Refugees as troubled learners in UK Schools. An evaluation and reconceptualisation of education for diversity in UK schools. The integrated threat theory approach

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Abstract

This paper addresses the policy of education for diversity that seeks to facilitate refugee integration. The integrationist theory considers that a culturally homogenous society could be created as a result of immigrants adapting and changing their ways sufficiently to fit in with the host culture.   Using qualitative data from refugee students from the UK, the paper adopts integrated threat theory as an analytical tool to interrogate the perceptions of refugee students as they try to 'fit' in UK schools. Findings indicate that refugee students identify perceived threats in their daily interactions with host community students. The study concludes that the restrictive migration trajectories, a hostile transitional climate, and some right-wing anti-immigration discourse create a climate of suspicion, alienation leading to actual experiences of refugee racism. Integrated threat theory therefore offers a useful insight into understanding these differences in group dynamics between refugee learners and their hosts and how this affects the implementation of intercultural interaction policies.

Key words: refugees, integration, identity, groups, diversity, integrated threat theory.

1: Introduction

Hill & Hessari (1990:2) argue that *'cultures are not as monolithic or homogeneous as is often assumed. The convenient labels that we use hide an enormous variation within them.'* One of such labels as posited by Hill & Hessari is ethnic diversity. Despite progress in education for ethnic diversity and/or multicultural and anti-racist education, research in refugee education has continued to raise questions about the reality of anti-refugee racism as another dimension of multiculturalism or education for ethnic diversity (See Kum, 2009, 2010; Rutter, 2003, 2004, 2006). Such research cited above has noted that while the agenda on an enriching educational experience to all including refugees is implemented, there are significant barriers to overcome before the impact is positively felt in refugee communities. This article focusses on two related but distinct themes. The integration of refugee students in UK schools and the context of refugee racism as experienced by refugee students in UK schools. These themes are elaborated in interview responses by refugee learners and analyzed using the integrated threat theory. Before applying this theory, the researcher seeks to establish policy conflicts and practices that have effectively positioned the refugee as an unwanted 'other' in the eyes of members of the host communities. The paper starts with an elaboration of international

and national policy difficulties that show the increase in refugee prejudice in troubling times. This writer acknowledges that there are positive immigration policies internationally and within the UK that enhance the lives of refugees but the focus of this paper is on the challenges faced by refugee learners as a result of the implementation of education for diversity in UK schools.

2: Troubled times and refugee Prejudice

2.1:   Restrictive International Policy Context

Donald Trump (US president) has kept up with his anti-immigration rhetoric which he devised in the US 2016 presidential campaign 'of building a wall' to keep out illegal migration (including asylum seekers). In 2018, maritime vessels were stranded in the Mediterranean ocean with several frail asylum seekers because no European country was willing to take them in. And Australia which had bowed to international pressure to close Christmas Island where refugees are illegally detained and prevented from going to mainland Australia has just announced that it is reopening the Island for further detentions. This is proof that industrialised countries see themselves as becoming increasingly threatened by immigration, although immigration in such countries is sometimes encouraged for specific reasons especially in the need to fill skill gaps in the labour market. The policies on immigration have led to important as well as problematic human rights issues in the twenty first century (Korac 2003). Migration threats include forced migrants, economic migrants, political migrants and social migrants. Due to continuous conflicts, wars and human rights violations, industrialised nations have had to balance human rights law with responses to forced migration that includes refugees and asylum seekers and the internal pressure from anti-immigration campaigners in their respective countries. The readiness of the host communities to welcome refugees requires a distinct but gradual process of integration comprising inter-related legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions, all of which are important for refugees' ability to integrate successfully as fully included members of the host society.

Despite the legal commitment that states have signed up to, there is still widespread (though far from universal) resentment by some states and members of the public of unrestricted immigration (Cole and Virdee 2005; Fielden 2008). Increasingly restrictive measures seem to be developing side by side with growing legal practices that fight for the human rights of refugees and other migrants. There are contradictions between human rights and restrictive immigration policies which continue to negatively impact on the self-worth of refugees. Kum (2018) posits, for example, that Sweden which has until today accepted more refugees per head than any EU member country announced border control on its Danish frontier to stop the inflow of refugees. Denmark has also adopted controversial plans to confiscate items of high monetary value from refugees so as to use the proceeds in caring for the refugees. In addition, Denmark has built a fence on its border with Germany to check the influx of refugees crossing from Germany. These are measures similar to what Hungary, Slovakia, Serbia and Macedonia had already adopted to deny refugees crossing into their countries. The German ruling party of Angela Merkel suffered significant losses in the Berlin local elections because of its soft stance on the admission of refugees into Germany. And in the UK, it is believed that the admission of foreigners, and UK immigration policies triggered the Brexit vote which saw the UK voting to leave the EU. Such policies which are highly

publicised in right wing media organs continue to define the refugee as the unwanted 'other'.

2.2: Restrictive UK Refugee Policy Context.

