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Stories Told By, For, and About Women Refugees: Engendering Resistance

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Abstract

In this paper I discuss some of the ways women's narratives reflect how they make sense of seeking asylum^[1] and how narratives can become a means of resistance. The interview data comes from a qualitative study^[2] looking at the in-depth narratives of seventeen women who had all made a claim for asylum in the United Kingdom (UK). The women who participated had been living in the UK for different periods of time, ranging from a couple of months to seven years. Aged between early twenties to mid-fifties, they came from fourteen different countries of origin. I utilised an in-depth narrative approach to interviewing women which offered a number of distinct advantages: allowing for women's narratives to be the focus of the study; capturing the particularity, complexity and richness of each woman's story; and highlighting women's agency in storytelling (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, 2003). Interviews lasted between one and a half to three hours and were conducted in a wide range of different locations in the UK.

[1]The term 'asylum seeker' used in this study include women who have made a claim for asylum under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, regardless of the legal determination on their claim.

[2]This study was developed from PhD research that was funded by an Economic and Social Research Council studentship.

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