Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework

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Integration has become both a key policy objective related to the resettlement of refugees and other migrants, and a matter of significant public discussion. Coherent policy development and productive public debate are, however, both threatened by the fact that the concept of integration is used with widely differing meanings. Based on review of attempted definitions of the term, related literature and primary fieldwork in settings of refugee settlement in the UK, the paper identifies elements central to perceptions of what constitutes 'successful' integration. Key domains of integration are proposed related to four overall themes: achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community; and structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the local environment. A framework linking these domains is presented as a tool to foster debate and definition regarding normative conceptions of integration in resettlement settings.

Introduction

The *Indicators of Integration* study that formed the foundation for this paper was commissioned by the UK Home Office in 2002 as part of the wider evaluation of the effectiveness of Challenge Fund (CF) and European Refugee Fund (ERF) funded projects across the United Kingdom. A large number of these projects were seeking to support the integration of refugees within the UK in line with the policy direction specified within the Home Office paper 'Full and Equal Citizens' (2001a).

While indicating a number of areas where integration is to be encouraged, 'Full and Equal Citizens' did not offer a formal definition of the term.

Indeed, Robinson (1998: 118) has suggested that '"integration" is a chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most'. Suggesting, further, that the concept is 'individualized, contested and contextual' (*ibid.*), Robinson sees little prospect for a unifying definition. This is a sentiment echoed by Castles *et al.* 'There is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration. The concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated' (2001: 12).

However, integration remains significant both as a stated policy goal and as a targeted outcome for projects working with refugees (European Commission 2004; Scottish Executive 2006; Frattini 2006; HMG 2007; Welsh Assembly Government 2006; USEU 2007). In this situation, it seems appropriate to explore whether an operational definition of the concept, reflecting commonalities in perceptions of what constitutes 'successful' integration in a range of relevant stakeholders, is possible.

This paper describes such an attempt, which has resulted in the development of a framework which suggests ten core domains reflecting normative understandings of integration, and provides a potential structure for analysis of relevant outcomes (Ager and Strang 2004a). Although the goal of identifying potential 'indicators' with respect to such domains was significant in planning the work, the focus of the current paper is on the domains themselves as a means to facilitate discussion regarding perceptions of integration that is accessible to policymakers, researchers, service providers and refugees themselves. The framework does not seek comprehensively to map political, social, economic and institutional factors influencing the process of integration itself. For such analysis, readers are referred to recent works on migration and settlement (Robinson 1999; Castles and Miller 2003; Sigona 2005; Spencer and Cooper 2006; European Commission 2007). Rather the framework serves as 'middle-range theory', seeking to provide a coherent conceptual structure for considering, from a normative perspective, what constitutes the key components of integration.

Methodology

An inductive methodology was adopted, comprising four discrete elements: documentary and conceptual analysis; fieldwork in settings of refugee settlement; secondary analysis of cross-sectional survey data; and verification.

Documentary and Conceptual Analysis

Research began with two major strands of literature review and documentary analysis. In one, approaching 200 'indicators' of integration proposed in the Council of Europe (1997) report 'Measurements and Indicators of Integration' and in other sources were reviewed (Ager and Eyber 2002). In the other, 49 discrete definitions of 'integration' or related concepts were identified. These two strands of literature were used—together with analysis of published reflections on integration processes and outcomes by refugees

(ECRE 1999a; Ager *et al.* 2002)—to develop a preliminary thematic and conceptual analysis of the term 'integration', as used by a range of stakeholders. This analysis suggested that despite considerable divergence of focus and perspective, there are a number of discrete themes that are recurrent in attempts to understand notions of integration.

Fieldwork in Settings of Refugee Settlement

This preliminary analysis was then interrogated and elaborated in the context of applied fieldwork in the form of qualitative research in refugee impacted communities (Ager and Strang 2004b). Fieldwork was based in two fieldsites representing different patterns of refugee settlement (Islington in London with a long history of self-settlement, and Pollokshaws in Glasgow with a recent history of dispersal-led settlement). Interviews at both fieldsites were preceded by a social mapping exercise. This was used as a basis to identify key population groups for interview and also to gain initial insight into local dynamics of integration processes. Over the two sites, 62 semi-structured interviews (after Silverman 2001) were conducted. Interviews began with invitations to define key features of integration as experienced at the local level, and then systematically explored the themes identified through the preceding documentary and conceptual analysis. Twenty-nine interviews were with refugees who had recently received refugee status (either formal refugee status or a form of 'leave to remain'), sampled to broadly reflect the demographic composition of the refugee populations at these fieldsites. The remaining 33 interviews were with non-refugees resident or employed in the fieldsite areas, sampled to reflect the demographic profile of these locations (Ager and Strang 2004b). Respondents included residents in public and private housing areas, teachers, health workers, community workers, police, clergy and local business people.

Secondary Analysis of Cross-sectional Survey Data

The availability of data from a national cross-sectional survey of refugees being conducted in parallel with the *Indicators of Integration* study (MORI 2003) provided a further opportunity for triangulation. Although many of these survey questions addressed the specific experience of receiving a particular service from a project, a number addressed broader experience as a refugee in the UK. With such items covering a wide range of themes (including housing, health, employment, language, community relations, subjective well-being etc.) the survey provided the opportunity to conduct statistical analysis (using Proxscal Multi-dimensional Scaling; SPSS 2006) to identify potential grouping and linkage between themes in a way that would assist in the definition of coherent 'domains' of experience.