In the UK, policies adopted to assist refugees in the search for answers to their needs are often superficial and inadequate. For example, provision of English as an additional Language (EAL) and English as a Second Language (ESOL) have been withdrawn in some Local Authorities and some provision now excludes refugees who are not receiving state benefits. In England, a refugee who has not lived in the UK for up to three years has limited access to state funding for university education and to certain courses like teaching, social work and nursing among others. Partners of refugees on family reunion do not have any recourse to public funds and this places financial stress on how these families respond to the educational needs of their children (Randall, 2003; Zetter 2007)

When asylum seekers arrive in the UK, they are relocated to one of major cities where accommodation and subsistence is offered. The result of this has been increased poverty, isolation, vulnerability to racial attacks, congestion in reception centres and hostels, social exclusion and forced mobility from one area to the other thereby disrupting the education and schooling of these families (Rutter 2006; Kum 2009, 2010, 2018; Rutter et al 2007, Smyth et al., 2010). This is a concern to schools, Local Education Authorities and Government, especially those in urban areas that receive most refugees. For example, schools can refuse to admit children if the school is already full; if the admissions policy of the school says that it prefers to take children who practise a certain religion; if the school is a grammar school which selects children on the basis of ability; and if the school is nearly full and preference is given to children who meet certain conditions. The conditions might include living near the school or having a brother or sister who is already in the school. This entitlement does not distinguish refugee children from non-refugee children. The entitlements sometimes are not often clear to refugee parents and in some cases; barriers are created with schools, local authorities and local education authorities that inhibit refugee parents from accessing such entitlements. This becomes an extremely troubling time for refugee parents who cannot gain school places for their children nearer to where they have been accommodated.

Sometimes, frequent reallocation from one accommodation to another and inter urban mobility exacerbate the instability and hinder the active participation of refugees in the life of the society, like in employment, education and other social values. Some of them who have had long periods of restriction from living normal lives may endure damaging mental health and develop conditions such as depression, dependency syndrome, apathy and lack of self-confidence (Rutter et al. 2007). Ignoring the existence of these mental and psychological aspects of refugee settlement only adds to the difficulties of educational integration.

The asylum process does not take into consideration cultural differences and its complex nature makes it difficult for refugee learners to understand their rights and entitlement. The risk of social exclusion and under-achievement for such children is very high. Richman (1993) indicates that refugee children may manifest a range of characteristics. These include feelings of loss, change and separation often associated with fear of loud noises or voices of group of men, or men in uniform; sadness or irritability as they may appear worried, miserable or lacking in energy: poor concentration and restlessness and regularly being over-active and unable to settle at any one activity: aggression and disruptiveness which is a very common feature of accompanying distress (Rutter, 2006). Children experiencing such feelings require specialist

support to cope with such loss, despair and fear and their alienation reduces the credibility of the education for diversity agenda. This specialist support is not often available in schools, schools are sometimes ill equipped to manage such symptoms or there is limited funding for such specialist support. Despite this, there are no schools specific to refugee learners, meaning that they have to be schooled alongside their home counterparts which sets up diametrically opposed learners into in-groups and outgroups. This adds to the troubling context that refugees face in the UK. Such troubling times impact on the applicability of the education for diversity agenda in UK schools which is analysed in this paper using integrated threat theory. Integrated threat theory is considered most appropriate to apply in this context because of the integrational focus of most policy contexts when it comes to addressing the challenges of refugees.

3: Literature Review

3.1: Intergroup Collaboration.

Drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), Brewer (2003) asserts that the process of separation into in-groups and outgroups is a natural part of human experience. It reduces complexity by allowing assumptions to be made about interactions with other in-group members, who can be trusted to behave in certain ways and to hold shared values. Conversely, outgroup members are unpredictable and motivated by different drives, which may be at odds with their own intentions. Humans will naturally stress and overestimate both similarities within the in-group and the differences between the in-groups and outgroups, thereby subconsciously reinforcing preferences for the in-group; this is sometimes termed 'mindless in-group favouritism' (Brewer 2003). This in-group bias can be broken down to some extent when the outgroup is in cooperation, rather than competition (Riketta & Sacremento, 2008; Wolsko et al., 2003) where individuals are interacting rather than groups.

A useful concept in understanding in-group bias is that of 'cultural distance'. In this research, I use the term culture to mean the collection of socially-learned rules, norms, and values and shared meanings that influence individuals' behaviour within a population. While some critical theory and postmodernist writers (Benhabib, 2002) argue that culture is an artificial and outdated concept, others continue to present strong evidence from a broadly materialist perspective for identifiable and meaningful between -group differences (Harris, 1999; Hofstede, 2001; Gannon, 2004). A number of writers (e.g. Hall & Hall, 1990; Triandis, 1995; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Hofstede, 2001; Gannon, 2004) have attempted to identify and define dimensions on which cultures vary. It is then hypothesised that intercultural relations will be simpler and more rewarding the 'closer' the two groups are and more fraught with misunderstanding, culture shock and anxiety the greater the 'distance' (Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Stephan, Ybarra & Morrison 2009; Zeitlin, 1996; Ward et al., 2001). A consensus on the dimensions of culture has, as yet, proved elusive, but may comprise aspects such as the strength of social hierarchies, the role of family, relative gender dominance, attitudes to politeness/face, attitudes to uncertainty and time, the fixedness of rules and the levels of ethnocentrism.

