated that his approach be adapted to specific contexts and situations. This is what I have attempted to do in constructing a capabilities framework for refugee education in the context of Bangkok, Thailand.

> *"The capability approach points to an informational focus in judging and comparing overall individual advantages, and does not, on its own, propose any*

> *specific formula about how that information may be used. Indeed, different uses may emerge, depending on the nature of the questions that are being addressed and, more practically, on the availability of data and of informative material that can be used."*
>
> (Sen, 2010, pp. 231)

The next section will outline an educational capabilities framework for young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand. It will draw on research conducted with sixty participants through semi-structured individual and focus group interviews; the 'Shift Maps' visual narrative project; the 'Where I'm from' digital stories project; ethnographic diary data; the literature review for the purpose of this thesis; and interviews with professionals working in the field of refugee education in Bangkok, Thailand. The participants were mixed age and from a variety of backgrounds, mainly Vietnam, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, but also from Sudan, Iraq and Somalia. Most of the participants had lived in Bangkok for between four and eight years at the time of the interview and had attended school, though not all. These schools included Royal Thai government schools, international schools, informal learning centres, and community schools. Some of the participants had refugee status through the UNHCR in Bangkok, and were awaiting resettlement, whereas others were still awaiting a decision on their case or appealing again. The framework will build on the key concepts of the capabilities approach, as espoused my Sen (1999); the capabilities for development constructed by Nussbaum (2000); and the educational capabilities derived by Walker from her research (2006b).

Educational Capabilities

Sen emphasized the significance of education as a capability in itself that leads to a number of other important capabilities. When people are denied an education, they are denied access to essential freedoms and opportunities that fulfill a life that one has reason to value. This limits their agency, their right to make choices over their lives and wellbeing, and their ability to participate in social and political processes which enhance these rights and creates the conditions necessary to lead more fulfilling lives. Thus, education perpetuates freedom so should therefore be an essential capability. Terzi (2007, p. 31) explores this in her chapter, 'The Capability to be Educated':

> *"Education has an instrumental aspect, since it is a means to other valuable goods, such as better life prospects, career opportunities, and civic participation. It improves one's opportunities in life. In this sense, education, specifically schooling, promotes the achievement of important levels of knowledge and skills acquisition, which play a vital role in agency and wellbeing."*

Therefore, I will begin this framework with an emphasis on the capability of education for young refugees in Bangkok, and then go on to explain what particular capabilities should form this wider educational capability. The reason it is important to emphasize this capability is because many young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, and indeed all over the world, are denied this basic capability. In being denied this, either through lack of access; exclusionary policies and procedures; transient and unstable

existences; or war and conflict, young refugees are being denied other freedoms and capabilities that limit their agency, aspirations, wellbeing and ability to lead lives they have reason to value. This also limits these choices for those around them and for their future generations, perpetuating the cycle of poverty, marginalisation and liminality that all too often define the lives of refugees (Dryden-Peterson, 2006). Vaughan (2007), in her analysis of the 'capability to participate in education', describes how, 'an assessment of the capability to participate would, therefore, compare constraints that might affect the freedom of a child to achieve various educational functionings.' (p. 116)

It is important to address however that inequalities can also be enhanced and perpetuated through schooling, as has been experienced by some of the participants in the research for this thesis. It is therefore crucial that approaches to education address more than just issues of access, but also how to promote inclusion, equality, respect for diversity both within educational environments and in wider society. Tikly and Barrett (2011) explore this in their examination of human rights-based approaches to education, which emphasize the right not just *to* education, but also *in* education and *through* education. The right *to* education includes issues of access, transport, finances, and other issues that facilitate or impede one's ability to learn. The right *in* education involves structures and processes within an educational institution that promote learning and well-being. The right *through* education includes the opportunities available to a person as a result of their education, and how the educational environment and educational policies promote or inhibit these. "A key role for good quality education

becomes one of supporting the development of autonomy and the ability to make choices in later life rather than simply providing individuals with the necessary resources to learn." (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, p. 7) Thus, in this framework, I will attempt to construct a list of capabilities that examine what enabling conditions are necessary for young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand, to access, participate and succeed in education, drawing on the capabilities frameworks constructed by Nussbaum (2000) and Walker (2006b) for inspiration. The framework will respond to the key themes identified in the analysis chapters, drawn from the interview, digital poetry and shift maps data; and the literature review conducted for the purposes of this thesis.

Nussbaum's list of 'central human capabilities' was constructed as a framework that could be applied and adapted to different contexts and conditions, although its initial development was in response to promoting gender equality (2000). It has been criticized for being overly prescriptive, thus conflicting with Sen's emphasis on informational design and developing capabilities that are socially embedded and responsive to individual and community needs (Sen, 2010). Despite these criticisms however, Nussbaum's central human capabilities have been adapted and used in several different ways and contexts, thus demonstrating their flexibility and applicability. Walker (2007) has adapted them to various educational contexts, to gender equality in education in the context of South Africa; and widening participation students in higher education institutions in the UK (2006a). The following framework will examine how the central human capabilities of Nussbaum (2006) and the educational capabilities of

Walker (2007) can be adapted to a capability framework for refugee education in the context of Bangkok, Thailand.

Nussbaum's capability of 'senses, imagination, and thought' and 'practical reason'; and Walker's capabilities of 'knowledge', 'aspiration', 'voice' and 'autonomy' will be a particular focus. I will also incorporate Sen's emphasis on the concept of 'agency' as being a fundamental human entitlement, that must be embedded in and gained through a quality education. Nussbaum (2006) described the capability of 'senses, imagination, and thought' as:

> *"Being able to use the senses to imagine, think, and to reason – and to do these things in a 'truly human' way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice: religious, literary, musical and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain."*
>
> (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 65)

In her 'practical reason' capability, Nussbaum discusses the importance of being able to 'plan one's life' (2006). Walker (2007) emphasizes the significance of 'knowledge' as being a capability that can enhance, 'knowledge of school subjects that are intrinsically interesting or instrumentally useful for post-school choices of study, paid work and a career…fair assessment/examination of knowledge gained.' (p. 189). Walker also discusses the capability of 'aspiration' as being 'the motivation to learn and succeed, to

have a better life, to hope' (p. 190); the capability of 'voice' for, 'participation in learning, for speaking out, not being silenced through pedagogy or power relations or harassment, or excluded from curriculum, being active in the acquisition of knowledge' (p. 190); and the capability of 'autonomy' as, 'being able to have choices, having information on which to make choices, planning a life after school, independence, empowerment.' (p. 189) The following capabilities will incorporate these aspects of Nussbaum and Walker's capabilities, but adapt them to the needs, experiences and aspirations expressed by the research participants in this thesis. In this way, the capabilities will also incorporate Sen's informational design approach, which emphasizes the importance of basing capabilities on public consultation (Sen, 2010).

Thai language education

Although the majority of research participants did not envision a future in Thailand, those who were learning Thai discussed the benefits of it: They were able to perform practical tasks, such as shopping and getting around the city more easily and were also able to help communicate for their families. Many young refugees assume this responsibility for their parents when arriving in a new country (McBrien, 2005). If all the family are unable to attend local schools and/or language classes, the priority tends

to go to the younger generation. This can place quite a lot of responsibility on children and young people. When asked about this however, most of the participants said that they wanted to help their families and regarded it as their responsibility to do so.

Some of the participants also agreed that being able to communicate in Thai helped them to feel safer in Bangkok. For the Vietnamese refugees, who have the advantage of resembling Thai people, they felt they could blend in more, and thus were less targeted by police and people hostile to foreigners. Other refugees, for example those from Pakistan or Sri Lanka, discussed how they thought communicating in Thai made local people more amicable towards them, and less likely to report them to the police. They were also more likely to form friendships and community ties with their Thai neighbours, which increases the feeling of security in a place. One participant explained how some neighbours warned her family if police were in the area, and even helped to hide them at times. Learning the local language can also facilitate bridging capital between people from different backgrounds and communities (Putnam, 2000), which, as explored in chapter four of the literature review, can enhance the livelihood, social and educational opportunities of migrant and refugee populations (Westlund & Larsson, 2016).

Understanding the Thai language is essential if refugee children want to attend Royal Thai Government Schools. Indeed, they need to demonstrate a basic level in order to be accepted. This was easier for the younger participants than the older. The

older participants explained how it was too difficult to learn such a different language to their own and felt uncomfortable learning alongside children much younger than them. Older participants were also more aware of the long-term need for them to learn Thai and were less motivated. They understood that they could not stay in Thailand so did not see the necessity in learning the language. Two participants however had progressed onto secondary level Thai school and were able to work towards nationally recognized qualifications. Even if they are resettled outside of Thailand, they may be able to convert these qualifications in the future.

There is an instrumental value to learning Thai. It may not be a language that is used internationally but it is still an extra language that could be a benefit in the future. One participant explained how he and his cousin were able to work as interpreters for a refugee organization, often translating their native language into Thai or English. Another participant aspired to be a translator in the future, and thought that knowing Thai would be useful, alongside her native language and English. Two participants expressed a desire to stay in Thailand and live in the future, if they could. This does not seem possible under current immigration law but Thai policies towards people seeking asylum may change in the future. If they do, knowing Thai language may help them obtain a visa, education and employment. Some participants were helping to support their families through working in the informal sector, which knowing Thai helped them to achieve. However, employment of this kind can be risky and make them more of a target to the police.

Thus, learning the Thai language connects to Walker's capabilities of 'voice' and 'autonomy' (2007). It enables young people from non-Thai speaking backgrounds to engage in Thai education if they can and wish; and be able to access the curriculum, express their ideas and ask questions more easily. Understanding Thai enhances autonomy by enabling young refugees to access local information, therefore making more informed choices, and gain independence and empowerment for themselves and their families by being more mobile and able to access services and resources. An understanding of the local language and culture was identified as a key step in fostering inclusion in the UNESCO 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report (2018c). It also emphasized the valuable role that informal education can play in facilitating this.

Native language education

Native language education can be quite a controversial topic in migration politics, with regards to funding priorities (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). It is difficult for schools to accommodate many different languages, so priority tends to be given to the national language, and then curricular languages (which vary according to country and region). In Thailand, the main languages taught in schools, aside from Thai, are English and

Chinese. Many of the participants explained how they missed learning their native language, and were worried about forgetting it, or not being able to read and write in their native language. This was important to them in terms of preserving their culture and heritage, and also because many of the participants dreamed of one day being able to return to their native countries. For some of the older participants, there was also a level of pride in their culture and language, that they wanted to preserve. They associated it with being educated and respected, in contrast to how they felt in Thailand, where they did not know the language and felt very much excluded from society.

Additive acculturation occurs when a person foreign to a country learns the language and culture of that country while still preserving their native language and culture (McBrien, 2005). Research has shown that people assimilate more productively into a new culture through additive acculturation, in terms of educational success and social integration, than if they reject their native language and culture:

> *"Research on second language acquisition and bilingualism informs debates on educational models that promote success for immigrant youth, especially which language should be used for instruction, under what circumstances, and for how long. One recurring finding is that it takes approximately five to seven years for immigrant language learners to develop the academic language proficiency required to compete fairly with native speakers in standardized assessment regimes at the centre of education reforms the world over. Another consistent finding suggests that 'balanced bilinguals', that is, youth who maintain their home language, as they acquire a second academic language, tend to have better educational trajectories over time."*
>
> (Suarez-Orozco, Darbes, Dias, Sutin, 2011, p. 315)

Tikly and Barrett (2011) discuss how, 'there is significant evidence that learning in the mother tongue at least in the early years is critical for cognitive development.' (p. 11)

Therefore, it is important for children from refugee backgrounds to still learn their native language alongside their new languages. This can also aid literacy development, which leads onto other key skills such as being able to decode important information, read, comprehend text, make predictions, deduce and analyze text. These are important skills that can be applied to other areas of education and knowledge acquisition (Wearmouth, 2001).

Bonfiglio (2010) discusses how one of the many advantages of non-formal education for refugees is being able to construct the curriculum to include mother-tongue language education. In the research for this thesis, most of the refugee community schools I visited that were established for children and young people unable, or unwilling, to attend Thai government schools, incorporated native languages into the curriculum, for example Urdu and Tamil. Non-formal schools that were more culturally and linguistically diverse might find this harder but could assign certain times of the day or week where students split into groups to learn. One school actually incorporated the various native languages of the school into the mainstream curriculum, so that students had the option of learning an extra language, such as Arabic or Punjabi. This is one of the more structured and well-resourced non-government schools in Bangkok. It is not an accredited international school, but students do pay a fee and are able to work towards recognized qualifications. Most of the participants in this research however could not afford to pay fees, unless they were sponsored. There are some disadvantages to schools that teach native languages: students are less likely to learn

Thai or other languages so may not integrate as well into the local culture; students are less motivated to attend more formal schools where they may have more access to accreditation and qualifications.

The capability of 'native language education' relates to Nussbaum's capability of 'senses, imagination, and thought', in that it enhances one's ability to, 'use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech,' (p. 65) and Walker's capability of 'voice', in that it aids one's ability to express themselves, understand and take pride in their heritage. In examining the concept of voice however, it is important not to oversimplify it to just language. There are much more powerful barriers to voice than this (Twum-Danso, 2009). For example, in many cultures, it is considered rude for people, especially children and/or women to speak out and be too critical. Abebe (2009) discusses his research with street children in Ethiopia. He noticed that girls were far more reluctant to participate in research due to their 'tihitina' or "honesty, politeness, respectfulness and good manners." (p. 459) It is important that there be opportunities for students to express themselves and participate in their education through non-verbal communication, such as creative expression. This concept of voice will be discussed further in the next section.

English language education

In terms of leading to various essential functionings (Nussbaum, 2000), English language education is an important capability for young refugees living in the context of Bangkok, Thailand. First of all, understanding English helps young refugees to communicate with people from other countries due to its status as an international language. For example, in one of the migrant learning centres a Vietnamese research participant attended, he talked about how he was able to converse with students from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia and the Philippines in English. Organizations assisting refugees in Thailand, such as the UNHCR and Asylum Access, use English as the main language to communicate, both verbally and in written documentation. Many of the people working for international organizations also use English to communicate so refugees who are able to communicate in English can help their families and communities by translating letters and documents and interpreting important information. Some are also able to access voluntary employment as translators and interpreters, receiving certain benefits in return for their assistance, and gaining recognized experience with international organizations, which may help them to acquire meaningful employment opportunities in the future. This relates to Walker's capabilities of 'knowledge' and 'autonomy' (2007); refugees can acquire skills that help them access information and knowledge and may lead to employment opportunities. This is by no means guaranteed however. It can be a common misperception that a mastery of

English will lead to meaningful employment (Mortland, 1987). This will be examined further in this section.