Verification

The above data sources were the basis for formulating a framework representing key understandings of integration by specifying 'domains' that

reflected themes consistently emerging in analyses as salient. The verification phase of the study then involved consultation with a wide range of potential users of this framework, at both the level of local practice and wider policy. The triangulation of the diverse data sources used (literature review and documentary analysis, qualitative fieldwork and cross-sectional survey) provided the fundamental basis for claims regarding the conceptual validity of the framework as describing key outcomes in normative understandings of integration. The focus of the verification phase was on the meaningfulness and utility of the framework for potential users, whether they be policy makers, service providers or from refugee impacted communities themselves.

   The principal means of verification was the presentation of the framework at three major verification seminars: one in Islington, one in Pollokshaws (i.e. the two sites of the qualitative fieldwork phases) and one in Croydon, to an extensive list of Home Office invitees (across the governmental, voluntary and academic sectors). These discussions broadly supported the structure of the proposed framework as an operational definition of key aspects of integration, with the majority of feedback related to potential indicators relevant to proposed domains.
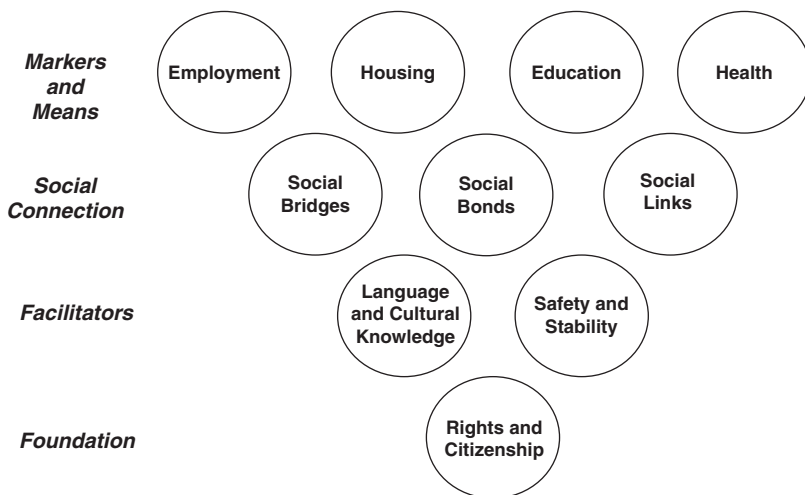
Domains of Integration

This section presents the proposed domains of the conceptual framework, together with evidence from the above data sources in support of their inclusion. In this way data from documentary and conceptual analysis, fieldwork in refugee impacted settings, and secondary analysis of the cross-sectional survey is integrated to provide the rationale for the proposed framework (outlined in Figure 1).

Markers and Means

The review of potential indicators highlighted a number of key areas of activity in the public arena (employment, education etc.) which are widely suggested as indicative of successful integration. Policy documents and analyses also frequently structure thinking about integration around such sectoral issues (Korac 2001). 'Full and Equal Citizens' was fundamentally organized around such themes, as is much work addressing refugee integration in Europe, in an emphasis that can be traced back to the 1951 Geneva Convention with its specification of social rights of refugees in terms of such issues as employment, social welfare, education and housing (United Nations 1951). Our conceptual analysis initially adopted the term 'public outcomes' to represent achievement in such areas (Ager *et al*. 2002), which consistently emerged as salient from all phases of the study. However, it is problematic to see achievement in these areas purely as a 'marker' of integration. They may serve as such, but they also clearly serve as potential means to support the achievement of integration. 'Employment', 'Housing', 'Education'

Figure 1

A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration

and 'Health' were recurrently key issues in analyses, and are consequently specified as discrete domains in this section of the proposed framework.

Employment.

  'To me integration is work, if we work we are integrated' (ECRE 1999a: 42).

Employment constitutes perhaps the most researched area of integration (Castles *et al.* 2001). Employment has consistently been identified as a factor influencing many relevant issues, including promoting economic independence, planning for the future, meeting members of the host society, providing opportunity to develop language skills, restoring self-esteem and encouraging self-reliance (Africa Educational Trust 1998; Bloch 1999; Tomlinson and Egan 2002).

  Refugees are often highly educated in comparison with other groups of immigrants (Muus 1997). However, a major barrier to securing employment is difficulty relating to the non-recognition of qualifications and previous work experience. Many refugees are unable to produce proof of previous qualifications and even when they can employers may not recognize them (ECRE 1999b). Consequently, under-employment (defined as holding a job which does not require the level of skills or qualifications possessed by the jobholder) is a common factor in the experience of refugees in the labour market (Africa Educational Trust 1998).

Duke *et al.* argue that evidence suggests that for refugees 'successful resettlement depends on programmes which allow them to find a place in the new society, for example by converting their skills and qualifications so that they can be used in the new situation' (1999: 106). Vocational training and further education are thus usually considered as key aspects of integration to the extent that such measures foster employability either in general terms or through enhancement of specific language or work skills. In areas with significant potential for economic growth and a demand for labour such efforts, crucially, can be seen to be not only to the benefit of refugees and their families, but to the wider communities in which they may settle:

> the people aren't going to stay there if there are no opportunities, once they get [refugee or 'leave to remain'] status they're going to move…where the jobs are…(Council Officer, Islington).

Housing.

> I find it difficult too about housing. I have been in the same one bedroom flat and…with two children for eight years (Refugee mother, Islington).

The effect that housing has on refugees' overall physical and emotional well-being, as well as on their ability to feel 'at home', is well established (Glover *et al.* 2001; Dutch Refugee Council/ECRE 2001). Indicators of appropriate housing that were developed during the course of this study included a range of measures of the physical size, quality and facilities of housing, along with the financial security of tenancies and, where appropriate, ownership.