One particular dimension of relevance to this study is that of the contrast between what might be broadly described as collectivist and individualist cultures. Seen by many commentators (Smith & Bond, 1993; Triandis, 1995; Ward et al., 2001; Schimmack et al., 2005) as a vital component in understanding

intercultural relations, cultures that generally stress interdependence, context, long term group bonding, which are shared over individual goals and rigid hierarchies contrast sharply with those which stress individual agency, personal success and social mobility. The UK is generally considered to be near the individualist end of the spectrum (Hofstede, 2001; Allik & Realo, 2004) and so culturally distant from strongly collectivist cultures like those found in many parts of Asia and Africa where most of the refugees in this study come from. As such, host country or home students in the UK might be expected to experience higher levels of in-group bias when presented with refugee students from collectivist cultures and lower levels with those from more familiar individualist cultures in Europe and North America. This phenomenon has been observed in reverse among migrant students (including refugee learners) from broadly collectivist cultures travelling to individualist ones (Chirkov et al., 2005)

Any essentialist approach to culture is open to challenge, not least as widespread migration and multiculturalism make the analysis of national cultural identity increasingly problematic (Couldry, 2000). However, as it shall be observed later in this research, the participants in this study articulated perceived differences between themselves and their host country peers that relate to various dimensions of cultural distance, including around what might be described as collectivism.

3.2 Conceptual Framework: Integrated Threat Theory

There are a number of important conceptual frameworks that could be applied to understand the educational integration of refugee learners in the context of education for diversity. But this project has chosen integrated threat theory to analyse the data emerging from encounters with refugee learners in UK schools in the context of schooling together with UK students. Related to this is the concept of cultural dissonance which is very significant in understanding in-group. Culture here is used to mean the collection of socially learned rules, norms, values and shared meanings that influence individuals' behaviour within a population. It refers to collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. Some critical and postmodernist writers e.g. Benhabib, (2002) argues that culture is an artificial and outdated model; others like Harris (1999); Hoftede (2001); Gannon (2004) continue to present strong evidence from a broadly materialist perspective for identifiable and meaningful between-group differences. Stephan & Stephan (1996) posit that intergroup relationships will be simpler and more rewarding the closer the groups are and more fraught with understanding, culture shock and anxiety the greater the distance.

According to differences between collectivist and individualist cultures (See Ward et al 2001) cultures that generally stress the interdependence, context, long term group bonding, shared over individual goals and rigid hierarchies contrast strongly with those which stress individual agency, personal success and social mobility. Hofstede (2001); Allik & Realo (2004) view the UK as near the individualist end of the spectrum and so strongly distant from strongly collectivist cultures found in many parts of Africa and Asia. I recognise the fact that any essentialist approach to culture is open to challenge, not least as widespread migration and multiculturalism make the analysis of national identity increasingly problematic. Integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) is derived from the field of social psychology and proposes an integrated framework for analysing difficult intergroup relations drawing on practical examples of tensions between two groups who come into regular contact. It was developed in an attempt

to pull together previous competing single factor theories of threat into broader framework.　In particular it has been used to analyse a range of intergroup situations where an incoming minority is interacting with an established majority group, including migrants in the USA (Stephan et al 1996), refugees in Australia (Schweitzer et al 2005) and Muslims in the Netherlands (Gonzalez et al 2008). Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) used the framework to investigate relations between home students and international students in the USA and found it a useful tool in understanding threat, anxiety and the use of stereotypes.　There are four major components of threat felt by one group in respect of another.

- Realistic threat: these are those that endanger the material safety and wellbeing of the group and might include fear of harm or a decline in quality of life.
- Symbolic threat includes those that are perceived as threatening the groups culture or place in the wider society, particularly by challenging or undermining accepted norms
- Intergroup anxiety occurs when two groups come into contact and relates to fears over the ability to communicate positively and effectively
- Negative stereotyping are those ingrained attitudes and responses to members of another group that mediate contact, set expectations and that hamper the process of individuation.

Riek et al (2006) postulate amendment to this component with group esteem threat replacing negative stereotype and inter group anxiety.　The latter is seen more as a mediator between the other threats and more general behaviours and attitudes. Aberson and Gaffney (2008) remove negative stereotyping from the main framework and examine the role of positive intergroup contact on threat and how the various forms of threat impact on the creation of both implicit and explicit attitudes to outgroups. Stephan et al 2009 suggest that only realistic and symbolic threats should be considered with negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety being relegated to predictors for these.

It has been successfully applied in a wide variety of situations and it emphasises anxiety as a key emotional response to intergroup interaction.　Cottrell and Neuberg (2005) suggest that integrated threat theory underplays the highly individualised emotional responses to stimuli such as threat, although they concede that it provides a useful higher-level framework for categorisation.