English can be important for building bridging capital with the international community. These networks, whether they are developed through church, charities or community projects, are essential sources of resources and, in many cases, survival for refugees who are unable to work and support themselves through legal channels (Jacobsen, 2014). For example, Courageous Kitchen is a small social enterprise based in Bangkok that supports refugees through food and education projects. Although it does receive small grants from various funders, a large amount of its revenue is generated through cooking classes and food tours for tourists. Young people from the refugee community in Bangkok are trained to deliver these classes, in return for food and accommodation. It is essential that they are able to communicate in English with the foreigners taking the cooking classes. It also helps to raise awareness locally and internationally if refugees are able to talk about their experiences in a place where they feel safe. SEA Junction is an organization based at Bangkok Art and Culture Centre [BACC]. It hosts various events about issues affecting society, culture and politics in South East Asia. People are encouraged to participate in discussions and share their knowledge about these issues. In many cases, people are unaware of the situation affecting ethnic minorities in Vietnam, for example, or religious minorities in Pakistan. Hearing first hand experiences of people that have had to seek asylum from these countries because of ethnic, religious and political persecution is therefore an important

way to raise awareness and empathy about conditions and human rights abuses in these countries. Walker's capability of 'voice' is demonstrated here by young people being able to express their experiences and needs to international audiences (2007). However, it is important to recognise that this may be limited to those who are confident or proficient enough to use English and communicate effectively with it, limiting people's understanding of the refugee experience to this minority (Brodie, 2003). Others who are not so confident or proficient may still feel silenced, so it is important to find other ways of enabling 'voice' than simply through language and verbal communication (Begum, 2006). There is the danger of 'voice' becoming tokenistic and enabling the impression that certain groups have been heard, when really a very narrow representation of that group has been involved in this process (Cahell, 2007). There may also be ethical dilemmas involved in trying to give certain groups a 'voice' if they are put at risk in speaking out (Ahsan, 2009).

An understanding of English helps refugees have access to information which may be important. This may help with their asylum case, and inform them about international news, events and policies that could be useful. In addition to this, international academic institutions and qualifications use English as their language medium so a knowledge of it can open up more educational opportunities. There was a strong sentiment among the majority of research participants that attending English medium schools and learning English was a more worthwhile use of their time while awaiting resettlement, since they would not be able to stay in Thailand and Thai is not

as useful outside of Thailand. Even if a participant did not aspire to move to a native English-speaking country, they still felt English was more useful because it is spoken internationally, including in non-native English-speaking countries, where it is often the most common second language. Nussbaum's capability of 'practical reason' (2006), and Walker's capabilities of 'aspiration' and 'autonomy' (2007) are demonstrated here. An understanding of English equips young refugees with the skills to make more informed choices and to plan a better life. Sen's concept of 'agency' (2010) is also relevant in that having a wider choice of languages enhances one's choices in career and education prospects, and also in choosing where they want to live.

The danger of an over-emphasis on English language education however is that it reinforces the hegemony of the language, and the cultural power dynamics intrinsic and often perpetuated by this. Seidlhofer (2003) metaphorically depicts English as the 'Tyrannosaurus Rex' of languages; phrases such as 'linguistic imperialism' and 'linguistic genocide' (Albright and Luke, 2008) have also been used to describe its linguistic power, especially with regards to the colonial roots of the dominance of the English language. Many non-English speakers begrudge it as a necessary evil, one that threatens their cultural and linguistic identity, but that is necessary for global communication and economic advancement. Kramsch (2008) refers to Bourdieu's notions of 'cultural capital' and 'symbolic power' in literacy education, two concepts that could be aptly applied to the English language, the 'symbolic power' being the language and the 'cultural capital' something that you gain from acquiring the language. The more

time and money people invest in acquiring this particular form of capital, the more power the language has. De Costa (2010) refers to the English language classroom as political in that it conveys a particular message regarding what an immigrant needs to do, and sound like in order to fully assimilate and be included in their new society. An inability to do so implies incompetence and exclusion, even rejection, hence the 'symbolic violence' metaphor that Kramsch (2008) explores, whereby a lack of compliance with the symbolic power leads to negative consequences. Kubota and Lin (2009) also discuss the linguistic hierarchies in English language education and Seidlhofer (2003) argues for an indigenised form of English that respects, integrates and represents the linguistic and cultural diversity of its speakers.

It is critical therefore that English language education be approached sensitively and carefully so as not to simply reinforce the hegemony of the language, for example by using strategies that respect and incorporate diverse languages and cultures. One approach can be to adapt teaching strategies to the cultural context of the students. Goodkind (2006) describes this as an ecological perspective, whereby the cultural strengths of the students are incorporated into the learning approach. For example, when teaching the Hmong, Hope (2011) utilised their collective nature and created mutual learning circles, which also included the teachers. They describe how these tapped into their 'funds of knowledge' and helped to build 'transcultural capital' with families from other backgrounds. Montero, Newmaster & Ledger (2014) describe how they utilised their students' traditions of oral storytelling to develop reading instructional

strategies in their ESL classrooms. These approaches are not only relevant to English language education but align themselves with the 'holistic' approach discussed earlier (Pinson, Arnot & Candapa, 2010), with their emphasis on methods and materials that build on the cultural knowledge and experiences of the students. They require a certain level of openness and interest from the teacher. Some teachers may feel they lack the ability and understanding to develop culturally responsive pedagogies, which is why it is important for methods that support this approach to be built in to teacher training (Perry & Hart, 2012).

Medley (2012) explores the important role that English language teachers can play in trauma healing, and in helping refugee children to develop coping strategies. He describes a healing classroom as being safe and comfortable, and one where students know what to expect, through the use of routines, cooperative group work, and choral drilling exercises. Wood (2011) discusses the importance of personalised materials that give learners a chance to share something about themselves without being put on the spot. She describes the language experience approach (LEA) as one where learners create a text either together or by themselves. This text is then used to create exercises such as re-ordering, gap fill, grammar games, etc. A series of these texts and activities can be made into a Learners' Lives as Curriculum (LLC) package that can be distributed to the learners and used in further classes. Learners tend to be more engaged in the process because they have contributed to the materials. It can also foster collaboration and break down teacher student barriers. The capability of 'voice' (Walker, 2007) is

reinforced through these approaches in that students are encouraged to actively participate in their learning and power relations between teachers and students are minimised.

These approaches can be quite restricted however in their capacity to realistically initiate change outside of the classroom and challenge established norms whereby people with limited English language abilities are able to excel. Symbolic power can be enacted through the Western-style models of education that migrants must conform to in order to gain the cultural capital needed for survival and upward mobility. Warriner (2007) describes the English for speakers of other language [ESOL] classroom as a 'site of cultural politics' in which 'ideologies of language and language learning are played out' (p. 347). Underlying this is the rhetoric that classes and qualifications will lead to meaningful employment. This leads to disappointment when many immigrants end up only being given part-time, low skilled jobs. DeCapua and Marshall (2010) explore this in their analysis of the barriers experienced by students with limited or interrupted education. English language education should therefore involve more than just linguistic skills. Vocational and life skills should also be taught, such as 'soft skills' related to peace keeping, critical thinking, teamwork, business management and health (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Peer and autonomous learning strategies should be encouraged, as well as leadership and community involvement. These can be facilitated through integrated activities with organisations such as volunteering agencies, youth clubs, arts and recreational facilities. The literature around Sustainable Development

Goal Four emphasises these learning objectives: “Lifelong learning comprises all learning activities undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies, within personal, civic, social and employment related perspectives.” (UNESCO/Sustainable Development Goals, 2016, p. 8).

The significance of promoting digital literacy and online learning opportunities has been emphasised through the United Nations Education Strategy 2012-2016 (2012) and Teachers College at Columbia University (Mendenhall, Garnet-Russell & Buckner, 2017): “Providing access to computers in formal education for primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and for non-formal education. This will be done in collaboration with UNHCR’s computer technology access (CTA) programme and through accessing publicly available computer laboratories. Focus will be placed on group and peer learning opportunities; access to certified distance-based programmes and computer use for both educational and livelihood purposes; and language skills training.” (UNESCO, 2012, p. 38) A report carried out by The Vodaphone Foundation (2016) discussed how digital learning technology has helped to increase access to education and bring education closer to meeting Sustainable Development Goal Four. There are a number of issues however concerning access to digital learning technology, and ethical issues in terms of exposing vulnerable populations. If approached carefully and fairly however, developing digital skills can promote the capability for ‘knowledge’ (Walker, 2007) by providing instrumental skills necessary for a person to access information, communication and employment. Online learning platforms can also aid educational

inclusion by reaching people unable to attend conventional educational settings and increasing access to training and qualifications. Therefore, the capability of 'autonomy' (Walker, 2007) is enhanced through digital platforms by opening up more information and choices for marginalised communities with limited access to learning opportunities. It is important however that these learning platforms are developed with diverse populations in mind and that they respond to the needs and capacities of these communities. Their impact is also stronger when facilitated by teachers, mentors and peer educators (Mendenhall, Garnet-Russell & Buckner, 2017).

Educational certification

A strong desire for educational certification was expressed through the research, particularly by the older participants. This was for a number of reasons; some just wanted to feel like they were working towards a goal and would receive recognition of their hard work and achievements. They expressed frustration when there was a lack of this and satisfaction when they received it. For example, one informal school had an awards ceremony and gave out certificates at the end of each academic year. Although these certificates were not formal academic qualifications, they still helped to give the students who received them a sense of progress and recognition. They also viewed the certificates as something they could bring to other countries with them and use to prove

that they had been in education in Thailand. Students who did not receive any certification seemed less motivated and confident about their learning, because they did not have anything to show for it. Broadhead (2013) also explored the 'right to certification' in her case study research about refugee education in Bangkok, Thailand. She discovered that there was a higher school dropout rate among students who were not working towards accreditation.

Participants were aware that certification, especially in the form of internationally recognized qualifications, would benefit their future educational and career prospects. The most popular of these are the GED and the IGCSE exams. Participants had set up peer study groups to help them prepare for these and found sponsors through their churches and transnational networks to pay for the tests. They found resources on the internet and second-hand materials. Attaining qualifications is one of the biggest challenges refugees face in Thailand, and around the world, especially in places where they do not have many legal rights. Observing how they overcome these challenges is very inspiring. Refugees are more likely to get sponsorship also when they show so much resourcefulness, self and mutual help (Jacobsen, 2014).

The right to certification relates to Walker's capabilities of 'knowledge' and 'aspiration' (2007). Access to and attainment of recognised certification enhances one's post-school choices of work, study and careers. Particularly if the certification is internationally recognised, this can help a young refugee feel like they will have more

opportunities in the countries they are hoping to move to. They will also have a greater awareness of what is perceived as standardised knowledge in these countries, thus giving them more transferable skills and confidence. Sen's concept of agency (1999) is significant in the young refugees' efforts to peer educate each other, seek out resources and develop their own responses to the restrictive conditions they found themselves in. It is essential that services and programmes aiming to assist refugees recognise this agency, work with it and empower it. Walker's capability for 'social relations' (2007) is also apparent in this example of how, even when denied access to institutions that facilitate education and development, people will respond by developing their own support networks and programmes:

> *"The capability to be a friend, the capability to participate in a group for friendship and for learning, to be able to work with others and to solve problems and tasks, being able to work with others to form effective or good groups for learning and organising life at school, being able to respond to human need, social belonging."*
>
> (Walker, 2007, p. 190)

Educational capabilities overview

These educational capabilities are significant for the refugee community in Bangkok, especially for young refugees who tend to take on the role of communicating

for their parents and grand-parents with the local and international community. Many of the younger children are able to attend Royal Thai Government Schools but not all, and the older participants felt that they were too old, and too experienced, to start again with a whole new curriculum. Due to their impermanent status in Thailand also, they were reluctant to commit to learning Thai and adapting to a new academic culture. Informal education is therefore an important alternative to mainstream schooling and these schools can tailor the curriculums to suit the particular needs and linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds of the students (Bonfiglio, 2010).

Alternative provision can also provide more targeted support to young people that have varying needs and aspirations that differ from children in mainstream education. This is an important aspect of providing quality education, one of the key aims of the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda (UNESCO, 2018a). Rather than measuring educational outcomes in terms of access, the relevance and suitability of the curriculum and certification being offered also needs to be considered. Although this can be more challenging, especially in countries that have limited budgets and resources, accommodations do need to be made for diverse needs within a population. These approaches do not necessarily have to require a great investment and can end up saving money in the long run, if solutions and innovations are put in place, that are grounded in the needs of diverse populations, and effectively monitored. This was addressed by Audrey Azoulay, the Director General of UNESCO, in her forwarding remarks for the Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2018c).

> *"Ignoring the education of migrants squanders a great deal of human potential. Sometimes simple paperwork, lack of data or bureaucratic and uncoordinated systems mean many people fall through administrative cracks. Yet investing in the education of the highly talented and driven migrants and refugees can boost development and economic growth not only in host countries but also countries of origin. Provision of education in itself is not sufficient. The school environment needs to adapt to and support the specific needs of those on the move."*
>
> (UNESCO, 2018c, p. iii)

Another important resource that refugees completely lack access to in the context of Bangkok, is further and higher education. Even if they could afford tuition fees, non-citizens of Thailand require an education visa in order to attend college or university. This is very difficult for refugees to obtain if they are in the country illegally, even if they are registered with the UNHCR. Some of the research participants expressed a strong desire to attend college or university, particularly those who had achieved a substantial level of education in their countries of origin. This sense of stalled migration, and the inertia and frustration that results from it, is a waste of valuable time and resources which could be spent developing much needed skills and knowledge so that refugees are ready and equipped when they are eventually resettled (Zeus, 2011). Some of the respondents discussed using on-line programmes to develop these skills, and even work towards college and university course credits, but most expressed a desire to experience further and higher education in a more traditional way.

Life Skills Capabilities

This section will focus on life skills capabilities that have emerged from the data, particularly ones that are important to a young person's health and well-being, in their present and future situations. The framework will once again draw on Sen's concept of agency (2010); Nussbaum's central human capabilities and Walker's educational capabilities. Of particular relevance to the following list will be Nussbaum's capabilities of 'bodily health' and 'play' (2006); and Walker's capabilities of 'autonomy', 'respect and recognition', 'voice', 'bodily integrity and bodily health' (2007).