During the course of fieldwork in communities, however, discussions seldom focused upon such aspects of housing conditions. Rather, respondents were concerned with the social and cultural impacts of housing. Established local residents and refugees each valued the continuity of relationships associated with being 'settled' in an area over time:

> It has been one and a half years…I like school, and environment. So I am afraid that they are going to send me somewhere else, but I do not want to go (Refugee mother, Islington).
>
> The way it's going just now, there is only half the people I know from when I was a wee boy. They have all moved out…just can't be bothered with it anymore (Non refugee, Pollokshaws).

Comments also revealed the significance of neighbours and neighbourhood in providing opportunities for learning from established members of the community. For example an African woman dispersed to Glasgow reflected

> I come here as a foreigner…and what do you do? You send people to the bad area with the junkies and the criminals, and in the end of it…. You begin to wonder what sort of people live in this country (Refugee, Pollokshaws).

Safety and security issues associated with particular housing environments (e.g. proximity to populations with multiple social problems) were also frequently raised.

> The difference between a house and a home is the difference between a place to stay and a place to live. A home is a place of safety, security and stability, the lack of which was the main reason refugees left their country of origin (Dutch Refugee Council/ECRE 2001: 5).

Although linked to housing conditions, such issues raise wider concerns that are more fully reflected in domains subsequently outlined.

Education. Education clearly provides skills and competences in support of subsequent employment enabling people to become more constructive and active members of society. More generally, however, for refugee children (and, in many cases, refugee parents) schools are experienced as the most important place of contact with members of local host communities, playing an important role in establishing relationships supportive of integration. In the course of fieldwork we identified, for example, a number of support groups for parents run by schools which provided a useful focus for information on access to a range of local services. However there are a number of barriers towards effective integration in school.

> 'It was difficult; it takes time. In my country I used to sit in class listening to lectures. Here you have to contribute, discuss, ask questions, which is more difficult. If I was used to these things in my country it wouldn't have been very hard, but it takes time to get used to it' (McDonald 1995: 40).

Refugee children's experience of education is impacted by insufficient support for learning the host-society language, isolation and exclusion (bullying, racism, difficulties making friends etc.). We observed that some schools provided special language units for refugee children in seeking to meet their needs, but recognized that such provision limited opportunities for mixing with local children. A lack of information about the school system, including the consequences of pupils' choice of subjects on subsequent employment options (HAYS (Horn of Africa Youth Scheme) and Kirby 1998), is a further constraint on the potential for schooling to support integration.

Health. Although infrequently cited as a core factor in integration in the course of local fieldwork, good health was widely seen as an important resource for active engagement in a new society across the documentary sources reviewed. As well as supporting health outcomes, reliable access to health services marks effective engagement with a key state service. The move in Europe away from specialized centres to address the physical and mental heath needs of refugees, and towards improving mainstream health services has, in this respect, generally been welcomed (CVS 1999). There remain,

however, significant barriers to refugees integrating within mainstream health provision.

Language difficulties may make it difficult for refugees to communicate with health care professionals; a lack of information about services available may prevent some from taking up services (or lead to inappropriate use of services, e.g. Accident and Emergency facilities for routine health problems); gender and cultural perceptions of health care delivery may present problems for specific groups (Scottish Executive 2002). Seeking to address such issues had led to the development of a wide range of service models for primary health care in Glasgow, some of which were perceived to also have benefited the local population. While acknowledging the benefits of the 'mainstreaming' of health provision to refugees, health professionals believed that refugees' potential needs with respect to some specific health risks (such as TB or HIV) needed to be recognized.

The areas of employment, housing, education and health are thus widely acknowledged by diverse stakeholders to be key aspects of integrating into a new society. It is, therefore, appropriate to include them in an operational definition of 'integration' and to encourage programmes working in these areas. However, there is a major conceptual challenge in seeing integration as principally reflected in attainments in these areas. Given the wide variation in income and employment, in housing status, in educational experience and outcome, and in health access and status across the settled population of any nation, what constitutes 'successful integration' across these domains? This issue can be addressed by comparing outcomes for refugees with others in their locality, but this risks comparing outcomes for one disadvantaged group with those of another. While population-wide data can provide a more salient standard for comparative purposes, such considerations raise the more fundamental question of entitlement and common expectation. If one is integrating 'within' a society, what are the standards and expectations of that society that provide some basis for cohesion? This leads to a discussion of 'Citizenship and Rights' as a necessary foundation for a shared understanding of what integration is and how it may be measured.

Foundation

Citizenship and Rights.   There is probably no theme that creates more confusion and disagreement regarding understandings of integration than that of citizenship, and the rights and responsibilities associated with it. This partly reflects the widely different understandings of citizenship but, more fundamentally, of nationhood across societies. Our conceptual analysis necessarily addressed both terms.

Definitions of integration adopted by a nation inevitably depend on that nation's sense of identity, its 'cultural understandings of nation and nationhood' (Saggar 1995: 106). This sense of identity as a nation incorporates certain values; and these are values that significantly shape the way that

a concept such as integration is approached. For example, in Germany, the sense of nationhood has been historically based on a community of descent. Citizenship depends on *ius sanguinis* (blood ties) rather than *ius soli* (birth in the country; Duke *et al*. 1999). Children born in Germany to immigrant parents are not automatically naturalized (Faist 1995), for which a high degree of cultural assimilation is usually expected. Faist (1995) contrasts Germany with France and its notion of *citoyenneté*, embodying the idea of France as a nation to which people choose to belong. Favell notes the Commission de la Nationalité's vision of French society as being 'a country in which the very highest ethical and spiritual values are offered to its members for their conscious approval and adhesion' (1998: 63). In such terms full citizenship is an essential prerequisite for integration, and full partici-pation in civic life, including political participation, is expected (Duke *et al*. 1999).