4: Research Context

There is a considerable amount of literature on integration, on education within a multicultural setting and on the education for diversity agenda which seeks to explore the extension and widening of the school impact equally to all ethnicities. However, there is relatively little information on how refugee learners feel, act and react in the context of the education for diversity agenda especially considering the persistence of refugee racism within schools, social settings, media and policy contexts. School based practices and state policies on refugee issues have proceeded via a top down approach without willingly considering the inclusion of refugee voices. Due to the absence of representing refugee voices, the 'refugee' continues to attract widespread scorn and ridicule thereby increasing situations for refugee racism to flourish in an official context, despite the existence of education for ethnic diversity. The persistence of refugee racism denies refugee learners the opportunity to fully develop in any form of education prescribed for them by the state and it denies them the opportunity to enter public spaces as valued and equal people. The absence

of refugee voice in the policy application of the education for diversity agenda provided the focus of this research which sought present voices of the refugees as important actors in the educational spaces that claim to achieve educational and social integration in UK society. This was carried out through an exploratory approach to build descriptive accounts from a cross section of refugee learners in schools in Glasgow. It was intended that these would scope the main emerging themes in an area that has received little attention to date. The author understands that refugees' lives are constantly in flux and that their views around this subject are contingent and flexible, based on the accumulation of new experiences. It is also understood that refugee learners are not a homogenous group, with a wide range of cultural and ethnic identities; this point is later returned to in the discussion of limitations. The study was not therefore intended to map deterministic patterns of belief or behaviour, but to explore the range of experiences undergone by refugee learners and the meanings they attached to them.

The primary research questions that were posed were:
1. How do refugee learners view and interpret their interaction with home students and are there identifiable differences between sub-groups within the refugee learner population?
2. What themes emerge from refugee learners' narratives about the social and academic encounter they have had with host community students and/or the perceived barriers to such encounters.
3. To what extent are refugee learners willing and informed participants in the education for diversity agenda in the UK and do they share in its values and assumptions?

A further question addressed by this paper was whether it is possible to contextualise the findings within an established theoretical framework from the field of group relations.

5: Methodology

The research took place in four universities and four Further Education (FE) colleges in Glasgow, Scotland. The universities were partners in the Refugees into Teaching in Scotland (RITeS) project which aimed at assisting refugee teachers into requalifying and accessing the teaching sector in Scotland. All the four FE colleges were also partners of the RITeS project and helped to provide ESOL classes as a prerequisite for gaining registration into the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS). The four universities and four colleges therefore had a strong ethnic mix of refugee learners. The research subjects were refugees (had requested protection in the UK and had been granted leave to remain in the UK). They were in full or part time education doing various courses ranging from degree top up courses, full university programmes, and teaching requalification programmes. It should be recognised that the experience of postgraduate learners may (perhaps) differ significantly (Neame et al., 2007) and in more subtle ways (Trashar, 2007).

A mix of qualitative data collection methods was chosen in order to offer a contrast between the accounts generated by students in groups and in one-to-one environments. It was felt that focus groups would enable the researcher to examine the shared dialogues within the groups of refugee learners, with group members confirming, reinforcing, or challenging views expressed by individuals. However, there were concerns (addressed here under limitations) about the likelihood of self-censorship in the focus groups. One to one

interviews were therefore used to probe learners' individual experiences, and affective reaction to them, in a more confidential environment and in more specific detail.

5.1: Focus Groups: The learners were identified under three groups: Recently arrived refugee learners, newly arrived refugee learners and long term settled refugee learners. There were three focus groups, each focussed on a category above. 28 refugee learners attended one of three semi structured focus groups, each lasting about an hour. About 80% of the attendees came from schools and FE colleges with RITeS project partnership while 20% came from the two schools that had few refugee students studying there. The researcher facilitated the three focus groups. The focus groups aimed to gather information across a range of social and educational interactions between themselves and their host community peers and, in particular, their conceptualisation of host community students and what they perceived to be the main challenges and barriers to greater intercultural interaction within the context of education for ethnic diversity.

5.2: Semi Structured Interviews: 18 students attended a semi structured interview (4 long term settled, 5 recently arrived and 9 newly arrived refugee students). Each interview lasted about 45 minutes. The 18 students were drawn from across the four universities and four FE colleges and comprised of 11 males and 7 females. Again, as witnessed in the focus group discussions, the interviewees came from the institutions that had a partnership with the RITeS Project. The interviews focused specifically on their daily encounters at school or college (how issues of equality and diversity impacted on their daily lives and their experiences of studying with home students).

The participants self-selected in response to email inquiries made through the RITeS Project in consultation with partner schools. The RITeS Project had a total of 364 registered refugee learners in its database (excluding their dependents, some of whom also elected to take part in this study). Access to the students who were not members of the RITeS Project was gained through email inquiries to refugee community groups operating in Scotland. Emails were sent to their leadership which were advertised in their social fora and those who opted to take part emailed the researcher (guardians or parents for minors). Travel expenses to and from the focus group/interview places were refunded and a lunch package was provided to every participant. Since some participants belonged to the RITeS Project and/or to refugee community groups, a small subset of the focus group participants did previously know each other and had some shared experiences.