Leadership, initiative and responsibility

Chapter four discussed how young people are key contributors to the social capital of their communities, often establishing networks and seeking out resources that help their families and communities (Weller, 2006). This initiative is particularly important for refugee communities, where often the older generations face more barriers in terms of communicating and accessing education and employment. Young people tend to have more responsibility therefore, and many of the research participants

expressed a desire to take on this responsibility, wanting to help their families and communities after seeing how much hardship they experienced. It is important for NGOs and refugee organizations to encourage and utilize these leadership skills amongst young people (Boyden, 2001). Young people could be taught consultation skills which they can use to gather and communicate the needs of their communities and help to inform programming (Gale & Molla, 2015). Young people can also help to navigate where best to access resources and seek help, take action, seek protection, and create opportunities through networking and fundraising (Holland, 2009).

I recorded in my research journal about one event I was invited to attend at the church the Hmong – Vietnamese community attend. I noticed that many of the young people were in the church choir, and two were assisting the church pastor, seeming to take on quite important positions. I noted that their church was evidently a place where they could feel valued, respected, and take on positions of leadership. I followed this observation up in an interview with the young people and they agreed. Almost all of the young people who participated in the digital poetry project referred to their church as a place where they could feel safe and valued, as did some of the participants in the 'Shift Maps' project, including young participants from Pakistan, as well as Vietnam.

Some community projects, NGOs and charities also try to engage with young refugees and encourage leadership skills. Asylum Access, for example, an international NGO that supports refugees and asylum seekers, works with Amnesty International to

raise awareness about migration issues in schools and other settings. Young people are often involved in these projects and events. Courageous Kitchen also consults with young people on programming and supports young people to take a lead as trainee cooking and English teachers. The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network [APRRN] is a collective of refugee-led organisations supporting refugees. When I interviewed the director of APRRN, in April 2017, he discussed how important it is to have young refugees' voices represented more in the network. APRRN hosted an Asia Pacific summit in October 2018, which included refugee community groups, and organizations supporting refugees from around the region. The main objective of the summit was to give refugees a platform to represent themselves, and base refugee programming in the region on their needs and experiences:

> *"The inclusion of refugees in policy- and decision-making is important in acknowledging and facilitating refugee agency and self-determination. With personal experience in situations of displacement, refugees are well placed to offer practical and sustainable solutions. Refugees can be powerful agents of change, evidenced through their capacity to take charge of building local communities and filling gaps in services and assistance. These summits also recognize that a major challenge in enabling refugee self-representation at an international level is the lack of opportunities for refugee representatives to come together and work collaboratively on areas of shared concern."*
>
> (Asia Pacific Summit of Refugees [APSOR], 2019, p. 2)

Another important life skill capability that it is important to cultivate in young people is responsibility. Many young refugees have a great deal of responsibility within their families and communities, but not all have the confidence or the skills to assume this role (Wood, Giles-Corti, Zubrick, & Bulsara, 2011). Although many young refugees

face a great deal of hardship and are often made to feel that they are not entitled to the same privileges as others, it is still important for them to learn certain skills like the value of hard work, sharing and cooperating, creating reciprocal relationships and teamwork. Often these skills are learned at school or through recreational activities, particularly in a system that encourages student autonomy (Saito, 2003). When young people are denied access to these activities however, as many of the research participants are, they do not have a chance to develop these skills. Interviewees explained how they had to spend all day sitting in their small apartments, unable to go out and learn or play. I noticed that for some of them, when they were offered opportunities to do so, they would be reluctant to engage. I viewed this as a response to their restrictive circumstances and the fear, anxiety and sheer inertia it caused. Parents would not always encourage their children because they were scared to let them leave the safety of their room. Hardgrove (2009) refers to this as Mundane Extreme Ecological Stress [MEES] in her research with Liberian refugees in Ghana:

> *"Many of these families had been at Buduburam for over a decade. Most had nothing to show for their time but mere survival. Their lives were lived in environments characterized by anticipated, ongoing and pervasive poverty, deprivation, discrimination and lack of autonomy…families who live with such unrelenting environmental stress often display muted expectations about opportunity. When crisis occurs, they are prone to respond with no action, characterized by an acceptance of society's definition of self and situation, or with action often taking the form of rebellion or protest."*
>
> (Hardgrove, 2009, p. 498)

The capability for leadership, initiative and responsibility resonates with Walker's capabilities for 'autonomy', 'respect and recognition', and 'voice' (2007). By being given

more opportunities to participate in their communities, young people can learn essential skills and feel more independent and empowered. Through leadership positions within community institutions such as their church, young refugees can gain respect and recognition, not just from their own communities but also local and international communities. This gives young refugees confidence and helps themselves and their communities feel less marginalised. Through being encouraged to be active and have a voice in organisations involved with refugees, young people have the opportunity to express their needs and have more control over the services, policies and programmes affecting their lives and communities.

Nutrition, health and hygiene

Although sexual health education is a very culturally controversial issue, it is important that young refugees have access to an awareness of how to keep themselves safe and how to make informed choices when it comes to their health and wellbeing (ILO, 2014). Some participants mentioned that their church would teach them about sexual health. It is also important for them to learn about personal safety and respecting their bodies, for example keeping themselves safe online. Some of the participants have family members who were kidnapped in Vietnam, so are more aware of the dangers of

online grooming. However, this is still quite a taboo subject because of the shame it brings a family, so it is not always spoken about publicly, which would help others understand the dangers of grooming and peer pressure (UNPO, 2012).

Access to healthy food, medicine and hygiene products is also an issue among refugee communities who experience financial hardship (Ferlander, 2007). Some communities raid rubbish dumps on a regular basis in order to feed themselves. Participants in this research explained how their churches and mosques were a good source of food, medicine and hygeine products. There are also organizations such as the Tzu Chi Institute which runs free clinics for people on low incomes, including Thai people. However, this only runs once a month. Courageous Kitchen raises money through cooking classes and food tours for tourists and uses it to feed and teach children how to cook and grow their own food. One of the many benefits of schools is that children are more likely to have a decent meal each day than if they stay at home (UNICEF, 2012b). At one community school I visited, the students took it in turns to cook for everybody each lunchtime.

Some of the research participants shared how they lived in communities where they were exposed to drugs and knew people that engaged in risky behaviour. Drugs and alcohol are important topics to discuss with young people, so that they can be aware of the dangers and make informed decisions. Engaging young people in education and positive recreation activities can also help significantly reduce the

chances of getting involved in risky and antisocial behaviour (UNESCO, 2015). It also helps to make communities safer if young people are engaged in positive activities and creates less conflict and stigma about refugees (Williams, 2003). Some of the research participants explained how their church and mosque helped them to do this by providing a safe place where they could connect with people from local and international communities over a common belief and identity.

This capability for nutrition, health and hygiene relates to Nussbaum's capabilities for 'bodily health' and 'play'; and Walker's capability for 'bodily integrity and bodily health', where she emphasizes the importance of, 'making own choices about sexual relationships, being able to be free from sexually transmitted diseases, being involved in sporting activities.' (Walker, 2007, p. 190) Nussbaum also describes the capability for 'bodily health' as, 'being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.' (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 65)

Life skills capabilities overview

The majority of these life skills are important for any young person, whether refugee or not, to learn and develop. School plays a strong role in this, but young

people also learn from their families, their peers, community education initiatives, and general life experience. Some of these life skill capabilities are denied and restricted to young refugees, such as regular access to health and hygeine; whereas others are learned far quicker than other teenagers the same age, for example earning money to help the family. It is important to note also that developing life skills is one of the key aims of the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda, which Thailand has made a recognized commitment to (UNESCO, 2018a).

Refugee protection is one of the core mandates of the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2009). The protection strategy covers a wide remit, but child protection is central to this. It is essential to educate children and young people about their rights regarding protection from abuse, harmful behaviour, and also their rights to safety, education, recreation, health and nutrition (UNICEF, 1989). It is also critical that children and young people understand what to do if they do feel unsafe and are able to communicate this to people that will listen. Although schools can be places where these abuses occur, they can also provide safe spaces and communication channels if appropriate systems are put into effect. It is therefore important that educational organisations working with refugees take the time and responsibility to educate children and young people about their rights to safety and protection both in and out of school and put necessary systems in place to meet these objectives (ILO, 2014).

> *"Human well-being is the core principle of the capabilities approach and, according to Sen and Nussbaum, is inextricably bound to social justice. A just society aimed at well-being grants the substantive freedoms necessary for capabilities development. We have come to adopt human well-being, and the*

> *capabilities development on which well-being depends, as core educational aims…with capabilities approach principles in mind, we operationalized well-being as being able to hold onto one's identity and values as one learns, to feel safe as one learns, and to be a part of an authentically engaged learning community."*
>
> (Deprez & Wood, 2013, p. 150)

Life skills capabilities are a significant factor influencing one's sense of agency (Sen, 1999), since one needs to feel safe, informed and empowered in order to be aware of the choices available to them, act on and try to enhance these. These factors also contribute to one's sense of well-being, which in turn increases one's ability to engage and succeed in education.

Freedom of Movement Capabilities

The final section of this framework will explore capabilities for freedom of movement that many of the research participants are denied. This makes it very difficult to fully implement other rights, such as the right to education, which, as discussed earlier, is legally extended to both citizen and non-citizen children and young people in Thailand (UNICEF, 2016). Sen's (2010) concept of agency will be explored through

these capabilities, as well as Nussbaum's (2000) capabilities for 'senses, imagination and thought', 'emotions', 'affiliation', 'play', and 'control over one's environment'; and Walker's (2007) capabilities for 'autonomy', 'knowledge', 'respect and recognition', 'aspiration', 'voice', 'bodily integrity and bodily health', and 'emotional integrity and emotions'.

Freedom to engage in educational pursuits

Although the majority of the research participants were engaging in education, whether it be RTG schools or informal schools, some of the participants were denied access, and had been out of school for a substantial amount of time. This section will discuss some of the reasons why and make recommendations as to how to break down these barriers. Children who were unable to access RTG school had been told that they were too old or too tall to attend. Although there are difficulties associated with having mixed ages and abilities in a class, there did not seem to be any accommodations made for these children. They were just denied access and not given any alternative support. These children then spent one to two years staying at home, feeling very isolated and excluded. This is a very difficult experience for a child and not only has serious long-term cognitive implications on their intellectual development, but also on their social and

emotional development (Lansford & Banati, 2018). One child chose to leave his RTG school because he was not allowed to bring halal food to eat and was forced to eat the school's food, even though this was against his religion. He also explained that some teachers threatened to beat him because he could not sing the national anthem properly. Although this is only one case, and quite an extreme one, it still shows that Thailand's commitment to including all children in school, no matter their background or legal status, is still subject to the whims and attitudes of the school administration (Grimes, 2011).

This problem is certainly not limited to Thailand however and, as discussed earlier, Thailand has made significant steps towards educational inclusion (UNESCO, 2018b). Many of the participants who did attend RTG schools spoke of very positive experiences, where teachers set up buddying schemes to help refugees; and asked students who were significantly older than their class peers to act as teaching assistants, thus giving them a position of respect and dignity in the classroom. These were commendable strategies but again were subject to the ethos and compassion of the individual teachers who used them. There are some very effective programmes and policies being initiated in Thailand to make education more inclusive towards young migrants and stateless children, such as the border schools programme, and some projects targeting Burmese refugees in the Northwest of Thailand (UNICEF, 2011). However, there is no specific policy documentation targeting the urban refugee population in Bangkok. This may be because of the illegal status of refugees, and

because of Thailand's rejection of article twenty-two of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC], which protects the rights of children seeking asylum (UNESCO, 2018a).

One of the biggest barriers to accessing educational opportunities for many of the research participants was the constant threat of police harassment and detention. Young people spoke of how their schools had been raided and closed down by the police, and their teachers arrested and detained. This is a very traumatic experience for anyone, especially a child. Families also shared how the police would sometimes hang around outside their community schools and learning centres, so that they would be scared of going. During periods where there were many police raids on schools and refugee homes, parents would not let their children go to school, for fear of being exposed to the police. Some participants explained how they had to just stay indoors for weeks, months, and even years because of this threat. Some communities responded by setting up schools in the apartments where they lived. These would take place in someone's living room or even bedroom and be facilitated by people in the community. Although these were a resourceful response to the fear of being caught by police, having this as the only educational option still restricts young people from accessing other opportunities that may be more beneficial for them. If a child or young person is put in detention, they have very little access to education within the Immigration Detention Centre [IDC]. There is a small school, but it operates more as a daycare for young children, rather than a quality educational establishment. One participant, who

was in detention for six months when he was fourteen years old, felt that he fell behind in his studies substantially while he was in there. He unfortunately had to return to the IDC, along with two other participants his age (eighteen).

Restricting a young person's access to school relates to the emphasis Sen places on the capability for education in general (2010), as an entity which leads to various other capabilities, is a basic human entitlement, and underpins just societies. This also conflicts with Walker's capabilities for 'knowledge', 'respect and recognition', 'aspiration', 'voice', 'bodily integrity and bodily health', and 'emotional integrity and emotions'. If a young person is excluded from school based on their gender, race, religion, ethnicity, nationality or citizenship status, they are not being treated with the dignity they deserve [respect and recognition]. They are denied the opportunity to 'learn and succeed, to have a better life, to hope.' (Walker, 2007, p. 190) [Aspiration]. If they are excluded from or bullied at school, they are being denied their ability to participate, speak out, and their protection from harm [voice, bodily and emotional integrity].

Freedom to engage in social and recreational pursuits

The fear of police and detention places severe limits on other aspects of a young refugee's life in Bangkok, such as the freedom to engage in social and recreational pursuits. Participants explained how they were often unable to play outside and in parks because Thai people would threaten to report them to the police. This would also prevent young people from forming friendships and relationships, both significant aspects of their personal and social development. I asked one participant if she would like to get involved in a women's art project. She said she would love to but could not because her parents did not like her to travel far. Although this was an understandable response to the fear caused by harassment and their legal situation, it was very sad that she felt unable to follow her creative aspirations. Some participants shared how they felt safer in their countries of origin because at least they could go outside and play there. Being able to go outside and enjoy nature and solitude is also an important capability that was expressed by some of the participants.