In the United Kingdom the emphasis from the mid-1960s until recent years has been on 'multicultural' society or 'ethnic pluralism', with different groups co-existing but retaining their independent cultural identities. Saggar (1995) argues that UK policy-makers have always been preoccupied with the cultural and social implications of integration alongside the economic, with much attention being given to 'harmony' and 'disharmony'. He suggests that, as a civilized liberal democracy, all members have a stake in the notion of harmony. This preoccupation has relegated 'equality' to the status of a second order factor, only of relevance if its absence leads to disharmony (Saggar 1995).

Over recent years, however, there has been a significant shift in UK debates regarding nationhood, prompted initially by race riots in Northern England and latterly by concerns over Muslim extremism fostering terrorist threats within the UK (Home Office 2001b; Cantle 2005; McGhee 2005; Institute of Community Cohesion 2006). Preparedness to challenge the long-term commitment to 'multiculturalism' (Kelly 2002; Modood 2005) has been accompanied by debate on what characteristics define the nation and the introduction of citizenship courses and ceremonies (with all their ambiguities in a nation for which such concepts are quite 'foreign'; McGhee 2005; Crick 2006).

Much literature concerning refugee integration uses the concept of citizenship. However, this concept, like the characteristics of nationhood, can be interpreted in a variety of different ways. Carl Levy (1999) distinguishes four models of citizenship: imperial, ethnic, republican and multicultural (characterized, in turn, by subjection, 'blood ties', political participation and choice) and notes that the trend in Europe 'is towards a modified form of ethnic-based citizenship'. In an alternative formulation, Faist (1995) identifies two dominant models evident in western democracies: 'ethno-cultural political exclusion' (e.g. Germany) and 'pluralist political inclusion' (e.g. USA, UK and France).

Ethno-cultural political exclusion tends to be associated with 'assimilation' models of integration: the expectation that refugees will adapt to become

indistinguishable from the host community. This theme has, for example, been argued to shape current Spanish definitions of integration (see US Committee for Refugees 2002). However, this policy has become less and less politically acceptable in liberal democracies as the right to maintain cultural and religious identity and practices has been increasingly established, and the notion of the pluralist society has become transcendent (e.g. Ireland: O'Neill 2001; Canada: Beiser 1993). Mirroring the shift in UK debates, Muller traces the start of such ideological change in the USA to the race riots of the 1960s (Muller 1998).

Such discussions are of fundamental importance to our analysis of integration because notions of nationhood and citizenship shape core understandings of the rights accorded, and responsibilities expected, of refugees (O'Neill 2001).

> 'Living in another country as a refugee is very difficult. We were forced to leave our country. We have not chosen to come here ourselves. I don't say that it is not a good place to live but I want the government to treat us like other citizens. We are human beings and have the right to live' (ECRE 1999a: 31).

It is clear from the above analysis that to develop an effective policy on integration, governments need to clearly articulate policy on nationhood and citizenship, and thus the rights accorded to refugees. Such considerations are fundamental to the normative framework that determines refugee policy and understanding of 'successful' outcomes. In the UK, for instance, policy now reflects an understanding of integration

> as the process that takes place when refugees are empowered to achieve their full potential as members of British society, to contribute to the community, and become fully able to exercise *the rights and responsibilities that they share with other residents* (Home Office 2005) [emphasis added].

Articulating refugee rights thus defines the foundation of integration policy, to which governments are accountable. Rights considered may include: human dignity (Duke *et al*. 1999; Goodwin-Gill 1997); equality (Ring 1995; O'Neill 2001); freedom of cultural choice (Ring 1995; Baneke 1999); justice; security and independence (ECRE 1998). Much literature about refugee integration explores how the state might protect these rights. In this way second order rights ('second order' in the sense that they are derived from the primary rights listed above) are recognized, such as the rights of citizenship, family reunification and equality in legislation and policies (O'Neill 2001). These rights do not in themselves define integration, but they underpin important assumptions about integration.

As reflected above, acknowledging rights raises the question of responsibilities (ICAR 2006). Much literature only concerns itself with the responsibilities of the State. O'Neill (2001) argues that the government should lead, but successful integration depends on the contributions of all sectors of

society, including public bodies, community and religious leaders, the education system, voluntary organizations, employers and trade unions.

Definitions coming from NGOs and refugees themselves elaborate on the responsibilities of the refugee. For example ECRE (1998) refers to 'the establishment of a mutual and responsible relationship between individual refugees, civil societies and host states'. It is also recognized that integration requires from the refugee 'a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host community' (Baneke 1999).

> 'we have to adapt. I don't ask the Italian to have the same mentality as mine; it's for me to get my mentality closer to his. This is a rule, because it's me who came here, it's for me to look for the way through which I can ... [achieve] integration' (ECRE 1999a: 23).

Some integration policies explicitly acknowledge responsibilities on the part of refugees. For example, Muller (1998) points out that the USA now requires immigrants to take up citizenship in order to be eligible for certain benefits. In France full citizenship has been seen as an essential prerequisite to integration, along with the rights and responsibilities thereby implied (Favell 1998), although recent ethnic tensions highlight the importance of the economic opportunities required to support this model (Bordonaro 2005). Recent trends in the UK have been noted above.

The above analysis, though principally derived from our conceptual review of definitions and approaches to integration, was consistently underscored by our fieldwork interviews. Refugees, and workers and volunteers involved in the support of refugees and asylum seekers, were generally clear that in an 'integrated' community, refugees should have the same rights as the people they are living amongst. This shared basis of entitlement was seen as an important prerequisite for refugees to live harmoniously with non-refugees. A number of refugees also pointed out that the establishment of equal rights had an impact on the way people view them; where there are not equal rights, there is less respect. For example, refugees commonly reported distress at having been described as 'scroungers' when, as asylum seekers without the right to work, they had had to depend on benefits.