The data were subjected to thematic analysis. Initially, emerging themes from the focus groups were identified followed by the interview transcripts. Each transcript analysis was compared with the others, refined leading to a further phase of analysis based on similarities and differences of experiences and thoughts. The findings in this paper are based on the refined themes from the second phase of the analysis.

6: Findings, Discussions and the Integrated Threat Theory.

The following section will discuss how the emerging themes in this study relate to the four components of Integrated Threat Theory. It is important to note that not all of the emerging themes related to a sense of threat about encounters of refugee students. Some were actively positive (e.g. the exchange of social capitals by both groups), but these were considerably less common and beyond the scope of this paper.

6.1: Realistic threats

Realistic threats were often felt where there is competition for resources. Resources here can be contentious but it is important to state that there is a degree of interdependence between host community students and refugee students regarding their academic success and this forestalls a degree of competition. Refugee learners reported the lack of specialised support relevant to their needs and the absence of opportunities for them to discuss their needs and responses to these needs. Support often available was for all the students and this placed home students at an advantage as the cultural context favours them. This limited the participation of refugee learners in group, pair and team work which was often misconstrued as poor academic attitudes. This led to negative peer attitudes from home students as well as negative teacher attitudes. Refugee learners feared making mistakes or being considered as incompetent and so displayed a non-participatory approach as an expression of realistic threats. Sometimes the refugee learners were perceived as mastering the content but were deficient in the manner of expression due to their English language weaknesses. Trashar (2007:7) notes that 'language skills and intellectual ability are often conflated in people's minds' such that there is an assumption that the students with poorer English will form a threat to the academic health of the classroom especially in the context of group work (Le Roux, 2001). For example, Structural discrimination as seen in the quotes below consistently exposed these realistic threats which negatively impacted in the schooling of refugee learners.

Joel *'...being a refugee reduces one's chances of performing or aiming for some courses/professions'*
Franc '...*the insecurity one faces here is as a result of negative attitudes and discrimination from members of the public. They have the wrong notions of refugees and blacks'*
Roland '*You can always see the finger of the journalist pointing at you. Murder (er), smuggling (smuggler), economic migrants, NHS destroyers, benefit frauds, driving issues, violence is always linked to refugees and asylum seekers*'

Joel, Franc and Roland (interviewees) all exemplify how refugees have to adjust to ruptures that unexpectedly modify the structure and the meaning of their lives as learners in order to mitigate these realistic threats. The misconceptions and misunderstandings of who they are, how they learn and how they socialise are significant realistic threats that reduce their multicultural contributions in a learning environment in UK schools.

6.2: Symbolic threats.

Refugee learners were often considered by their home peers and teachers as an outgroup based on factors such as nationality, language proficiency and foreign qualifications, among others. The expression of this 'otherness sometimes became less positive. In schools where refugee learners were many, perceptions from home students and teachers became more negative leading to a degree of anxiety and irritation among refugee learners. At times their identities were defined by the type of language that they spoke and the subject matter of their discussions which was often related to immigration issues and home country experiences and connections. This made their home peers uncomfortable thereby triggering negative attitudes that made the learning environment very uncomfortable. Refugee learners, as a result held on to their inward bonding, often seeking out one another where there was greater social acceptability. Ward, et al., (2001) calls this as tightening or inward integration due to symbolic threats. When norms were transgressed by refugee learners, symbolic threats increased and further alienated the refugee learners. Roland (interviewee) indicated that this alienation was often promoted by negative media discourses which threatened the way home students and teachers viewed refugee learners in schools. For example, Calvin stated that as '*every time in the news, if the discussion is not about what migrants don't do right, it is about what they do wrong and how they cause serious criminal problems, break laws, and live freely and never work. It is just similar to not understanding why migrants come here or why refugees even exist. You just see the finger pointing at you.*' Being a refugee became tied up with notions of victims, dependence, displacement, and loss of homeland, loss of identity and lack of status. Franc (interviewee) added that, being a refugee '*you (refugee) have to work as twice as your white counterpart to prove your worth because the perception is that you are not part of the wider society, you are here for benefits and you are called names and deemed to be incompetent.*' With the visibility of these negative labels, some refugee learners became sensitive to the presence of home students around them thereby adding additional pressure on how they handled the multicultural atmosphere. For example, Joel (interviewee) commented about his younger sister:

'*She was away from school for four days because some children (home students) often got into her school bag and took her stuff to hide somewhere. She will look for her pens, pencils and rulers etc and not find them. They will start laughing at her.   She complained that some children will poke her head and when she turns to look, they will pretend as if nothing has happened. The class teacher said it was simply a game but it she was always upset and refused to go to school. My parents complained that they could not force her to go back to school and she became irregular in school'*