The places the research participants mentioned feeling the safest were their churches and mosques. One Somali participant explained how he liked to go and spend time in his mosque, and he felt like he was always welcome there. Other participants said they liked to go to their church and play music, read and run around in the garden. These religious establishments represented freedom for them on many levels, both physically and spiritually. The majority of the research participants experienced religious persecution in their countries of origin, particularly Vietnam and Pakistan. They therefore perceived their church and mosques as places where they could be free to

believe what they wanted and celebrate these beliefs together. This was extremely important to all the research participants, and fortunately there were no reports of their churches or mosques being targeted by police in Thailand. Some reported being scared of travelling to these places, but they felt left alone once there. Nussbaum (2000) discusses the significance of religion in her capability framework:

> *"To be able to search for an understanding of the ultimate meaning of life in one's own way is among the most important aspects of a life that is truly human. One of the ways in which this has most frequently been done historically is through religious belief and practice; to burden these practices is thus to inhibit many people's searches for the ultimate good. Religion has also been intimately and fruitfully bound up with other human capabilities, such as the capabilities of artistic, ethical and intellectual expression. It has been a central locus of the moral education of the young, both in the family and in the larger community. Finally, it has typically been a central vehicle of cultural continuity, hence an invaluable support for other forms of human affiliation and interaction. To strike at religion is thus to risk eviscerating people's moral, cultural and artistic, as well as spiritual, lives. Even if substitute forms of expression and activity are available in and through the secular state, a state that deprives citizens of the option to pursue religion has done them a grave wrong in these important areas."*
>
> (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 180)

As mentioned earlier, church also offered many participants a place where they could feel part of a community that was wider than their immediate refugee community; form networks, friendships and build bridging capital with Thai and international people; take on specific roles and leadership positions; and feel a sense of acceptance and respect. In a country where their legal situation is tenuous at best, having this safe and dignified place was very important. Hardgrove (2009) explores this in her research with Liberian refugees in Ghana:

> *"God's provision for their lives, no matter their loss or difficulty, was cited over and over as the empowering source of meaning and purpose for their lives and*

their family's future. Church involvement also contributed to positive identity by creating opportunity to obtain a social status within the community. Many of these refugee women proudly announced positions of leadership or participation within their churches. They held titles such as 'evangelist' or 'secretary to the head deaconess'. As refugees, isolated from mainstream economic opportunities and socially marginalized, they were of least significance in Ghana. Most held no official job and their days were allied with the basic tasks of survival and care for children. Positions of leadership or participation on committees and choirs gave opportunities for recognition and a sense of importance."

(Hardgrove, 2009, p. 493)

The capability to engage in social and recreational pursuits resonates with Nussbaum's capabilities for 'play', 'emotions', 'affiliation', and 'senses, imagination and thought' (2006). It is very important for young people to have the freedom to engage in play for both mental and physical health reasons. Nussbaum also emphasizes the significance of, 'not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.' (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 66). This is very difficult to avoid when young people are always in danger of arrest and detention, or fearful that their families, friends and teachers will be. Young people should have the right to socialize, form friendships, relationships, networks, attachments, and belong to groups and institutions that facilitate these [affiliation]. Young people should also feel protected from the harmful and degrading effects of discrimination and humiliation: 'Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.' (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 66)

Freedom to work

A large proportion of the participants discussed how they aspired to work and earn an income to help their families but were legally restricted from doing so. Despite these restrictions, many still did, usually taking up jobs such as serving food, cooking, cleaning and construction. They were paid less than their Thai colleagues, and did these jobs alongside going to school, but still expressed appreciation for being able to earn an income and learn new skills. Some of the participants were under the legal working age when they started these jobs, which is not uncommon for many migrant children in Thailand (Harkins, 2019). Only two of these participants were working instead of attending school however and stopped once they attained full time access to school. Debates over child labour regulations are controversial, especially in contexts where children are regarded as a resource for the family and community. There are arguments that anti-child labour regulations are western constructs (Kendall, 2008), but these arguments fall outside of the remit of this thesis.

In the case of this research, the participants who were working were over sixteen and in education, so it was not necessarily having harmful repercussions on their life, in terms of restricting their academic success and well-being. They were working illegally

however which exposed them to exploitation and police arrest. Indeed, two participants were arrested at work and taken to the Immigration Detention Centre. This fear of police arrest and detention restricts refugees from being able to access employment and support themselves. It exposes them to exploitation and abuse because they are working illegally and are therefore not able to report any cases of mistreatment and non-payment (ILO, 2015). It also makes refugees more vulnerable to getting involved in criminal activity out of desperation. This then fuels negative perceptions of refugees and ends up creating a vicious circle that leads to even more hardship and trauma for refugees who have already experienced so much in the countries they are seeking asylum from. Some countries have developed positive responses to these issues and are implementing policies to help refugees and asylum seekers overcome restrictions and barriers to employment. Jacobsen (2014) explores this:

> *"Even when refugees are permitted to work or own businesses, social exclusion processes, including bureaucratic procedures, can make obtaining work documents so complicated and burdensome that most refugees forgo them. The host authorities then turn a blind eye – both to the work and the exploitation that goes with it – because refugees provide cheap labour, or labour that nationals are unwilling to do. By contrast, host governments can choose to promote refugee's self-reliance. For example, in Ecuador, the constitution guarantees equal rights for refugees, and the Ministry of Labour provides all refugees with a free 'work permit' that helps clarify their status to potential employers and facilitates initial entry into the market."*
>
> (Jacobsen, 2014, p. 106)

The freedom to work is related to many capabilities but particularly to 'autonomy', 'aspiration' (Walker, 2007), and 'control over one's environment' (Nussbaum, 2000). If someone is denied the right to work and earn a living, they feel disempowered and

dependent on others [autonomy]. They are more likely to feel a sense of despair and a lack of control over their lives and futures [aspiration] [control over one's environment]. The capability to work also affects other capabilities such as the capability for bodily health and bodily integrity; respect and recognition; and the capability to form social relations (Walker, 2007). Lastly, one's sense of agency (Sen, 2009) is limited by restrictions on the choices they have and social and political environment that controls these choices. Even if someone is able to work, if the right conditions are not in place which protect the rights of workers, this work can be just as disempowering as not being able to work at all.

The Wider Implications of the Capabilities Approach for Policy and Practice

Briones (2009), in her research with foreign overseas domestic workers (FODWs) described a capability as, 'a transformative power; the power to do and be for intended, valued ends' (p. 17). She explored how the capabilities approach could be applied to policies affecting FODWs in order to enhance the agency exercised by

(mainly) women in this situation and develop programmes and structures of support at a local, national and international level that both protect and empower women working overseas as domestic workers. Briones (2009) emphasized that approaches that focus on the women as victims are neither deterring women from becoming FODWs or protecting them when they are in this situation. Therefore, new approaches need to be developed which expose the vulnerability of women in these situations and make the conditions they experience more visible, while recognising the value that this work can bring to their lives, particularly in their home countries, and building on these capabilities. Policies therefore need to be adjusted so that the victimization of FODWs is addressed and challenged in a way that respects their agency and autonomy.

In the same way that Briones (2009) addresses how the concept of the FODW as victim and agent needs to be reconciled through policy and practice at both a local, national and international level, a similar approach can be applied to addressing the concept of 'the refugee'. Harrell-Bond and Voutira (2007) explore how humanitarian responses to work with refugees perpetuate the notion of refugees as helpless victims utterly dependent on aid and assistance from foreign actors such as the UNHCR and NGO's. Programming thus reflects this mentality rather than recognising the extraordinary courage and resilience exercised by forced migrants, and building on the skills, knowledge and contributions that they can bring to a locality. Harrell-Bond (2002) refers to the danger posed by international humanitarian programmes that reinforce dependency and helplessness and have in some cases replaced local initiatives aimed

at helping refugees integrate and build independent livelihoods. Policies and programmes aimed at assisting refugees therefore need to build on these local initiatives, rather than replace them, and recognise the value that civil society, local NGOs, religious organisations and other grassroots initiatives can bring to work with refugees. In this way the capabilities approach is applicable because of its emphasis on developing freedoms that are contextually defined, respond to human agency and do not prescribe a 'one size fits all' approach (Sen, 2010).

Rutter (2006), in her research into education for refugee children in the UK, explores how many policies and programmes developed for refugees tend to homogenise their needs, rather than recognising the diversity of cultures, backgrounds, aspirations, experiences, skills and abilities represented. She emphasises the importance of developing educational strategies that respond to these individualised circumstances, rather than incorporating 'the hegemonic construction of the refugee child,' that 'assumes homogeneity' (p. 5). Malkki (1995) also explores how refugees are too often misrepresented as a unified whole, who have undergone trauma and difficulty in equal measure, and therefore have common needs and experiences that should be reflected in homogenous programmes and practices. Although it is important to recognise the difficulties and challenges that refugees have experienced and face, it is equally important to be aware that these may not be the same for everyone, and that pitying can be another form of othering or stigmatizing (Malkki, 1995). Harrell-Bond and Voutira (2007) refer to this process as the 'dehistorization of experiences' (p. 294), a

process often used to legitimise a 'refugee regime' which constructs the refugee as 'a burden, a victim and a threat' (Harrell-Bond and Voutira, p. 295).

Agamben (1998) relates the figure of the refugee to 'homo sacer', a term used in Roman law to describe a person who is excluded from the protection of the sovereign state and the rewards of citizenship yet is not outside of the law in the sense that they are free of the controls and expectations of the state. Rather, they are used to remind the citizen what it means to be included and protected by the state. Their exclusion defines the sense of inclusion that gives the state its power and sovereignty. Without this inclusion, and the protection, rights and benefits associated with it, the individual is reduced to 'bare life' (Murray, 2010). They are thus in a 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005) and serve to remind and reinforce the rewards of citizenship, define legal limits and construct state power. Rajaram and Grundy-Warr (2004), in their research into detention centres in Australia, Malaysia and Thailand, refer to these centres as 'zones of exemption', using Agamben's concept of 'homo sacer' and 'bare life' to explain how the system of detention both legitimises and is legitimised the perception that refugees are undeserving of the same rights afforded to citizens. This inclusion/exclusion paradox serves to reinforce the legal parameters required by states to maintain their power and sovereignty:

> *"The law defines itself, makes itself known, in negative terms, in terms of where it does not apply. The sovereign law is thus both inside and outside the sovereign space it creates. It entitles itself to effectively transgress its law in the creation of zones of exemption where the law does not operate. It maintains a ruse of inside/outside while at the same time creating the ambiguous system of the*

nation-state that depends on the appropriation of the ostensibly excluded in order to maintain the inside."

(Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2004, p. 36)

All of the refugees involved in the research for this thesis were experiencing this 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005), in which they were denied the protection and rights afforded to Thai citizens, and citizens of their home countries; and under constant threat of arbitrary arrests and being forced into 'zones of exemption', which in the context of Bangkok meant the notorious Immigration Detention Centre (IDC). This constant threat places significant restrictions on a refugee's freedom of movement and ability to integrate, access education, work and livelihood. It places the refugee in a constant state of liminality and reinforces their sense of exclusion, loss and marginalisation (Pinson and Arnot, 2007). Harrell-Bond and Voutira (1992) describe this as a 'betwixt and between status', that can only be transcended by being 'incorporated as citizens into their host state (or returned to their state of origin)' (p. 7). For refugees in Bangkok, the former is not even an option. Exile in Thailand is therefore defined by waiting in hope to be relocated to a country that accepts refugees or living in fear of being detained and forced into 'voluntary repatriation' to the countries they have fled. Both of these conditions are marked by years of insecurity and exclusion. Yet despite this state of liminality, refugees in Bangkok find ways to adapt and source livelihoods out of the precarious conditions they find themselves in. Al-Rasheed (1993), in her study of Iraqi women in the UK, explores the various stages of exile and the strategies employed by refugees to 'reconstruct meanings' from their old life into their new:

> *"Studies of refugees show that people can be disoriented as a result of experiencing material and social loss, yet at a later stage they are capable of showing resilience. The refugees' culture has elements which help them cope with this initial loss. Refugees try to establish familiar patterns and maintain continuity with their past in an attempt to overcome personal alienation and social disintegration."*
>
> (Al-Rasheed, 1993, p. 92)

The capabilities framework for education in the context of Bangkok, Thailand, as constructed from the perspectives, experiences and aspirations expressed by the participants in the research for this thesis, aims to address the liminality faced by refugees living in this context, and advocate how the challenges caused by it can be overcome. It aims to build upon the agency, resourcefulness, initiative and resilience demonstrated by the young people involved in this research, and their wider families, communities and networks. It also aims to respond to the diversity of needs, experiences, backgrounds and aspirations expressed by the participants, thus making recommendations that are flexible and adaptable, rather than the 'one size fits all' approach referred to by Rutter (2006). Despite the agency and resourcefulness exercised by the refugee communities involved in this research however, their efforts and achievements will always be limited by the restrictive policies and structural constraints refugees are exposed to on a daily basis in Thailand. There have been recent signs of progress, such as the Thai government addressing the problem of children in detention (Harkins, 2019), but these tend to be ad hoc and subject to the whims of the government at the time, which can be quite transient in Thailand. There is very little political commitment to addressing the situation facing refugees in Thailand,

despite the significant presence of refugees both in Bangkok and in towns and cities closer to the borders with Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. This could be down to a lack of political will and compassion on the part of the government and Thai civil society; or it could be due to the economic benefits drawn from having an invisible labour force (Nail, 2015); and the political advantage derived from Thai citizens being subtly reminded of what someone who is 'excluded' from the protections and rights afforded by the state is exposed to (Agamben, 1998). The presence of the UNHCR in Bangkok may also be part of the problem, rather than the solution; this presence, however well intentioned, may serve to deter the Thai government and civil society from addressing the needs of refugees within its borders, in that the UNHCR and other international NGOs make it a 'foreign' problem, that should be dealt with by overseas organisations (Harrell-Bond, 2002). The danger of this approach is that it is then viewed that solutions should be imported, rather than home-grown, and with it the implication that the beneficiaries of those solutions should therefore be 'exported'.

XIII. Conclusions

The following chapter will summarize the research process; discuss the data findings in relation to the questions guiding the study; reflect on the significance and contributions of the research outcomes, theoretical framework and methodology; and explore the impact of the research in the context of Bangkok, Thailand.

1. Discussion of research questions

This section will examine the main findings from the research and how they respond to the guiding research questions:

1. *What are the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand?*
2. *How do young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand, perceive the educational services and opportunities that are available to them, and the factors affecting their availability and effectiveness?*

The research findings indicate that the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand, are extremely nuanced and varied, according to age, nationality, ethnicity, educational and cultural backgrounds, and locality in Bangkok. Even within these groups, there were nuances, but these were the distinct factors that emerged from the data in determining the different needs, experiences, aspirations and perspectives of the research participants.