> Most importantly, you get as much opportunity as anybody else, you get as much respect as anybody else (Refugee, Islington).

Accordingly, the proposed framework includes a 'foundational' domain which prompts discussion about citizenship and rights to be made explicit in whatever situation the framework is being applied. Notions of nationhood, citizenship and rights will vary across settings, but in all cases such ideas are fundamental to understanding the principles and practice of integration in that situation. In the development of indicators for the use of the framework in the context of refugee integration in the UK, the domain was used to focus on the extent to which refugees are provided with the basis for full and equal

engagement within society. Such measures as 'mean length of asylum application procedure for successful claimants', 'utilization of legal and welfare benefits advice', 'reported sense of equity in access to services and entitlements' and 'rates of application for citizenship by refugees' reflect the salience of these concerns for understandings of citizenship and rights in the UK at this time (Ager and Strang 2004a). The logic of the above analysis, however, is that quite different indicators should be chosen where different approaches to nationhood, citizenship and rights define a different normative context (that is, provide a different foundation) for understanding integration.

Social Connection

What processes are seen to mediate, or provide 'connective tissue', between foundational principles of citizenship and rights on one hand, and public outcomes in sectors such as employment, housing, education and health on the other? Our analysis suggests two main groupings of factors are widely perceived to be relevant. Facilitators, understood as removing 'barriers' to integration, are considered in the next section. In this section we address the fundamental role that social connection is seen to have played in driving the process of integration at a local level. Indeed, local respondents commonly identified social connection to be for them the defining feature of an integrated community.

> 'Integration is a long-term two-way process of change, that relates both to the conditions for and the actual participation of refugees in all aspects of life of the country of durable asylum as well as to refugees' own sense of belonging and membership of European societies' (cited in ECRE 1999b: 4).

Our initial conception of our approach to field study was to focus on the experience of refugees. This approach would have inevitably shaped our understanding with respect to ideas of integration as 'insertion' of one group amidst another. But the phrase 'two-way' in the above definition, points to the importance for integration to be seen as a process of mutual accommodation, and thus the need to consider means of social connection between refugees and those other members of the communities within which they settle.

Local understandings of integration in Pollokshaws and Islington were found to be heavily influenced by expectations of relationships between groups within the area. These expectations ranged across a continuum in terms of the depth and quality of relationships expected within integrated communities. At the most basic level, absence of conflict and 'toleration' of different groups was considered to reflect integration. However, the majority of individuals—both refugees and others within the studied communities—had expectations beyond this, to a community where there was active 'mixing' of people from different groups. Many additionally identified

'belonging' as the ultimate mark of living in an integrated community. This involved links with family, committed friendships and a sense of respect and shared values. Such shared values did not deny diversity, difference and one's identity within a particular group, but provided a wider context within which people had a sense of belonging.

Our earlier conceptual analysis had identified differing forms of social relationship which could be used to make sense of such findings. The concept of social capital has been an influential one in identifying assets associated with social connection and trust. In one formulation (Putnam 1993; Woolcock 1998) theorists have distinguished between three differing forms of social connection: social bonds (with family and co-ethnic, co-national, co-religious or other forms of group), social bridges (with other communities) and social links (with the structures of the state). While these concepts are contested (Portes and Landolt 1996; Bourdieu 2000) they offer significant explanatory value in the context of local integration (Zetter *et al*. 2006). Our secondary analysis of refugee survey data reinforced the value of these distinctions. Their spatial separation in the Multi-Dimensional Scaling Plot presented as Figure 2, suggests that for the cohort of refugees studied involvement with one's own ethnic group (bonding capital) influenced 'quality of life' independently of involvement with the local community (bridging capital).

Social Bonds. Many refugees interviewed in the course of our fieldwork valued proximity to family because this enabled them to share cultural practices and maintain familiar patterns of relationships. Such connection played a large part in them feeling 'settled'. For example, a number of single male refugees pointed out that traditionally it would be their family's responsibility to find them a wife. Without family, they were anxious about how they could ever get married.

The establishment of connection with 'like-ethnic groups' is seen to have various benefits contributing towards effective integration (e.g. Hale 2000). Duke *et al*. report on a number of studies pointing to the importance of refugee community organizations, summarizing that:

> They provide a 'voice for refugees', contact points for isolated individuals, expertise in dealing with refugee issues and flexible and sensitive responses to the needs of their target populations. They also provide cultural and social activities which offer refugees the chance to maintain their own customs and religion, talk in their own language, celebrate their traditions and exchange news from their home country (Duke *et al*. 1999: 119).

Relationships with a like-ethnic group also appear to have health benefits. For example, Beiser reports that 'research has demonstrated that refugees who do not have a like-ethnic community available to them may suffer a risk of depression three to four times as high as others who have access to this resource' (1993: 221). Muller (1998) notes the positive role of 'ethnic enclaves'