Symbolic threats can sometimes be made more destructive by the absence of role models. All refugee learners came from ethnic minority backgrounds whose presence in schools and universities is very insignificant. Wright (2010:315) for example, summarises the situation of blacks in employment in UK universities:

'*Of the 13.530 professors/Head of Departments, 55 are only Black and 210 are Asian. This is only 0.2% of the total…As with regard to managers, 4.6% of them are BME (black and minority ethnic) compared with 6.5% of the total academic staff…Similarly at senior lecturer level, 17.8% of white staff are senior lecturers but only 9.5% of BEMs…The pay gap between white academics and BME is 2.5%'.*

As seen above, a high-profile professional invisibility of the socio-cultural context of refugee learners was compounded by the invisibility of high-profile educational role models from their ethnic backgrounds and this exasperated the symbolic threats that refugee learners faced.

6.3: Intergroup Anxiety

Brewer (2003) asserts that because we are less familiar with outgroup persons, imagining or being with them is likely to trigger anxious thoughts and the presence of an outgroup member may arouse negative thoughts without the individual consciously aware of the affect itself. Refugee learners showed anxiety about intercultural interactions with home students and teachers where the cultural distance was greatest. More generally, cultural communication between students can be challenging due to differences in conventional forms of communication (House 2003). This leads to information gaps which often result in anxiety. Some of the misunderstandings could lead to causing offence or being interpreted to be so. For example, as reported earlier, Joel's younger sister stayed away from school because she claimed other home children poked fun of her, a context interpreted by the home children as well as teachers as having fun. This ties in with Hopkin's (2007: 73) research that concludes that the feelings of 'otherness and difference' can be either 'enforced upon them through others or through personal choice' (73). Subscription to the fluidity of identities (see postmodernist investigations of identity in Brah 2007, Parekh 2007, Wetherell 2007) and its multifaceted nature, viewed as being about belonging based on the recognitions of what is shared with some people and what is different with others is very important to how refugee learners negotiated intergroup anxiety in schools.

6.4: Negative Stereotypes.

Stereotypes and broad categories prevail where people who are considered to matter to the individual are concerned. Refugee learners come from countries where there are great human rights violations, wars, conflicts, and sometimes these countries are presented in derogatory terms by some right-wing media. These right-wing media sometimes present the only source of information to their home peers and teachers and they limit awareness of any other positive values displayed in these refugee countries. They encourage prejudices and negative stereotypes that were reflected in the interpretation and understanding of the refugee learners. On the other hand, most of the refugee countries involve aspects of western history and literature and way of life in their curricula. This means that whilst refugee learners may have some authentic knowledge about the host culture, the custom of the host communities are limited to far from objective reporting through public discourses in media organs. As a result, refugee learners became branded as types rather than individuals, often dissected as embodiments of shortcomings associated with the refugee country. It is common to refer refugee learners as Africans, Syrians, Chinese, Asians rather as individuals with distinct behavioural traits. Peter (interviewee) remarked that

'we *tend to be looked at in the eyes of the westerner, required to be like them in order to conform, else we are outsiders and once an outsider, always an outsider. A good student is one who appears to speak like them, act like them, dress like them, drink like them or who appears to cease exhibiting non-traditional western attributes and who should not even speak his own indigenous language'.*

Pauline (Interviewee) indicated that '*the first home student I tried to be friends with asked me why I chose to settle in Glasgow instead of London where there are many refugees. That simply put me off because I could not understand why she wanted to influence my choice of where I should live and why she thought that there was a particular designated community for refugees*.'

Pualine's comment shows that she withdrew from the company of home students because the media has enabled home students to feel that refugees should be settled in specific areas in some towns of the UK. The ingroup –outgroup tension here is interpreted as influenced by hegemonic discourses from some right-wing media. Similarly, Joel (interviewee) felt that he was discriminated against by the course director who decided that Joel was found not good enough to study Energy Management and Extraction. The refusal was not based on Joel's academic skills because he finally took the course and met all the requirements, but the course director explained that most Africans who take that course end up dropping it. So, the course director did not perceive that Joel would succeed in that course, because Joel is an African and African are apparently not competent enough to study the programme. Joel explained that he felt the course director was 'judging a book by its cover'.

Participants therefore expressed concerns about attitudes from peers and teachers as a result of their refugeeness which led to cultural dissonance, nervousness about personal interactions and communications and fear of peer pressure due to negative stereotyping. Undoubtedly, their refugeeness had become their most visible identity among their multiple identities and Bouillon (1998) underscores the instrumentalization of socio-cultural differences in the way refugee learners are treated socially and officially, given minority status and unequal treatment.

7: DISCUSSION

It is important to state that most of the participants appreciated the opportunities to study in the same spaces with home students. For example, Pauline (interviewee) stated that:

'*I really love the ESOL classes. You meet and communicate with people from a cross section of the world here, different colours, dress, and food. I have met people in this course with different nationalities, different reasons for coming to the UK, different accents and levels of English and communicating with them is very interesting because we all struggle together, and we make progress like a family. It is very different when you leave the classroom and go outside*'.