Young refugees of Hmong Vietnamese descent were able to access and integrate into local Thai government schools more easily. They expressed a sense of gain at having not been able to access a quality education; or indeed any education at all in some cases in Vietnam; and all of the Viet-Hmong participants, with the exception of three, had attended a local Thai school. The three Viet-Hmong participants who had not were in their mid to late teens when they came to Bangkok, so were too old to attend an RTG school, where they would have had to start at a lower level of primary education in order to learn Thai sufficiently. Those who had attended an RTG school experienced challenges, in terms of bullying from peers and in some instances from teachers; and learning Thai language well enough to understand the curriculum. All the participants who attended an RTG school were older than their Thai peers, which they expressed was quite difficult at first, but they got used to. They all fast-tracked through the system, completing two years in one, in order to reach a higher level of schooling appropriate to their age. This system was found to be beneficial. Two interviewees from Sudan and two from Sri Lanka, living in the same locality, were also able to access RTG

school and conveyed satisfaction with it, reporting their success and achievements. One of the schools in this locality had a buddying system to assist the newcomers, which helped the interviewees attending this school to make friends and settle. Thus, the two schools in an area that were attended by young people from Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Sudan provided places for a substantial number of refugees and had certain strategies in place, such as the fast-tracking and buddying systems, to accommodate the refugees, help them settle, and reach an age-appropriate level of schooling faster.

Only two participants, both of Vietnamese descent, attended a secondary RTG school. Two participants requested access but were denied due to their age. The other participants living in the same locality however, who had finished primary RTG school, moved on to an informal school, due to a lack of information, guidance and support in attending a secondary RTG school; and a greater interest in attending an English-medium school. Even though there was a level of agency involved in not attending secondary RTG school, on the part of the participants, the lack of guidance from the Thai schools indicates a gap in secondary schooling access for refugees and a reluctance to support young people from refugee backgrounds to progress onto secondary schooling.

Only two interviewees from the Pakistani communities that I visited were able to attend their local RTG schools. The others were not attending, as a result of choice or being denied access to the school by the authorities due to their age. These participants

were the same age as some of the Tamil and Viet-Hmong participants when they started at an RTG school. This demonstrates the ad hoc nature of educational inclusion policies and practices towards young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand. Rather than there being effective monitoring of policies that address the age limits of students attending RTG schools, procedures for accessibility and inclusion are determined by the school authorities and seem to vary by locality.

Another option for young people too old to attend an RTG school was an informal school operating in partnership with the UNHCR in Bangkok, where students learn English, Thai and maths. Out of all the participants who had attended or been offered a place at this school however, only three expressed satisfaction with it. Most of the participants conveyed a reluctance to attend due to the curriculum being too basic and not meeting their educational needs. These young people of Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Iraqi origin, had all attained a substantial level of education in their countries of origin, three having almost completed their schooling before having to leave. Other participants, mainly from Pakistan, were unable to attend the school, due to restrictions on their movement resulting from the threat of police arrests and detention.

The participants who were unable or reluctant to attend RTG primary and secondary school, and the UNHCR partner school, all experienced long gaps in their education as a result of this. They expressed frustration for the challenges it posed to their intellectual and social development, the boredom, isolation and sense of

stagnation. Communities responded by setting up their own informal schools, often in private living spaces. Other responses were to form peer learning networks or, if sponsored, attend private schools requiring a fee. The community schools were poorly resourced however and lacked trained teachers. Some were targeted and closed down by police. Peer learning networks proved effective in helping young refugees share resources and knowledge, with older members with more advanced education mentoring younger, and in some cases helping them to work towards recognised qualifications such as IGCSE's and the GED. Interviewees also conveyed that using the internet to learn and study was a useful tool if school was not an option, but not all participants had access to ICT equipment or the internet. Although these responses helped the out of school participants to engage in some form of learning and social activity, none expressed preferring them over the opportunity to attend school.

Overall, although there was evidence that some Thai schools were providing access to young refugees and assisting those children to integrate and progress, there were significant gaps in effective educational provision for refugees in Bangkok, particularly for older members who had already attained a substantial level of schooling in their country of origin. These young people were unable or unwilling to attend Thai school, where they would need to start at a level inappropriate to their age and ability and found the UNHCR partner school too basic in its educational provision. Some of the participants in this situation were able to obtain sponsorship or scholarships to attend private schools which vary in quality. Other communities set up informal schools, but

these were poorly resourced, vulnerable to police crackdowns, and did not provide enough meaningful progression towards educational certification or qualifications.

To date, there are a number of initiatives, projects and programmes addressing the needs of young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand, but very little research explaining why these initiatives have been developed, and even less data on the effects and outcomes on the refugee community (Larkins, 2019). Networks such as the Bangkok Asylum Seeker Refugee Action Network [BASRAN] exist to tie these programmes together but most function independently, are funded in a very ad hoc manner, are short-term in nature, and are not subject to any formalized, systematic monitoring and evaluation procedures (UNESCO, 2015). A lot of the projects developed to address the educational needs and barriers experienced by refugees in Bangkok operate outside of, and even reject, the protection and administration of the UNHCR, which is meant to be the umbrella organization, holding the protection mandate for refugees in Bangkok, as formally recognized by the Thai government (Smith & Lim, 2019). Therefore, the unsustainable and transient nature of many educational initiatives for refugees makes it difficult for young people to progress and have the stability they need to obtain a quality education (Broadhead, 2013). This study has highlighted some of these gaps in existing educational provision for young refugees in Bangkok, identified their causes and implications for effective policy implementation, and developed strategies for overcoming these gaps that are grounded in the perspectives of the people experiencing them (Thoresen, Fielding, Gilleatt, & Thoresen, 2016).

One outcome of the research for this thesis has been to elicit, investigate and document positive practices and approaches to education for young refugees in the context of Bangkok. This is a significant aim of the UNHCR's education strategy on an international level (UNHCR, 2012) and is critical to the continuation and development of effective agendas that provide quality education for all (Save the Children, UNHCR & Pearson, 2017). Challenges to the implementation of these promising practices have also been highlighted, particularly the legal barriers. Much of the knowledge and insight gained through the research from this thesis has informed the curriculum of Cedar Learning Centre, especially building on the capability's framework outlined in the previous chapter. CEDAR [Creating Education Diversity Aspiration Resilience] Learning centre (www.smlcth.com), was set up in 2018 by a refugee from Sri Lanka, in response to a need he recognized for targeted alternative provision for young refugees who could or would not access mainstream education, or the refugee school used by the UNHCR. The founder approached me to assist him in advising on the curriculum for the school, having heard about the research I was conducting and the voluntary teaching I was involved in with refugee community schools in Bangkok. The students can work towards taking the GED [General Educational Development] exams, recognized as a high school diploma equivalent in several countries, thus incorporating the 'right to certification' capability. A virtual classroom is used to do this, so that the students can access the materials and work through them at their own pace, without a teacher always needing to be present. They can communicate with teachers online but are required to exercise a

great deal of autonomy in their learning, thus building on the capability for agency and leadership. The students elect a class leader who is responsible for making sure everyone is aware of what they need to do, assists students who are having difficulties, identifies resource support, and communicates any issues to the teachers. Once a month the students do activities aimed at developing their life skills, such as cooking, team sports, financial awareness, personal safety, creativity and PSHE [personal, social, health education]. Students are also given a space to play, interact and socialize; and the centre collaborates with organisations that can offer professional counselling and psycho-social support services. Much of the face to face teaching time is aimed at developing critical thinking skills, through discussion and reflection; analyzing issues; constructing arguments; communicating ideas; listening to each other; and giving constructive feedback. Peer education and support is strongly encouraged, as is goal-setting and self-reflection. Students are involved in the management and administrative process of the centre, taking on active roles and contributing to decisions. CEDAR Learning Centre provides an effective model of alternative provision for refugees in Bangkok but lacks sustainable support. The centre is run by volunteers and funded by individual sponsors and donors, both precarious sources. Despite this however, and largely due to the ingenuity and commitment of the people involved, including the students, the centre still runs and eight students (to date) have managed to attain GED certification as a result of it.

2. Educational, social, theoretical and methodological implications of the research

Educational Implications:

Thailand is a signatory to the Education for All and SDG4-Education 2030 agendas, which aim to ensure that all children and young people in Thailand, regardless of ability, background and citizenship status, obtain a primary and early secondary education (The Thai National Commission for UNESCO, 2015). While Thailand is making strong advances towards meeting these goals, many children and young people, particularly those from migrant, refugee and stateless populations, are not accessing education (Larkins, 2019). Some of these young people may have been directly excluded, while others experience too many barriers in terms of language and curriculum support, bullying, transport restrictions, school costs, and outside work commitments (ILO, 2014). Others find that the education system is not relevant to their needs and circumstances (Mendenhall, Garnet-Russell & Buckner, 2017). In the case of the research participants involved in this study, all three factors were addressed. Many of the participants did attend Thai primary school, but were not encouraged to progress onto secondary school, even if they had graduated primary school and demonstrated an understanding of Thai language. If they were older, they fast tracked through primary

school, showing how these schools did have accommodations in place for young people joining at an advanced age. However, there did not seem to be any levers in place to monitor the outcomes of these accommodations and track the progress of the pupils. Progression onto secondary school is one way of measuring this but Thai schools are not subject to any accountability in this regard (Roman & Chuanprapun, 2019). Some of the participants had been directly rejected by the schools they approached, on the grounds that they were too old, although they were significantly below the legal threshold to stop attending school (Lathapipat & Sondergaard, 2015). Again, there is not enough transparency in the education system in Thailand to ensure that policies such as Education for All are being implemented effectively so vulnerable populations such as refugees and those lacking official documentation are often at the whim of corrupt administrations and discriminatory attitudes and practices (Grimes, 2012).

One of the significant aims of the Education for All SDG4-Education 2030 agendas is not just to measure educational inclusion in terms of access, but also in terms of quality. A quality education is one that is relevant to the needs of the communities it is serving, monitors progression and evaluates learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2018b). For many of the young people and communities involved in this research, mainstream Thai education and the learning centres offered through the UNHCR, were not relevant to their needs, and were not appropriate to their educational backgrounds, legal situation and aspirations. This was especially the case for the older participants who came to Thailand with a good level of education in their countries of

origin and were either too old or reluctant to start again in a new system and a new language, where they would be more advanced in age and cognitive ability than their peers. The older participants were also more aware of the fact that they would not be allowed to live and have a future in Thailand, where they could never be recognized as legal citizens with equal rights and opportunities (Roman & Chuanprapun, 2019). Some outright rejected Thai education for this reason, while others pragmatically considered the point of learning a language and gaining qualifications that would not necessarily be recognized outside of Thailand. The school offered through the UNHCR was also regarded as inappropriate to the learning needs and backgrounds of participants who had already obtained a high level of education in their countries of origin.

For these reasons, quality alternative provision for this population needs to be developed that is responsive and embedded in the experiences, needs and aspirations of these communities, hence the capability framework outlined in this thesis (Robeyns, 2003). The aim of this framework is to provide a model for learning centres offering alternative provision for refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand. The recommendations included in the framework are derived from the experiences, needs and aspirations explored by the research participants (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004); and build upon the agency, resourcefulness and resilience expressed by many of the participants in constructing 'lives they have reason to value' (Sen, 1999), despite the significant barriers, restrictions and challenges they face. Cedar Learning Centre can serve as a strong and effective model of quality alternative provision for young refugees

living in Bangkok, and for targeted refugee learning support on a more regional and global level. With more secure funding and sustainability in place, it could be further developed to enhance quality, such as through teacher training and the hiring of qualified teachers; accommodating more students and catering to different ages, levels, abilities and language needs; developing a more structured curriculum and offering a choice of accreditation provision; supporting other learning centres and developing a network of targeted provision, involving key stakeholders representing the needs of refugee communities. It could also put necessary monitoring and evaluation procedures in place so that student progression and learning outcomes are more effectively recorded and reflected upon. At the moment however, most of these learning centres are run in a very ad hoc, independent and unsustainable manner, making it difficult for them to provide the stability and progression that the students attending them need. Many are also operating on an illegal basis, making their situation even more precarious and vulnerable.

Social Implications:

For political reasons, the government continues to place great restrictions on the lives and movement of refugees in Thailand, thinking that these restrictions will prevent refugees from coming (Huguet & Chamratrithirong, 2011). These have failed to work, and Thailand continues to be a place of asylum for people escaping persecution, both

near and far. The government allows the UNHCR to operate in Bangkok but prevents them from providing adequate protection measures for refugees once they are here (UNHCR, 2009). The Immigration Detention Centre in the centre of Bangkok becomes increasingly over-crowded and continues to be a blight on Thailand's human rights record (Amnesty International, 2017). People, including women and children, are languishing there indefinitely, living in squalid conditions, with little hope of being released until they are resettled, a process that can take years. Police are allowed, and in many cases encouraged, to harass refugees, demanding heavy fines and threatening them with detention and deportation if they are unable to pay these fines (Sciortino & Punpuing, 2009). These constant threats and fears, along with numerous other challenges and obstacles, including discrimination and financial difficulties, make it very difficult for refugees to not only access basic services and survival strategies, but lead healthy and meaningful lives. These barriers have both short-term and long-term implications on their emotional well-being; cognitive, social and personal development; and livelihoods (Smith & Lim, 2019). If these restrictions were lifted, refugees would find and develop the resources to help themselves and their communities.

Theoretical Implications:

A capabilities approach to investigating the educational experiences, needs and aspirations of young refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok, Thailand, was chosen

because of its emphasis on context and agency, two critical aspects that emerged from the data (Alkire, 2002). Although this thesis was informed by international literature relevant to a diversity of refugee contexts, it was also important that the recommendations that emerged from the research be grounded in the conditions and realities of the people experiencing and representing them (Squire, 2013). The concept of agency was demonstrated by young refugees in Bangkok navigating the many challenges they face; and developing educational and livelihood initiatives and networks for the benefit of themselves, their families and their communities. Agency is critical to a capabilities approach because of its emphasis on empowering people with the skills, materials and conditions to construct lives that are relevant and meaningful to them (Nussbaum, 2003). It is necessary first however to explore what conditions are valued by a community, what capacity building systems are already in place and how these can be developed further. The concept of social capital is also relevant to this approach because for refugees who have very little access to financial capital, the bonding and bridging networks they create within their communities and without are essential to their education, livelihoods and wellbeing (Morrow, 1999). Young people play a particularly important role in building these networks, so it is crucial that they are listened to and given the skills and resources to act upon their initiative and develop these networks further (Leonard, 2005).