Figure 2

Relationship between Experiences and Activities of Refugees (referenced to Perceived Quality of Life)
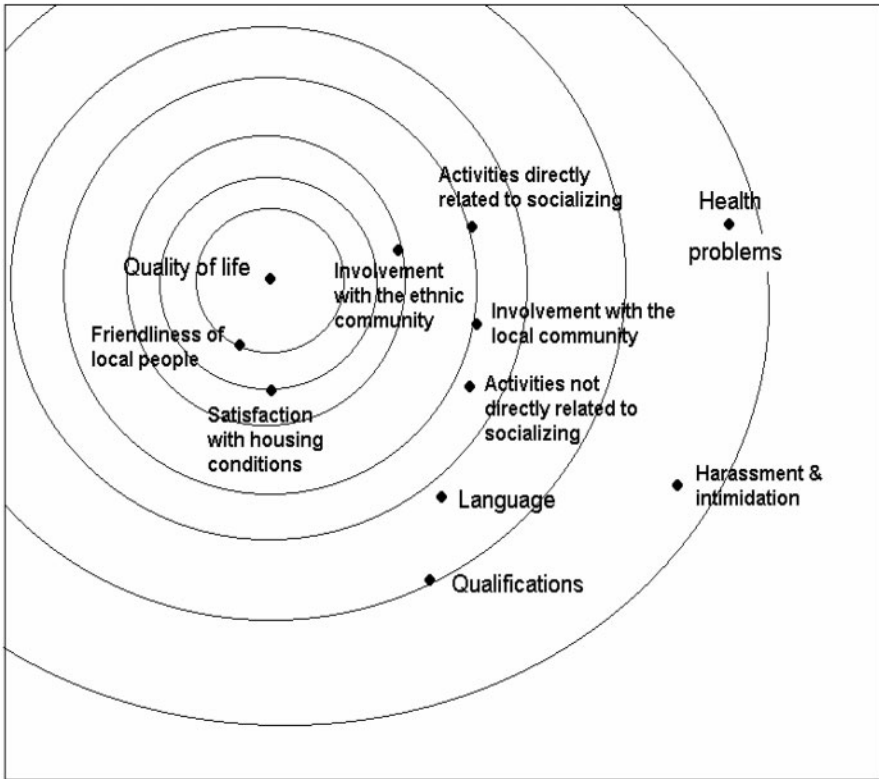
in the USA in providing employment. He argues that an 'enclave' is distinct from a 'ghetto' which implies low levels of economic activity, and which becomes a permanent rather than transitory home. Such analysis points to the value of social bonds being a component, but not the sole source, of social connection, a theme developed in the next section.

Social Bridges. In the literature, consideration of the relationship between refugees and host communities is generally represented by issues relating to social harmony, and also references to refugee participation in the host society. In the UK, refugee integration has, since the first Race Relations Act (1965), been primarily considered in the context of race relations. Latterly the language of social inclusion has emerged. For example the Refugee Council Working Paper document of 1997 describes integration as:

  a process which prevents or counteracts the social marginalization of refugees, by removing legal, cultural and language obstacles and ensuring that

refugees are empowered to make positive decisions on their future and benefit fully from available opportunities as per their abilities and aspirations (p. 15).

Both the 'race relations' and 'social inclusion/exclusion' discourses address the polarization of society into distinct, though not necessarily cohesive, groups. Polarization in such analyses is commonly seen to imply an inherent danger of conflict.

In the course of our fieldwork both refugees and non-refugees suggested that an important factor in making them feel 'at home' in an area was the friendliness of the people they encountered on a daily basis. Being recognized and greeted by others in the neighbourhood was greatly valued. Small acts of friendship appeared to have a disproportionately positive impact on perceptions. Friendliness from the settled community was very important in helping refugees to feel more secure and persuading them that their presence was not resented. Conversely, perceived unfriendliness undermined other successful aspects of integration.

> You can feel you are settled-in. But in a.... you feel they isolate you.... They say, 'you foreigners.... Go home again,'.... They don't say 'hello'...not warm, not friendly (Refugee, Islington).

Both refugees and non-refugees discussed integration in terms of participation of people from different groups in a range of activities. A range of examples of shared activities were identified during the study, including sports, college classes, religious worship, community groups and political activity, all of which were welcomed as evidence that integration was occurring. The underlying principle behind such views appeared to be that if a community is integrated then the people will participate equally, and without prejudice, in the activities and pastimes available to it.

> To have people come...come together have something going...for the community so people can meet and not be strangers. Because if I see you on the streets, because I have not spoken to you I will judge you according to the way you look...but if you sit down and talk to people, and deal with them you understand them better (Refugee, Pollokshaws).

Our secondary analysis of survey data (Figure 2) further supported the distinction between social contact with local communities that reflects 'friendliness' (generally understood as a lack of conflict and sense of acceptance) and that which reflects more intensive involvement with the local people. It was the former, with its linkage to a sense of safety and security, that was most closely associated with positive judgements of 'quality of life' by refugees. However, evidence suggests that the latter may be crucial in bringing longer-term social and economic benefits to a community. Such 'bridging' capital may significantly facilitate employment opportunities, for example (Woolcock 1998).

Social Links. While social bonds describe connections that link members of a group, and social bridges connections between such groups, social links refer to the connection between individuals and structures of the state, such as government services. It was generally recognized that refugees' particular circumstances (lack of familiarity with their surroundings, not speaking the language etc.) led to barriers that required additional effort from both refugees and the wider community if genuine equality of access to services was to be achieved. People interviewed in Islington saw this as one of the benefits of living in areas where refugee settlement was more established, in that local services were seen as more capable of dealing with refugees' specific needs, thereby ensuring levels of access more in line with those of other residents.

> It's much more of an ethnically diverse community, and you know, London's had a long history of people from other ethnic groups, so I think the issues of racism...have been tackled to some extent. You know, the police are quite sensitive in London, and so are all the services (Service provider, Islington).

In Pollokshaws, without this history of ethnic diversity, attempts to support refugees' access to services were recognized as practically valuable and inclusive.

> I did not find any difficulty accessing services because when I go to my GP I am asked if I need interpreter or not. So if I need one, they find one...telephone connection...telephone service. It is not difficult (Refugee, Pollokshaws).