Accumulating these social and cultural capitals highlights the major benefits of multicultural education as an instrument of facilitating the integration of refugee learners. It should be noted that threats did not only come from home students. Refugee students also demonstrated anxiety, nervousness in the presence of other refugee learners especially considering the differences of whether there are newly arrived refugee learners, recently arrived refugee learners or long term settled refugee learners. Alain (interviewee) asserts that:

'*English in class, I mean ESOL is limited and determined by a fixed programme. Some learners control the class and make you feel inferior participating and they lead the teacher to rush through things. We come from different countries. I come from a French speaking country where English is not studied at all. If I feel left out in class as an adult, I can imagine how my children feel in school*'

Alain is a mature refugee student who faces in-group threats from other refugee learners because of his newly arrived status, the language of instruction in his country of origin and his specific needs as a learner. This raises questions on the homogeneity of group identities as some learners were categorised in blanket terms as Asians, Africans without regard to their individuality. Africans or blacks are sometimes assumed to be of one ethnic group, homogenous and passing across as possessing the same needs, problems and traits.

Ligali (2005:4) critiques these ethnic representations of Africans:

'African people have no need for a distinct ethno-geographic identity because as integrated black people…(they) become coloured visions of the normal white people who have successfully assimilated their alien cultural heritage…African people remain the only minority group in Britain to be institutionally labelled using colour coding. This perpetuates the odious practice of cultural disinheritance imposed by British slavers and colonialists.'

Ligali questions the dominance of colour coding which has become a matrix for group categorisation and such a matrix provokes the four threats discussed above. The use of negative metaphors in the language of respondents like '*Fish out of water', 'empty vessel', 'caged in one spot', 'British on paper'* etc confirms the levels of anxieties and threats that they face in the context of multicultural education.

Pursuing this debate about in-group and outgroup threats, Kearney (2003) narrows it down to the curriculum and looks at the shortcomings of the UK school's curriculum that fails to address the complexity of modern life where issues of identity are central to fundamental debates of the consequent interdependence between people from diverse cultural heritages (See Kearney, 1998, 2003, 2004). He affirms that the curriculum fails to address contemporary interest and dilemmas: minority cultures and identities and in the case of this research, refugee/asylum seekers. This leads to more alienation in schooling and education and consequently in careers and jobs and maintain this community as poor and economically disadvantaged which negatively impacts on multicultural education. From the responses of participants, there appars to be a misconception about refugee cultures as unique, and static and that has become widespread to the extent that it has a huge impact on policy and practice. Hill & Hessari (1990:2) argue that *'cultures are not as monolithic or homogeneous as is often assumed. The convenient labels that we use hide an enormous variation within them. For example, the blanket label "African" encloses many nations, cultures, religions, and diverse land mass…'*. See also Hill (2009) in which he seeks to explain a notion of raced and gendered class, where some minority ethnic groups are racialised and suffer a race penalty in schooling, education, policing, housing, judiciary, health and employment services.

These exclusionary aspects heighten the in-group and out group tensions and anxieties thereby challenging the supposed merits of multicultural education. Refugee learners seem to posit that the non-acceptance of their refugee and individual identities, the expectations by home students and teachers that all students should conform to the dominant culture actually produce negative stereotypes, realistic threats, symbolic threats and intergroup anxiety. Greig (2009:12) states that 'Members of a social group frequently behave in a variety of different ways. Individuals are also often able to maintain multiple, and sometimes mutually inconsistent identities. The boundaries of some social groups have also been recognised as being permeable and negotiable'. From the responses of participants, the boundaries of refugee learners are recognised to be permeable and negotiable for them to conform but the boundaries of home students and teachers are

seen to be non-permeable and non-negotiable because they belong to the dominant culture. Most social theorists subscribe to a multifaceted and fluid conception of identity. Identities are fundamentally temporal and permanently shifting; they are the product of specific historical, cultural and institutional sites within specific discursive formations (Hall et al. 1990). Brah (2007:141) adds that identity is a relationship; it is not something fixed '*that we carry around ourselves like a piece of luggage'*. Therefore, the emerging concept here shows identities as forms of relationship that are constantly in the making.

Different identities may conflict, interact and shape each other. But for multicultural understandings to be practicable, these identities must acknowledge one another; meaning, home students must appreciate the refugeeness in refugee learners and their pre-exile experiences as much as refugee learners acknowledge the strengths of the dominant home communities. Multicultural education has an important role in shaping this commonality. As Allard (2006: 115) argues, the importance of education in reshaping perceptions in our multicultural societies because of the *'importance of education as both a site of and a powerful tool in the shaping of ethnic, classed and gendered identities'' remains very important today.'* (115*)*. This is the vision that Ball (2000) proposes on the impact of multicultural education when he states that social economic and political situations have changed drastically, and the enormous complexities of today's world require a new vision for schooling that responds to the needs of the global society in which we live. That home students are not empowered to understand differences with and between outgroups is enough grounds to argue that everybody be treated the same. Allard (2006:326) disagrees that *'treating everyone the same may not mean treating everyone fairly since in many ways such notions of sameness negate material or embodied difference'*. This, because, as Connell (1993: 23) elaborates:

'*the belief that we are all the same under the skin also operates to ignore differential power relations: it privileges cultural belief//values, makes central and normal the experiences of the majority and marginalises or silences the voices from other cultures, those who are materially well off ...as being part of the norm within mainstream educational theories.'*

They (refugees) are considered to operate in a kind of stasis in which the future is contingent, and their progress towards psychological, economic and social stability can only proceed in a similarly contingent fashion. Their social and economic stability remains precarious against a background of tougher immigration laws and difficult educational practices and attitudes. Structural discrimination as seen in the quotes remain a significant threat: -

Joel *'...being a refugee reduces one's chances of performing or aiming for some courses/professions'*

Franc '…*the insecurity one faces here is as a result of negative attitudes and discrimination from members of the public. They have the wrong notions of refugees and blacks'*

The discussion above illustrate the tension that the lack of understanding of group and individual identities by in-group and outgroup members can negatively impact on the educational, economic and social integration of refugees.

8: Conclusion and Limitations.

Unequal power relations exist in society and therefore between all participants in the educational process. These are based on membership of social groups such as role, gender and perceived ethnicity. Such unequal

power relations impact on pupil achievement. Much cross-cultural misunderstanding arises from misinformation, prejudice and stereotypes. Smyth (2006: RDG[1]) sums this up as: *'this is part of a process of othering or excluding those not like us.'* This research has focussed on three primary research questions involving how refugee learners view and interpret their interaction with home (host community students); how perceived barriers exist for such encounters and how refugee learners commit to the education for diversity agenda. To appreciate these primary questions, integrated threat theory was considered central to interrogating participants' perceptions, experiences and realities. The research sourced original accounts of participants' experiences within the context of education for diversity and found evidence of realistic threats, symbolic threats, negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety. The overwhelming conclusion that could be drawn from refugee learners is that home students were not fully empowered to understand what it means to be a refugee and the relationship between refugeeness and education. This lack of understanding let to social and cultural dissonance, alienation and negative attitudes thereby prompting refugee learners to embrace inward integration rather than outward integration. The polity of education for diversity exposes the difficulty of multicultural education because diversity has been seen to mean that refugee learners need to conform to the dominant host culture at the expense of their individual identities. Although the objectives of education for ethnic diversity are intended to cement an integrational framework of togetherness, the distances between groups and the persistent othering does not seem to move towards this goal. This research illustrates that for education for ethnic diversiy to be successful, individuation, widening the curriculum to non-traditional western cultures and the involvement of refugee learners and successful refugee past learners as role models need to be considered.

The research seems to dwell more on the negative aspects of diverse ethnic group relations. This does not mean that there were no positive aspects. The most important benefit of diverse ethnic group relations in the context of refugee learners included the opportunity to meet native learners and understand the culture of 'doing' things, in the UK. Participants were also excited about the opportunities that the diverse classrooms offered in terms of language acquisition which was seen as a major integrational component. Although these positives of education for ethnic diversity were acknowledged by refugee learners, this paper does not lend greater scope to this line of inquiry because its purpose is to establish views on refugee prejudice following their involvement in the education for ethnic diversity agenda.

One major limitation to the project is that the views of home students were not sought after and that provided a one-sided exploration of perceptions about refugee prejudice. The term 'home student' could equally be contentious because some of the home students could be refugees who have acquired 'home student' status as a result of long-term settlement or acquiring British citizenship. However, the need to engage refugee learners in isolation provided an opportunity to interrogate their reflections without the pressure of what understandings or misunderstandings that home students could bring to the research. The views of home students regarding multicultural education have been well documented by Graue (1993), McCollum (1996), Bhachu (1985), Coll (2001). Thus, the focus on refugee learners' realities in a school setting become increasingly important. As Rutter (2006) observes, the literature about refugees is dominated by studies that examine the traumatic experiences of refugees and their psychological adaptation in exile while information on trauma and psychological state of mind is often collected in clinics and limited to what is happening in exile than including what happened in pre-exile. Rutter (2006) extends her

questioning of such documented accounts by observing that most research subjects are rarely researched in social or school settings. Researching refugees in different contexts is a very important factor if the right context of refugee problems needs to be accurately defined. Conditions like the mixed experiences deriving from their home country's educational systems, their slightly homogenous societies where racism and racist bullying may not be an all too common occurrence need to be considered. As a result of this limitation, refugees' background and needs are framed by educationalist and other specialist service providers in terms of trauma (Rutter 2006). Policies and strategies adopted on such limited accounts do not follow through after the asylum seeker receives the right to remain in the UK and this further increases social exclusion as the individual grapples with whom they are in the new society. Therefore, the focus on refugee learners in the context of education for ethnic diversity in school helped to offer them an opportunity to reflect on patterns of prejudice in their multicultural settings.

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