The capabilities framework developed from this research has significant implications for the implementation of international educational agendas, which Thailand

is a signatory to, specifically Education for All and Sustainable Development Goal Four (UNESCO, 2016). If these agendas are to be successfully implemented, Thailand needs to make more effective steps towards granting young refugees greater freedoms and creating a more enabling policy environment for refugees to act on their own agency; achieve essential educational functionings (Nussbaum, 2000); pursue meaningful livelihood opportunities; and live lives they have reason to value (Sen, 1999). In order for refugees and other excluded groups in Thailand, such as migrants and stateless minorities, to gain greater access to a quality education, more effective monitoring and evaluation strategies need to be in place to measure this access and educational outcomes (UNESCO, 2018a). These procedures need to be transparent and involve a variety of stakeholders, such as local government, NGOs, community and refugee organizations. The current policy levers that the Thai government uses to measure the success of the EFA and SDG4-Education 2030 agendas are still not reaching some of the most vulnerable populations; are not locally driven and culturally responsive; and are bureaucratic and mainly quantitative in nature. Though Thailand is making clear and positive steps towards meeting its targets (UNESCO, 2018b), legal conflicts, especially around the refugee situation, still shroud certain educational contexts in mystery, and mean that the needs and capabilities of the people in these contexts are neglected.

Methodological Implications:

The capability framework for refugee education in the context of Bangkok, Thailand discussed in the previous section is grounded in the educational experiences, needs and aspirations expressed through ethnographically inspired research, involving young refugees from Vietnam, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan, Iraq and Sri Lanka; a small sample group of parents; and the perspectives of three professionals working with urban refugees in Thailand. These experiences and perspectives were obtained through semi-structured individual and focus group interviews, involving interpreters who spoke the same first language as the respondents. The languages included were Urdu, Punjabi, Hmong, Arabic, Somali and Tamil. Some of the participants were also involved in visual narrative projects, where they shared their experiences of migration on Talipot palm leaves, in the 'Shift Maps' project; or created digitalized poems where they explored issues of identity and aspiration through poetry and complimented the poems with visual images and music. These poems and shift maps have been exhibited at various events and conferences, with the consent of their creators, in order to raise awareness about refugees living in extended exile in Bangkok.

The ideas and images expressed through the 'Shift Maps' and 'Where I'm From' digital poetry narratives have fed into the data analysis and complimented the perspectives and journeys explored through the interviews. They have offered a more unique perspective to the issues being explored through the research because the questions were not as directed as they were in the interviews, and the participants

shared a different angle to their experiences (Leitch, 2008). For example, one young man talked about how Bruce Lee was his idol in his poem. Although this is not directly relevant to his educational experience, it provided a greater insight into who he is and who he aspires to be. Another young person expressed through his poem that he is, "from wanting to get into his car and go to working." Again, when asked in an interview what a young person's ambitions are, they might respond with something more specific. However, this simple statement provided a much more realistic idea of what this person wants, which is the kind of 'normal' life he sees other people living. He did not mention wanting a flashy, expensive car; rather, he conjured up an image of a life he associates with being a responsible adult. Interestingly, this young person declined doing an interview but wanted to be involved in the digital poetry project. Another poetry participant shared how she is, "from wanting her brother and sister to be good people." This did not come out in her interview but is obviously something she is concerned about, thus giving an interesting insight into her character and hopes for the future.

The 'Shift Maps' project also offered some unique insights into the backgrounds and experiences of the participants. One of the youngest interviewees, a six-year-old boy at the time, was unable to express a great deal through the interview, even with the presence of an interpreter. However, I learned quite a bit from his everyday experience of school through his visual images, particularly one of him and his mother and sister walking to school. His mother's poem about missing brushing her Grandmother's hair, which she wrote on a palm leaf, and read at the exhibition opening, was especially

poignant; it is one of those often-untold memories that we do not always get a chance to explore and share, but really captures the essence of our lives and memories. One young person described how she won a dance competition at her Thai school, an event that was obviously very important to her, but that she did not share through her interview. Another young man wrote about having to go to hospital for the acute anxiety he suffers from in Thailand, also an aspect of his life that he did not share in his interview. The title of this thesis, “Playing with Snow, with Peace and Freedom,” is drawn from a young woman’s shift map, where she explored her dreams for the future. Her family hope to move to Canada, a country she associates with these three elements. The image that she conjured with these words is very vivid and meaningful, which is why it was chosen as the title of this thesis.

A further benefit of the visual narrative projects, that complimented the semi-structured interviews, was that the participants were freer to express what aspect of their lives they wished to express, without too many directed prompts (Greene & Hill, 2005). In the digital poems especially, they chose to focus on the positive aspects of their lives, with minimal references made to negative aspects and memories. In fact, only one negative reference was made, where a young man spoke of his house being burned down. Refugees do not always want to express or be known for their negative experiences and will often use arts to explore and express the happiness in their lives (Arizpe, Bagelman, Devlin, McAdam, 2014). The participants were not pushed to share

anything in particular. If they wanted to focus on positive experiences, this was just as revealing as anything negative that they might have expressed.

3. Reflections on the trustworthiness of the research

In reflecting on the trustworthiness of the research, I will refer again to Lincoln and Guba's four tenets of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In ascertaining confidence in the truth of the findings (credibility), a number of key concepts were relevant. The first was environmental triangulation (Stahl & King, 2020); the research took place in more than one context, thus giving the findings a broader focus. Three key ethnic groups, representative of the wider urban refugee population in Bangkok, were involved in the research, as opposed to just one. The research also took place among five refugee communities in Bangkok, each located in a different part of the city. Next, prior ethnography (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and prolonged engagement (Rose & Johnson, 2020) were utilised to enhance familiarity with and understanding of the communities under study. I had worked with one community on a voluntary basis for two years before carrying out the research; I visited two other communities over a two- and three-month period respectively, also helping to facilitate familiarity and trust, though not to the same extent as with the first community.

This aspect of trust is another key concept which helped to enhance the credibility of the research; interviews with respondents living in communities which I spent more time with were longer, and the interviewees opened up more. This does not guarantee that everything being said was necessarily a genuine reflection of their feelings and experiences all the time but did help to give the data more depth and insight than other interviews which lasted half the time. These latter interviews tended to happen more in communities where I spent less time.

Maxwell and Chmiel (2014) discuss how important making the details of a research context explicit is to the transferability of the research findings. This thesis has provided an analysis of the socio-political and educational context for refugees in Bangkok, and of the backgrounds of the three key groups involved in the research; Vietnamese Hmong, Sri Lankan Tamil, and Pakistani Christians and Ahmadiyyah Muslims. Refugees everywhere face some of the same challenges as the young refugees involved in this research, such as gaps in education; problems with access and integration; bullying and discrimination; and inadequate, low quality schooling (Dryden-Peterson, 2006). However, some of the challenges faced by the participants in the research for the purpose of this thesis also faced challenges unique to the context of Bangkok, Thailand, and contexts with similar socio-political conditions. The fact that Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, or its 1967 Protocol, means that fundamental rights of refugees are not recognised in Thailand and they have the legal status of illegal immigrants. This has two significant ramifications for refugees in Thailand: firstly, Thailand can only be a transit country for refugees,

meaning they will never be able to remain in Thailand but may end up staying for years waiting to be relocated to a different country. While waiting, they are forced to depend on charitable donations and working illegally in the informal economy for a livelihood; and they are constantly vulnerable to police abuse, arrest and detention. The fear this causes places detrimental restrictions on a refugee's freedom of movement, well-being and survival. Young refugees, particularly those who have attained a substantial level of education in their countries of origin, are unable or unwilling to access and integrate into the Thai education system, leading to gaps in their education, impeding their social and mental health and development. Thailand lacks the political will and economic capacity to invest in meaningful alternatives for refugees while they are waiting to be relocated to a different country; therefore, refugees are forced to find and create their own educational resources and provisions, which vary significantly in quality. Peer networks and online learning platforms provide useful opportunities for young refugees to access learning and accreditation, but these also require funding and investment, which is very ad hoc and precarious in a context where refugees lack legal status and the fundamental rights that accompany this. Therefore, the findings from this research are mainly transferable to a context where refugees are living in similar socio-political circumstances. This accounts for most of the countries in Southeast Asia, with the exception of three who have signed the Refugee Convention. Refugees and people working with refugees in these countries can learn from each other and share meaningful approaches to solutions for people living in such restrictive circumstances.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the findings from the research for the purposes of this thesis would be replicated with similar subjects in a similar context (dependability). Time and funding restrictions did not provide an opportunity to test this. I can only speculate that many of the findings would be similar, since the socio-political conditions in Thailand have not changed since beginning this thesis, nor the educational implications of this for young refugees. Certain communities have become more established in Bangkok however, for example the Vietnamese-Hmong community. The young refugees from this community that were involved in this research were the first generation to attend school in Thailand. As younger generations grow and start to also attend school, it would be interesting to find out if their experiences of these schools would be similar, or if they would be more integrated as a result of having grown up in Thailand, rather than moving to the country as a child or teenager.

The final tenet of Lincoln and Guba's trustworthiness in research is confirmability (1985), whether the findings were determined by the participants responses and the conditions of the study, or by the biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the researcher. I would argue that both played a role in determining the findings. It would be inappropriate to deny that my sympathies and political leanings did not influence the research approach, the analysis, and some of the outcomes of the research. Part of the motivation behind the research was to provide a platform for the young refugees who I was teaching voluntarily to express their experiences in their countries of origin and in Thailand; and communicate their needs and aspirations to a wider audience. The research findings were disseminated through conferences and workshops in various

settings around Bangkok, and with international audiences. Part of the aim was also to attract support for refugee education initiatives in Bangkok, through sponsorship, networking and voluntary help. Although I feel that the perspectives and experiences voiced by the participants in the research have been represented as accurately as possible, I cannot deny that there have been motivations guiding the research that are beyond just representation. Equally however, some neutrality to the research has been maintained by the fact that it has been an independent endeavour, funded completely by myself, so therefore not subject to any conditions or targets set by a funding body or organisation. Although this has been a strength, it has also led to some limitations which I will discuss in the next section.

4. Limitations of the research

The main limitation of the research was its impact, due to my professional capacity in Bangkok, my position as a foreigner in Thailand, funding restrictions and the legal situation of refugees in Thailand. Throughout the research, my involvement with the participants was of a voluntary, academic nature, rather than a professional one. This led to some neutrality, because I was not approaching the research with the aims and objectives of a particular organisation; however, it also limited my capacity to effect meaningful change with the research. As discussed in the previous section, the

research findings were disseminated to international audiences through conferences and workshops. The findings also informed the curriculum of CEDAR Learning centre, providing alternative education for young refugees in Bangkok; and helped to raise awareness and sponsorship for this school. Although much of the positive work being done with refugees in Bangkok is carried out by civil society and voluntary groups, no matter how much these groups network and support each other, there are limits to their effectiveness when they are made up of volunteers, often with full time jobs, limited time and capacity, and facing restrictions due to the legal status of refugees in Thailand.

In the previous section of this chapter, I discussed the significance of trust in developing the credibility of the research findings. There were stronger elements of trust with communities where I spent a longer period of time and developed more reciprocal relationships with than just researcher/researched, particularly if I was involved with them as a teacher. This was evidenced in longer, more in-depth interviews with participants in these communities. It is naïve however to expect complete trust and openness from participants who have experienced such trauma and been let down by so many. Although gatekeepers were significant in helping me to access very hard to reach communities, I was always an outsider representing a different nationality, language, culture, religion, education and socio-economic status.

Another limitation of the research was the language difference between the researcher and the participants and the reliance on interpreters to convey meaning. Even though the purposes of the research were made clear to each participant from the

beginning, there may have been different interpretations and expectations from it, which affected the interviewee's responses. As discussed previously in this chapter, most of the responses were conveyed through a participant's non-native language, if they were responding to the questions in English without the use of an interpreter; or through an interpreter who, according to the very meaning of the word, can only provide an 'interpretation' of the interviewer's questions and the interviewee's responses. With more time and capacity, carrying out respondent validation would have been a useful approach to checking the 'truth' of the findings with the respondents themselves (Bryman, 2016). The difficulty of this however would have been that the findings would have had to be translated for the respondents, thus still only providing an interpretation of them for the respondents. The transiency of the communities involved however meant that by the time the findings were ready to be cross-checked, many of the participants had moved due to police raids, changed contact details, been detained, deported, gone into hiding, or relocated to a different country. Having some of the transcripts checked by a second interpreter did offer some useful insights into potential misinterpretations of the data and a critical lesson learned from the research would be to build this second checking process into the data gathering from an earlier stage so that it can inform the development of the research approach more thoroughly. Another lesson learned would be to conduct follow up interviews with a different interpreter with some of the participants, using the opportunity to check certain analysis and conclusions drawn from their previous interviews. Time and funding constraints

however restricted the opportunity to do this, as well as limited availability of interpreters in the languages needed.

5. Recommendations for future research

As mentioned previously, only three countries in Southeast Asia have signed the Refugee Convention: Philippines, Cambodia and East Timor. All of the countries in ASEAN however have refugee populations, facing restrictive legal rights and access to education, livelihoods, and services. Further research is needed into how refugee populations living in these restrictive circumstances respond and seek out and create education and livelihoods for themselves, despite the many barriers they face. Proper documentation of the more successful practices and responses are needed so that refugee populations, civil society groups and organisations can learn from each other, share ideas and resources. Further research into the role that virtual learning environments can play in promoting access to education for refugees and other groups with limited access to quality education would also be beneficial. These virtual learning programmes, and the recognised certification to accompany them, can be tailored to the particular needs, aspirations and capacities of the populations utilising them but research is required in order to do this effectively. Further research is also required into how to utilise and support peer learning networks in contexts with limited resources, and

train peer leaders and learning facilitators towards innovating, developing and delivering alternative educational services that offer meaningful opportunities and help refugees 'live lives they have reason to value.' (Sen, 1999)

6. Closing words

This research journey began in 2015 when I first began volunteering as an English teacher at a Saturday school with a small charity, then known as 'In Search of Sanouk', Sanouk meaning happiness in Thai. I had worked with refugees in the UK but had not been involved with any communities in Thailand and was not at all sure what to expect. What fascinates me most and made me want to focus on the educational experiences of refugees in Bangkok for my doctoral research, is the strength and courage that they have, in the face of, and perhaps because of, all the challenges they experience. I was immediately struck by the warmth and the spirit of the refugee communities I worked with and wanted to learn more about their cultures and backgrounds. I hope that this thesis has captured this strength and spirit and that I have done their experiences justice.