Such positive examples of facilitation of access to services are not, however, widespread and it is generally acknowledged in policy and practice that 'connecting' refugees to relevant services is a major task in supporting integration. Attention can usefully focus on specific initiatives that will improve accessibility of relevant services, but there is also recognition that there are many structural barriers to effective connection. Ways of overcoming such barriers—means of facilitating processes of integration—are the focus of the remaining domains of the proposed framework.

Facilitators

Concepts of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' tend to be associated with policy measures that use the metaphor of 'removing barriers' to integration. Hale (2000: 276) observes that 'economic and social participation in mainstream society' was central to the understanding of integration embedded in UK policy relating to Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s. The assumption was that such participation is inhibited by certain factors that act as barriers to effective integration. The role of the state is then to remove these barriers and thus allow integration to take place. Our analysis suggested two major areas, not considered elsewhere within the developing framework, where such barriers existed: language and cultural knowledge; and safety and security.

These were identified as discrete domains with respect to which actions could serve to facilitate (or constrain) local integration.

Language and Cultural Knowledge. All methodological strands of the study identified key areas of cultural competence that are perceived to be necessary to effectively integrate within the wider community. Being able to speak the main language of the host community is, for example, consistently identified as central to the integration process. In the UK context, not being able to speak English is seen as a barrier to social interaction, economic integration and full participation (Home Office 2006). Recent promotion of access to English language classes has generally been welcomed, though the level of competence attainable through short programmes of study is rather limited, with such provision severely inadequate for those experiencing problems acquiring the language (Sargeant *et al.* 1999).

With a 'two-way' understanding of integration, the issue of language competence is also, however, a challenge for receiving communities, especially providers of essential services such as health care. Fostering community integration potentially means reducing barriers to key information through the provision of material translated into the languages of refugees and other migrants. In the areas of field study we witnessed many attempts to provide such assistance, with such moves being seen in some settings as part of a general move towards enhanced cultural competence of essential services in a multicultural context (Pankaj 2004). In the UK widespread provision of translation and interpreting services has been critiqued as an inhibitor of language learning and thereby integration (Easton 2006). However, our data suggests that translation and interpreting supports are crucial in the early stages of settlement, and—given the length of time required to develop proficiency—are likely to be of ongoing significance.

Although the issue of language competence receives dominant attention, literature review and qualitative interviews within refugee impacted communities consistently highlighted the value of a broader cultural knowledge in enabling integration processes and outcomes. This included both refugees' knowledge of national and local procedures, customs and facilities and, though to a lesser extent, non-refugees' knowledge of the circumstances and culture of refugees.

> 'I think it is some kind of a joke. They call them integration houses and I have never met an Austrian inside the house except the staff. So what do they mean by integration? Integration between ourselves? I am sorry that I did not have the chance to learn anything about Austrian culture during my stay in that integration house. All I have learned is the language but nothing about the culture, not even about the eating culture of Austria' (ECRE 1999a: 28).

In addition to practical information about the area they were living in, refugees interviewed at fieldsites generally acknowledged their need to

develop an understanding of cultural expectations in the areas in which they were living:

> My problem was not with the older people around me it was with the children . . . My culture is really, really different from your culture when it comes to families, because the way we are brought up . . . whether the older person is wrong or right you do not talk back . . . you do not disrespect. Whether they are a year older than you . . . they are older than you so that's it . . . . I honestly do not know what to do about it (Refugee, Pollokshaws).
>
> They left a lot of litter and I said, 'well we can't . . . . they don't understand. If we don't tell them, and correct them' . . . So I spoke to one or two of them and said, 'please tidy up', and they did. They did. There was no question, it was just they just needed to be told (Non-refugee, Pollokshaws).

Adjusting to a different culture was, in the experience of most refugees, not straightforward. In particular, refugees who had experienced close family ties in their own culture, found their isolation and the lack of a local strong community to be alienating and depressing. A number of refugees suggested the value of sharing their own culture with others, thereby promoting mutual understanding, and also contributing something of value to the integrated community. The majority of non-refugees recognized the value of refugee communities maintaining cultural traditions for themselves. However, there were differences between the contexts studied with respect to perceptions by local residents of the cultural contribution of migrants to the community as a whole. Only Islington residents commonly spoke of the value of the cultural diversity of their area, typically as reflected in the local variety of restaurants and the cultural festivals celebrated.

Safety and Stability. Safety and stability—though not prominent through documentary analysis of pre-existing definitions and indicators of integration—were common themes emerging in community interviews. Refugees felt more 'at home' in their localities if they saw them as 'peaceful', while non-refugees were often concerned that new arrivals did not cause unrest in their community.

> It's peaceful, people are the same and nobody is treating you really badly (Refugee, Pollokshaws).

Avoiding 'trouble' was a common concern

> I have not made any effort so far to try and talk to neighbours or do anything about that because I don't want trouble . . . basically. In [other area] unfortunately . . . I had to live there before I lived here, so I learned to keep to myself because that way you avoid trouble (Refugee, Pollokshaws).

A sense of personal safety was for many paramount. Refugees often indicated that if they did not feel physically safe in an area they could not

feel integrated. Very often incidents of violence or being threatened had determined overall perceptions of a community.

> Some people, they were fighting there some day, I don't know, I mean, two men were killed [. . .] We feel afraid. [. . .] It was really frightening (Refugee, Pollokshaws).

Conversely, if an area was well regarded it was often primarily because it was 'safe'. Personal safety was not just seen in terms of actual violence; verbal abuse or even the perception that an area is 'threatening' appeared to have a similar affect upon refugees' judgements of their area.