Appendices

1. Interview questions

Name:

Date of Birth:

Nationality:

Language:

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Time of Interview:

Interpreter's name:

School one

Did you go to school in your country of birth?

If yes, what kind of school was it?

How long did you attend this school for?

When you left the school, how old were you? What year group were you in?

How did you feel about leaving this school?

What language did you use at school?

What language did you speak at home?

If these two languages were different, how did you feel about this?

What other languages did you learn at school?

What subjects did you like/dislike? Why?

What other activities did you like/dislike doing? Why?

What teachers did you like/dislike at school?

Do you miss it at all now? If so, what do you miss?

School two

When you first came to Bangkok, how long did you have to wait before you could go to school?

What did you do during this time? How did you feel?

How did you feel when you first started going to school in Thailand?

What school was/is it?

What year group did you join?

Were you the same age as other students in your class?

If no, how did you feel about this?

What languages did you learn and use at school?

What subjects did you like/dislike? Why?

What other activities did you like/dislike? Why?

What teachers did you like/dislike? Why?

What helped you to make friends at your school?

What did you like to do with your friends?

How old were you when you left this school? What year group were you in?

How did you feel about leaving this school?

School three

Do you go to school now? If so, what school? If not, go to bottom of this section.

What year group did you join?

Are you the same age as other students in your class?

If no, how do you feel about this?

What languages do you learn and use at school?

What subjects to you like and dislike at school? Why?

What other activities do you like and dislike doing at school? Why?

What teachers do you like and dislike at school? Why?

What helps you to make friends at your school?

What do you like to do with your friends?

What would you like to learn more of at school that you don't learn already?

What do you like to do when you're not at school?

(*questions if not at school)* If you are presently not going school, what do you do instead?

Would you like to go to school? If so, what kind of school?

If no, what would you like to do?

How do you feel about not being at school?

<u>The Future</u>

Would you like to stay at the school you are at now?

If no, what would you like to do instead?

What do you want to do when you finish school?

What do you want to do in the future?
What will help you to do this?

Where would you like to live in the future?

Is it important to you to learn English? If so, why is it important?

What aspect of English do you want to learn and improve? For example, speaking listening, etc. Why do you want to improve on this?

What helps you to learn and improve your English language skills?

What would you like to do more to help you improve?

What helps you to feel confident about your English?

What other subjects and topics would you like to learn in English class?

What other materials/resources/activities would you like to do for Saturday class?

2. Where I'm From Digital Poetry Preparation

You are going to write a poem about all the things, people, places, and memories that make you who you are
This will be based on a famous American poem by George Ella Lyon called
"Where I'm From"
You will add pictures and photos to this poem to turn it into a short film that will be about you and the people, places, memories and things that are important to you
To help you prepare, first write or draw some ideas

Name/names

People who are important to you, who have helped you become who you are today

- Friends, family, teachers
- People who have helped you
- People who have inspired you

Things that are important to you

- What are your hobbies/interests?
- What do you own that is special to you?

Places that are important to you

- Where do you feel safe and happy?
- What are the special places that you remember?

Things that you have seen that are important to you

Things that you have smelled

Things that you have touched

Things that you have heard

Things that you have tasted

Things that you have felt

Things that people have said about you and to you

Things that people have given you

Important memories that you want to share

"Where I'm From"

By _____

I am

from_____

From_____

I am

from_____

From_____

I am

From_____

From_____

I am

From_____

From_____

I am

From_____

From_____

I am

From_____

From_____

I am

From_____

From_____

I am

From_____

From_____

I am from all these moments

I'm _____, where are you from?

George Ella Lyon's Poem "Where I'm From"

I am from clothespins,
From Clorox and carbon – tetrachloride
I am from the dirt under the back porch
(Black, glistening, it tasted like beets)
I am from the forsythia bush, the Dutch elm, as if they were their own

I am from fudge and eyeglasses,
From Imogene and Alafair
I'm from the know-it-alls and the pass-it-ons
From perk up and pipe down!
I'm from He restoreth my soul with a cottonball lamb
And ten verses I can say to myself

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch, fried corn and strong coffee
From the finger my grandfather lost to the auger
The eye my father shut to keep his sight
Under my bed was a dress box spilling old pictures, a sift of lost faces
To drift beneath my dreams
I am from those moments snapped before I budded
Leaf fall from the family tree

3. Participant Information and Consent Form

Durham University
School of Education

Shaped by the past, creating the future

APPENDIX B

10/9/2016

Participant Information Sheet

Title: English on the Margins: The Educational Experiences of young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand

You are invited to take part in a research study of the educational experiences of young refugees in Bangkok, Thailand. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is conducted by Rebecca Warren as part of her EdD Research Project, 'English on the Margins' at Durham University.

* This research project is supervised by Dr. Carl Bagley, c.a.bagley@durham.ac.uk and Dr. Oakleigh Welpley, oakleigh.welpley@durham.ac.uk from the School of Education at Durham University.

The purpose of this study is to explore the educational experiences of young refugees in Bangkok, and the relevance of English to their lives and future aspirations.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer questions about your-self, your ideas, your beliefs, your friends, your family, your school, your past and present experiences and feelings, and your hopes for the future; create a portrait of yourself, using drawings, photographs, pictures, or textiles; and create a digital story about your life and community. Your participation in this study will take approximately 300 minutes.

You are free to decide whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences for you.

All responses you give or other data collected will be kept confidential. The records of this study will be kept secure and private. All files containing any information you give are password protected. In any research report that may be published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify you individually. There will be no way to connect your name to your responses at any time during or after the study.

* FUNDING this research project is part funded by The British Council and independently funded by the researcher.

* REIMBURSEMENT For your participation, you will be compensated for out of pocket expenses with 1000 Thai Baht

If you have any questions, requests or concerns regarding this research, please contact me via email at Rebecca Warren [r.c.warren@durham.ac.uk] or by telephone at 0981 580 070.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Education Ethics Sub-Committee at Durham University (1/12/2016)

Rebecca Warren

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Durham University is the trading name of the University of Durham

Appendix B – Thai Version – Participant Information Sheet

ภาคผนวก 2

วนั ที่ 10 กนั ยายน 2016

เอกสารข้อมลู ผ้สู มัคร

เรื่อง:เมื่อภาษาองักฤษเป็นเสยีงข้างน้อย:ประสบการณ์ด้านการศกึษาของผ้อูพยพเยาวชนในกรุงเทพมหานครประเทศไทย
ขอเชิญชวนเข้าร่วมงานวจิยัประสบการณ์ด้านการศกึษาของผ้อูพยพเยาวชนในกรุงเทพมหานครประเทศไทย

กรุณาอา่ นแบบฟอร์มให้รอบคอบและสอบถามก่อนเห็นชอบเข้าร่วมงานวจิ ยั
งานวจิยัเลม่ นเ้ี ขียนโดยรีเบคก้าวอร์เรนซึ่งเป็นสว่นหนงึ่ของโครงการวจิยัการศกึษาภาษาองักฤษเป็นเสยีงข้างน้อย

ที่มหาวิทยาลยั เดอร์แฮม
*หวัหน้าโครงงานวิจยัคือดอกเตอร์คาร์ลแบคลีc.a.bagley@durham.ac.ukและดอกเตอร์โอ๊คลี

เวลเพลoakleigh.welpley@durham.ac.ukจากวิทยาลยัการศกึษามหาวิทยาลยัเดอร์แฮม
จดุประสงค์ของโครงงานวิจยัคือเพื่อศกึษาประสบการณ์ด้านการศกึษาของผู้อพยพเยาวชนในกรุงเทพมหานคร

และความสมัพนัธ์เก่ียวข้องกบัภาษาองักฤษตอ่การใช้ชีวติและความใฝ่ฝันในอนาคต
หากมคี วามประสงค์เข้าร่วมโครงการ คณุ จะได้รับคาถามเกี่ยวกบั ตวั ของคณุ ความคิด ความเช่ือ เพ่ือน ครอบครัว

โรงเรียนประสบการณ์เร่ืองราวในอดีตและปัจจบุนัความร้ ูสกึและความหวงัในอนาคต ทางเราจะมีภาพวาดของตวั คณุ
โดยใช้การวาด ถ่ายรูป รูปภาพหรือวสั ดตุ า่ งๆ และ สร้างเร่ืองราวดจิ ิตอล เก่ียวกบั ชีวิตคณุ และสงั คมรอบตวั คณุ
คาถามโครงงานวิจยั นใี้ ช้เวลาประมาณ 300 นาที

คณุ สามารถเลอื กได้วา่ จะเข้าร่วมหรือไม่ หากตดั สนิ ใจเข้าร่วม คณุ จะได้รับอนญุ าตให้ถอนตวั จากโครงการได้ทกุ เมื่อ
โดยจะไมม่ีผลเสยีตอ่ตวัคณุ

ข้อมลูทกุอยา่งของคณุจะถกูเก็บเป็นความลบับนัทกึโครงงานวิจยันีจ้ะถกูเก็บไว้อยา่งดีและเป็นสว่นตวั
ไฟล์ทกุชนิดท่ีมีข้อมลูจะถกูตงั้รหสัผา่นรายงานวิจยัที่อาจถกูตีพมิพ์ทางเราจะไมเ่ผยแพร่ข้อมลูโดยการระบเุป็นรายบคุคล
บคุคลอื่นๆไมม่ีทางทราบข้อมลูตดิตอ่ของคณุทกุเมื่อในระยะเวลาวิจยัหรือหลงัจากงานวิจยั

***เงนิ ทุน**โครงงานวจิ ยั เลม่ นสี้ นบั สนนุ โดยบริทิชเคาน์ซิลและคา่ ใช้จ่ายสว่ นตวั ของผ้วู ิจยั

***การชาระเงนิ ตอบแทน** สาหรับการเข้าร่วม คณุ จะได้รับคา่ ใช้จา่ ยตอบแทน 1000 บาท
หากมคี าถามใดๆ สามารถสง่ คาถามข้อสงสยั มาได้ที่อีเมล r.c.warren@durham.ac.uk หรือ
ทางโทรศพั ท์ 0981 580 070 คณุ รีเบคก้า วอร์เรน
งานวจิยัเลม่นนี้ไ้ีดร้ับการตรวจสอบและอนมุตัิโดยวิทยาลยัภาคสว่นยอ่ยจริยธรรมการศกึษามหาวิทยาลยัเดอร์แฮม (ลงวนั ที่
:.....)

10 Ethics application form_Rebecca Warren 2.docx

Durham University
School of Education

Shaped by the past, creating the future

APPENDIX C

Declaration of Informed Consent

- I agree to participate in this study, the purpose of which is to explore the educational experiences of young refugees in Bangkok, and the relevance of English to their lives.
- I have read the participant information sheet and understand the information provided.
- I have been informed that I may decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the study without penalty of any kind.
- I have been informed that data collection will involve the use of recording devices.
- I have been informed that all of my responses will be kept confidential and secure, and that I will

  not be identified in any report or other publication resulting from this research.

- I have been informed that the investigator will answer any questions regarding the study and its

  procedures. Rebecca Warren, School of Education, Durham University can be contacted via

  email: r.c.warren@durham.ac.uk or telephone: 0981 580 070.

- I will be provided with a copy of this form for my records.

  Any concerns about this study should be addressed to the School of Education Ethics Sub- Committee, Durham University via email to ed.ethics@durham.ac.uk.

Date Participant Name (please print) Participant Signature

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant and secured his or her consent.

Date Signature of Investigator

Leazes Road
Durham City, DH1 1TA

Telephone +44 (0)191 334 2000 Fax +44 (0)191 334 8311

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Durham University is the trading name of the University of Durha

Appendix C – Thai Version - Participant Consent Form

ภาคผนวก 3

หนังสือแสดงความยนิยอม

- - ข้าพเจ้าตกลงเข้าร่วมโครงงานวิจยันี้
  เพื่อจดุประสงค์แกก่ารศกึษาประสบการณ์ด้านการศกึษาของผ้อูพยพเยาวชนในกรุงเทพมหานครและ
  ความสมัพนัธ์เกี่ยวข้องกบัภาษาองักฤษในชีวติ
- - ข้าพเจ้าได้อา่ นเอกสารข้อมลู ผ้สู มคั รและทาความเข้าใจเนอื้ หาถกู ต้องครบถ้วน
- - ข้าพเจ้าได้รับแจ้งวา่ ข้าพเจ้าสามารถปฏิเสธที่จะตอบคาถามหรือถอนตวั จากโครงงานวจิ ยั

  โดยไมม่ีคา่ใช้จา่ยหรือบทลงโทษใดๆ

- - ข้าพเจ้าได้รับแจ้งวา่จะใช้อปุกรณ์เก็บข้อมลูในการบนัทกึข้อมลู
- - ข้าพเจ้าได้รับแจ้งวา่ ข้อมลู ทกุ ชนดิ ของข้าพเจ้าจะถกู เก็บเป็นความลบั และปลอดภยั และ ข้อมลู จะไมร่ ะบตุ วั ข้าพเจ้า

  ในเอกสารหรือสงิ่ ตีพิมพ์อื่นๆที่แสดงผลงานวิจยั

- - ข้าพเจ้าได้รับแจ้งวา่ ผ้สู อบถามจะถามคาถามทเ่ีก่ยีวกบั งานวิจยั เลม่ นี้และขนั้ ตอนการทางาน

  ข้าพเจ้าสามารถติดตอ่คณุรีเบคก้าวอร์เรนได้ที่อีเมลr.c.warren@durham.ac.ukหรือทางโทรศพัท์098 1580 070

- - ขา้พเจา้จะไดร้ับสาเนาเอกสารหนงัสือแสดงความยนิยอมเพื่อเป็นขอ้มูลของขา้พเจา้
  ขอ้กงัวลสงสยัเกี่ยวกบังานวจิยักรุณาติดต่อวทิยาลยัภาคส่วนยอ่ยจริยธรรมการศึกษามหาวทิยาลยัเดอร์แฮมไดท้ี่อีเมล

  ed.ethics@durham.ac.uk

  วนัท่ี ช่ือผสู้มคัร(โปรดพิมพ)์ ลายเซ็นผสู้มคัร
  ขา้ พเจา้ ขอรับรองวา่ ขา้ พเจา้ แสดงขอ้ มูลขา้ งตน้ ใหแ้ ก่ผสู้ มคั รและรับประกนั หนงั
  สือแสดงความยนิ ยอมของผสู้ มคั ร