These local findings were reinforced by the analysis of the cross-sectional data of resettling refugees collected by MORI (see Figure 2). Harassment and intimidation (along with health problems) was the experience most distant from positive appraisals of quality of life, indicating the powerful influence of insecurity in undermining sense of well-being.

In terms of stability of communities, the study uncovered many stories of potentially positive community relationships being undermined by refugees having to move somewhere else (or the expectation that someone might shortly have to do so). In Pollokshaws, in particular, where existing residents clearly valued continuity in their refugee neighbours, there were frustrations that relationships had been 'cut short' when refugees had moved out of the area after a relatively short while. In Islington long-term residents similarly argued that the high levels of mobility of the wider population in the area undermined any sense of community.

Together with the preceding analysis supporting the role of social connection in enabling integration—and the importance of continuity in supporting effective access to public services—it is clear that community stability is potentially an important facilitator of integration. This has wide implications for refugee integration policy, not least in the area of housing, where short-term accommodation, insecure tenancies and certain forms of dispersal strategy all serve to promote instability in refugee settlement.

Conclusion

This study adopted an inductive approach to develop a framework summarizing perceptions of what constitutes 'successful' integration. Themes initially identified through documentary and conceptual analysis were explored and developed in fieldwork in settings of refugee settlement, and through secondary analysis of survey data. Key themes emerging through this process were used to specify 'domains' of the proposed framework, which was then reviewed through a period of stakeholder verification.

The framework specifies ten core domains that shape understandings of the concept of integration. The domains cover achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and

practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups in the community; and barriers to such connection, particularly stemming from lack of linguistic and cultural competences and from fear and instability. The framework accommodates common elements in existing attempts to define and measure integration, reflects perceptions of key issues determining local integration for refugees and non-refugees in two refugee-impacted settings, and was considered coherent and of utility by a range of policy-makers and service providers.

The challenge of any framework seeking to reflect normative under-standings of integration is for it to accommodate the diversity of assumptions and values of different settings while retaining some conceptual coherence. The framework proposed here seeks to address this by suggesting domains of wide relevance, but determining that in any given context indicators of local or national relevance be negotiated for each domain.[1] In particular, the domain of Rights and Citizenship is proposed as a basis for articulating the (potentially conflicting) assumptions and principles that shape policy and public debate on the integration of refugees, and agreement on what 'counts' as integration in other domains. This mechanism not only provides a basis for using the same framework in contexts with widely differing conceptions of citizenship, normative expectations of social integration within commu-nities, educational attainment etc. It is also a means for using the same framework—but with differing indicators for domains, as appropriate—in a single setting over time: assessing outcomes for recent asylum-seekers will necessarily require different metrics than for cohorts of refugees who have lived for longer periods in the receiving society.

There is some evidence of the framework being used both to inform development of local indicators of integration and, more generally, to facilitate discussion regarding integration that is accessible to policymakers, researchers, service providers and/or refugees themselves. The framework has influenced national and regional policy formulation (Home Office 2005; Welsh Assembly Government 2006; WMSPARS 2006) and its critique (ICAR 2004; Refugee Council 2006). It has been used as a structure for commission-ing and/or developing services aimed at supporting refugee integration (Scottish Executive 2006; TimeBank 2007). It has informed studies of local integration both conceptually and methodologically (Beirens *et al.* 2007; Sirriyeh 2007; Atfield *et al.* 2007; Daley 2008). Its wider utility and explana-tory value now needs to be tested in diverse contexts to gauge whether the proposed structure captures key elements of stakeholder perceptions of what constitutes integration in an appropriately broad range of settings and timeframes.

The formulation of the framework raises some significant questions regarding the processes that may facilitate integration. Firstly, although the framework specifies ten discrete domains, the interdependence of these has been highlighted throughout. The policy and practice implications of such interdependence are of real importance. There are clear benefits when those

working on housing issues, for instance, have a greater awareness of the potential contribution that housing policy can make to opportunities for social connection or a sense of safety. Generally, however, the 'pathways' through which progress with respect to one domain supports progress with respect to another are poorly understood (Spencer 2006), and warrant systematic study.

Secondly, the structure of the framework reinforces a notion that processes supporting the maintenance of ethnic identity (especially 'social bonds') in no way logically limit wider integration into society (through the establishment of 'social bridges' and other means). This opposes not only a common rhetorical misconception in the current integration debate in the UK (Modood 2005), but also theoretical analyses that see increased emphasis on 'social cohesion' as necessarily a prescription for a more assimilationist policy (Spencer and Cooper 2006; Zetter *et al.* 2006). There is a clear need for further work exploring conceptions of social capital as an explanatory concept for the processes of integration, here clarifying if key elements of 'multiculturalism' are compatible with a greater emphasis on social cohesion. In our analysis, social capital is presented in the context of an overall framework of interrelated domains, ensuring that the other resources essential to integration are acknowledged. This avoids the assumption implied by some policy statements that integration and social cohesion can be achieved through social connection alone, a position severely critiqued in some recent analyses (Cheong *et al.* 2007). However, the conceptualization of social capital in the context of integration in terms of bonds, bridges and links has itself been queried (Zetter *et al.* 2006; Cheong *et al.* 2007). Local studies of integration, particularly those with a longitudinal element allowing the suggestion of causal pathways in securing resources and connection, promise to be of value here (Spencer 2006).

All indications are that the concept of integration is likely to remain 'controversial and hotly debated' (Castles *et al.* 2001: 13) both as a policy objective and as a theoretical construct. Our aim is that that debate may be more effectively focused by having frameworks, such as that presented here, with respect to which such controversy can be related.

Acknowledgements

1. See Ager and Strang (2004a) for an illustration of this in the context of UK refugee resettlement policy.

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