  วนัท่ี ลายเซ็นผทู้าวจิยั

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4. Example interview transcription with secondary feedback from Urdu-English translator

Interview with (*name omitted to protect confidentiality)*
September 2nd, 2017
Pracha Uthit

M – interviewee
F – father of interviewee
B – interviewer
R – Interpreter
U – Urdu

B – Okay so like I said my name is Rebecca and I'm a teacher here in Bangkok
U
B – I work for the British Council
U
B – and I work at a Thai school but I can't really guarantee a place at a school
U
B – I'm just trying to find out a little bit more about what your needs and experiences are
U
B – are you guys okay, are you comfortable, because I feel like I have the fan, and you're…are you hot because I can…
U
R – okay
B – okay what is your date of birth?
U
M – 26 January 2005
U
R – 26 January 2005
B – and what is your nationality?
M – Pakistan
B – and what is your language?
U
M – Urdu
U
B – okay so first of all did you go to school in Pakistan?
M – yes
B – okay sorry how old are you are you 13 years old, no 12 years old
M – yes

B – and what kind of school was it, was it a primary school, a government school?
U
F – private school
B – and how long did you go to this school for?
U
F – four years
B – so how long have you been in Bangkok?
U
F – two years
B – so when you left the school in Pakistan, how old were you?
U
R – that time I was nine years
B – and what level were you in, what year?
U
M – level three
B – and how did you feel about leaving this school?
U
R – I feel very sad
B – and why were you sad?
U
R – because I don't have studies now, that is why I feel sad
B – and did you learn in Urdu, was it an Urdu school?
U
M – Urdu
R – Urdu
B – okay and what subjects did you learn?
U
M – social studies, science, math, general knowledge, English, Urdu
F – and I think Islamia
B – okay and what subjects did you like?
U
M – science
B – and why did you like this subject?
U
M – because it was very interesting
R – because it was very interesting
B – and were there any subjects that you didn't like?
U
M – no
B – and what other activities did you do at this school?
U
M – music class
U
R – there was music there, art

U
M – computer class
U
R – we play there and there were art class there and computer class there and music class
B – and what activities did you like?
U
M – art class
R – art class
B – and why did you like this?
U
M – because I like art
B – any activities that you didn't like?
U
F – sorry maam can I just mention…
U
R – okay, I just want to mention that she's very good in art. While in Good Shepherd they had a competition and she won the first prize there in art.
F – I have the first prize
M – certificate
B – Wow yeah, cool, what kind of art do you like doing?
U
M – painting
R – painting
B – and were there any activities that you didn't like?
U
R – no
B – okay and what teachers did you like at your school, so you don't need to say names but…
U
M – English and maths and social studies
B – and why did you like these teachers?
U
R – because they explained things very well in a [*unclear*] way so we could understand
B – and were there any teachers that you didn't like?
U
R – Urdu teacher
B – and why didn't you like this teacher?
U
R – she beat me
B – okay and do you miss the school now?
U
R – yes I do
B – what do you miss about it?
U
M – teachers, class, computer class, music class

F – friends
R – all I miss my friends, my music teacher, my computer teacher and my art teacher, social studies teacher, and miss my school, miss my friends
B – and what did you like to do in your free time in Pakistan?
U
R – I usually play with my friends
U
R – and she also take care of her younger sisters
B – oh okay, sorry I'm just checking [*checks recorder*]
B – okay is there anything else you'd like to tell me about Pakistan, about your school or your life?
U
R – I miss my Sunday school, Pakistani Sunday school
B – oh okay…when you first came to Bangkok, how long did you have to wait before you started school?
U
R – I wait for 10 days only before I went to school
B – okay that's good, and what did you do during this time, how did you feel?
U
R – I feel good and while we found the school and then we started school. In these 10 days, we were just playing
B – yeah, and how did you feel when you first started going to school here?
U
R – I feel good because I attend school after a long time so I feel very good
B – but after a long time, what does that mean?
U
R – uhh, I think she doesn't understand the question
B – okay, so what school was it that you started coming to when you first came to Thailand, what school was it?
U
R – Good Shepherd School
B – and what level did you join?
U
M – level 2
B – and were you the same age as other students in level 2?
U
R - yes they are
B – were you from the same place, same nationality?
U
R – there were Vietnamese, Sri Lankan
B – and how did you feel about learning with students from different…?
U *Romail interpreted, "people also good with us" I would like to change "with" to "to" "It felt good because those people were also good to us." (secondary feedback from a different interpreter)*

R – I feel good because those people also good with us
B – okay and what was the language that you used at the school?
U
M – English
B – and how did you feel about using English rather than Urdu?
U
R – I feel good
B – did you find it difficult at all or did you like speaking English?
U
R – I like to speak English
B – okay and what subjects did you like learning at The Good Shepherd?
U
M – English and Thai
B – and why did you like these?
U
R – because English is my favourite subject and Thai because I like to learn different languages and Thai is, that is why I'm learning Thai
B – and were there any subjects that you didn't like?
U
M – no
B – and what other activities did you like doing at The Good Shepherd?
U
R – sports day
B – what kind of sports did you play?
U
R – I like race, running and musical chairs, badminton, cricket
B – okay and were there any activities that you didn't like?
U
M – no
B – and what teachers did you like?
U
M - English
R – English teacher
B – and why did you like this teacher?
U
R – because she was nice
U
R – because she was loving to us and quite caring to us
B – where was she from?
U
R – Thai, she was Thai
B – okay, were there any teachers that you didn't like?
U

R – no
B –okay and did you have friends at this school
U
R – yes
B – what helped you to make these friends?
U
R – no one helped me
B – okay and what did you like to do with your friends at this school?
U
R – *laughing*
B – I heard gossip there
R – yes, this is first, we usually play there and we do activities there and also gossip
B – okay and are you still at this school?
U
M – no
B – okay so how old were you when you left?
U
R – 12 years
B – and what level were you in?
U
M – level 3
B – okay, so how long were you there for?
U
M – two years
B – two years? Okay so why did you leave?
U
R – okay so the teacher said that now you have completed two years now we have shortage of the seats so now you can go and the other children can come
B – hmm, and how did you feel about leaving?
U
R – I feel so bad
B – why did you feel this way?
U
R – because I didn't get admission in Thai school
B – okay so did you go anywhere else after The Good Shepherd, did you go to any other school?
U
R – only I went in our condo there is a school and today also we have class
B – hmm, and when you say you weren't able to go to Thai school, who was helping you go to Thai school?
U
M – BRC
B – BRC? Did you ever go to BRC, take classes at BRC?
U
R – I went to BRC but not for studying, I know BRC but for study I did not go there

B – so why did you go there?
U
R – sometimes we go with my father and also when I got prize we got from there
B – so when did BRC try to help you go to Thai school?
U
R – we tried BRC ad we tried also to go to Thai school but their policy is when the child is over 10 years then they did not give admission
B – whose policy is this, the Thai schools?
R - after 10 years they don't take any child so my daughter she is right now more than 10 so that's why she didn't get the admission in Thai school
B – when did you leave the Good Shepherd?
U
R – in the month of March
B – and did BRC, before, when you first came to Thailand, did they try to help you go to Thai school then?
R – beg your pardon?
B – did BRC or anyone try to help her go to Thai school when she was younger, when she first came to Thailand?
U
F – no
U
R – the policy of BRC is like this when a person try to learn the Thai language, when they do two semester at Good Shepherd, then they take him or her to the Thai school and while she has completed, she is already over-age
B – um, so how did you feel about doing being able to go to Thai school?
U
R – I feel so bad
U
R – she wish to study more, in Pakistan I love my school and here I don't have school, and my parents they are doing nothing for me, and I told them what I can do I am doing for you
B – hmm, yeah yeah, so do you go to school now?
U
M – no
B – okay so what do you do instead?
U
R – I do nothing, just sit in the room
B – so no one from UNHCR or BRC is trying to help?
U
R – no
B – do you learn anything by yourself?
U
R – in the condo school they give some paperwork so I study there when I am free
B – and that's every Wednesday and Saturday?
U

R – yes
B – okay and um what kind of school would you like to go to?
U
M – international school
B – are you Christian?
M – yes
B – um, okay and how do you feel about not being at school?
U
R – I don't feel good because all the time I am stay at home
B – what would you like to do in the future?
U
R – I wish to become a doctor?
B – and what do you think will help you to do this?
U
R – the study can help to be a doctor
B – and where would you like to live in the future?
U
R – in the USA
B – why would you like to live there?
U
R – because they have good studies there
B – okay and is it important to you to learn English?
U
R – yes it is
B – why?
U
R – because when I go to America and there I will have to speak in English
B – and what aspect of your English would you like to improve, like your reading, writing, speaking, listening?
U
R – reading, speaking and listening
B – and what helps you to improve your English?
U
R – when I will listen and when I will read
B – and what would you like to do more to help you improve?
U
B – it's okay she's already explained it already. What makes you feel confident about your English, like yeah I can do it well
U
M – reading
R – reading
B – and what other subjects and topics would you like to learn?
U
M – science

R – science
B – and what other resources or materials or activities would you like, so maybe for your community school, is there anything that you think maybe…do you have the Internet here?
U
R – we have Internet access and many of the things I'm concerned with are on the Internet and I learn from there
B – hmm, what about books?
U
R – I have my science book, I have my English book
B – art materials, do you have art materials?
M – no
B – okay…okay, is there anything else that you'd like to say?
U
M – no
B – are there any questions that you have for me?
U
R – after this interview will I be able to go to school?
B – I would love to help. I am going to look into it actually; I am going to look into one of the missionary schools
U
B – yeah I'm pretty shocked at what I'm finding here to be honest
U *Romail's interpretation here was completely different from what you said. He interepreted,"I will be trying and I believe I'll find one." (secondary feedback from a different interpreter)*

B – um so yeah thank you for sharing that
U

5.Example of poem written for the 'Where I'm From' digital poetry project - (Lis, aged 14, 2017, Viet-Hmong)

I am from my family

From singing and my heart

I am from my church

From food and flower

I am from my ears and my face

From song and lightning

I'm from lemon and salt

From comedian and film

I am from my dreams and love

From you're beautiful and lovely

I'm from singing Christmas songs

From reading stories with my friends

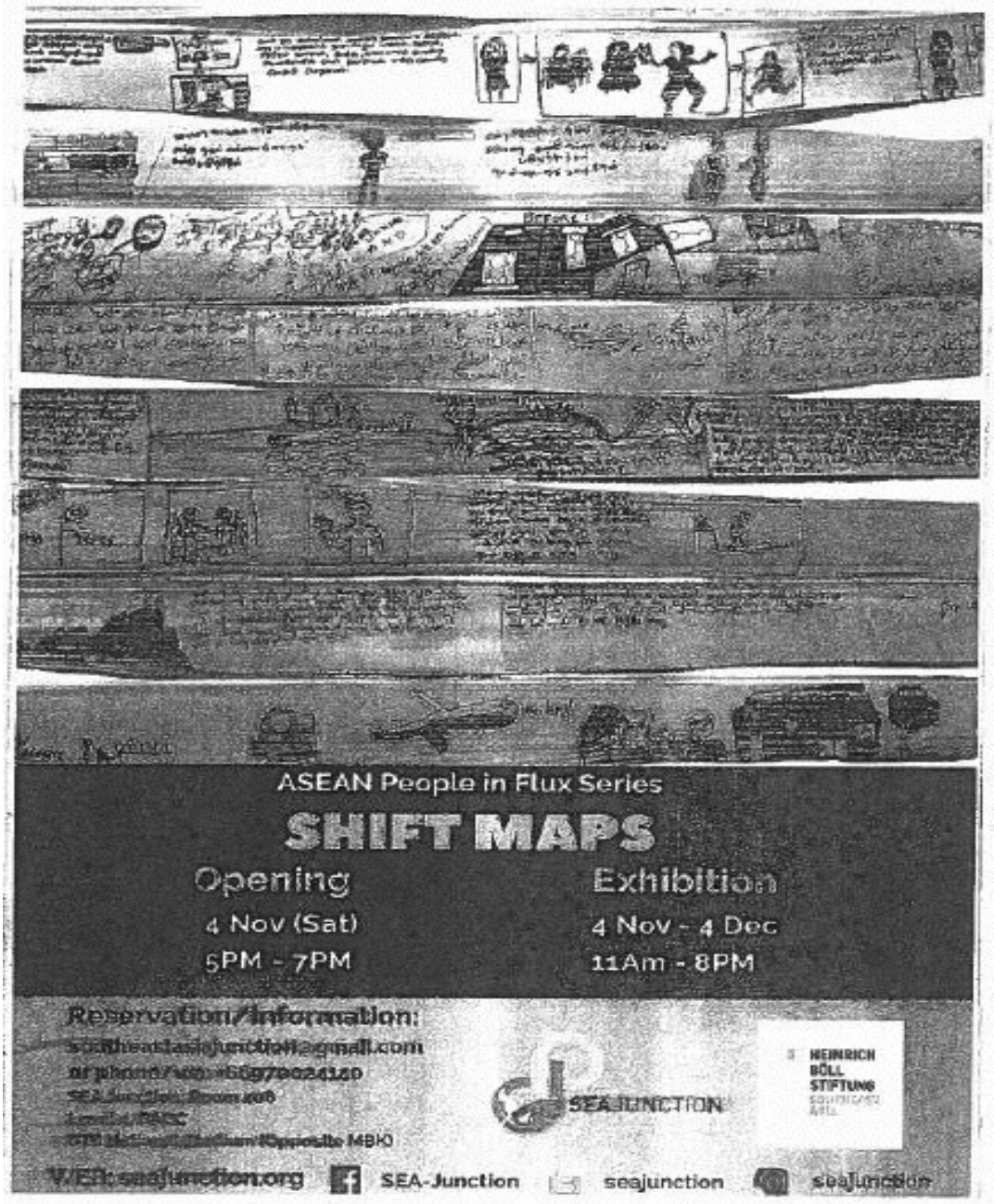
I'm from wanting to be a singer

From cooking by myself

I'm from caring for my brother and my sister

From hoping for my brother and sister to be good people

6.Poster from the Shift Maps Project


ASEAN People in Flux Series
SHIFT MAPS
Opening
4 Nov (Sat)
5PM - 7PM
Exhibition
4 Nov - 4 Dec
11Am - 8PM
Reservation/Information:
SEA JUNCTION
HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
SEA-Junction
seajunction

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