The individual decision-making process of refugees in Yogyakarta

Rory John Brown[1,2]

[1] School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland, Australia.
[2] The Australian Consortium for in-Country Indonesian Studies, Australia.
   E-mail: rory.brown@uqconnect.edu.au

Article Info

Abstract

The imminent situation faced by asylum seekers is a crucial factor in understanding their decision making process. This study has adopted Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to map out the circumfix of influence affecting refugees in Yogyakarta. In particular, this study makes use of rational choice, social strain and migration theory to better understand individual choice. Through the scope of behavioural analysis, this study finds that asylum seekers arriving in Indonesia begin utilising legal avenues of refugee migration and resettlement to a third party state once their ecological setting became more stable.

Abstrak

Situasi terdekat yang akan dihadapi oleh para pencari suaka merupakan faktor krusial dalam memahami proses pengambilan keputusan mereka. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memetakan hal-hal yang berpengaruh terhadap pengungsi di Yogyakarta dengan menggunakan *Bronfenbrenners Ecological model*. Dalam penelitian ini diterapkan *rational choice*, *strain* dan *migration theory* untuk lebih memahami proses pengambilan keputusan individu pengungsi di Yogyakarta. Melalui lingkup analisis perilaku, pada penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa pencari suaka tiba di Indonesia dengan memanfaatkan jalur hukum untuk mendapatkan status pengungsi, kemudian berpindah dan bermukim di negara lain setelah sistem ekologi mereka menjadi lebih stabil.

Introduction

The study is designed to learn from the perspective of refugees (formally asylum seekers before registration) in Yogyakarta. There is currently no research in the field of refugees relating to individual social and economic pressures imposed on asylum seekers arriving in Indonesia and how it impacts on their decision-making process. This study aims to assess the social and economic factors motivating asylum seekers arriving in Indonesia to pursue assistance through legal means of processing. Through data analysis of interviews conducted with refugees residing in Yogyakarta, I will assess individual social and economic circumstances shaping the decision-making process of asylum seekers, ultimately leading to acceptance of UNHCR assistance and subsequent processing. To do this, I will utilise Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model to map out the circumfix of influence.

In particular, I will apply rational choice, social strain and migration theory in order to better understand individual and group decision-making. Overall, this study argues that asylum seekers are making their decisions to pursue legal processing in Indonesia once their ecological setting becomes relatively more stable and they have access to better information channels. These decisions are being taken by individuals based on new information received after arriving in Indonesia or through shared and first-hand experience following contact with people with similar experiences.

Empirical evidence through interviews with four refugees has found that most asylum seekers arriving in Indonesia were completely unaware of the UNHCR and the refugee registration process until they arrived in Indonesia or were detained by Indonesian officials.

Nonetheless, the results of this study found that if asylum seekers had known initially about the refugee registration process in Indonesia, they would still have made the same choice to depart their country of origin due to the drastic circumstances they were experiencing there. However, they would

not have attempted an illegal voyage via boat to Australia, and would have continued with the registration process on arriving in Indonesia.

In terms of formulating the research question, this paper will seek to ascertain the circumfix of influence that are motivating asylum seekers to pursue legal methods of registration and processing in Indonesia as opposed to illegal entry to Australia via boat.

The purpose of the study is to use a sample of perspectives from a test group of refugees held in the Yogyakarta Refugee Transit Centre to identify the reasons for asylum seekers pursuing legal methods of registration and resettlement as opposed to illegal migration.

The study would be useful in assisting Australian and Indonesian policy makers to gauge the micro-picture of asylum seekers in Yogyakarta. This study could also be used as further evidence that asylum seekers are not accessing adequate information channels in terms of legal registration. From a micro-perspective, this study may assist in understanding future requirements relating to Indonesia's detention facility capabilities and how the UNHCR and IOM might re-visit financial budgets as the rate of People of Care (POCs) increases in Indonesia.

Research Method

The outcomes in this study were drawn from a combination of literature reviews and interviews conducted with four refugees being accommodated at Asrama Haji Transit Centre in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Aids included a set of twenty interview questions in order to collect information to better understand the variables impacting on the decision-making process of refugees. Questions ranged from general purpose questions in order to identify and validate the background of the interviewee, research-specific questions in order to secure specific information, and questions designed to cross reference the responses of interviewees. Care was also taken to consult with subject matter experts in order to understand given responses and identify whether answers provided by participants contained any bias or personal agendas. The sample group was specifically selected based on consistency with the exploratory case study methodology (Yin, 2009). Miles & Huberman (1994) suggest that a small sample should be the goal of the study for qualitative research purposes.

Research design

The research design is qualitative, aiming to apply a logical sequence to connect empirical data to the study's initial study question and conclusion.

Yin (1993) identified exploratory, explanatory and descriptive case study approaches that could be utilized in multiple or single case studies. In this exploratory case study, I invited four refugees who were then in transit at Yogyakarta's refugee transit centre, to participate and share their experience and views. This research adds to the body of existing knowledge relating to the perspectives of refugees currently in transit in Indonesia (Taylor & Brown, 2010).

The potential benefit is to analyse "what can be learned" (Yin, 1993, p. 5) of the attitudes, perceptions and desires of individual refugees residing in Indonesia. The unit of analysis is the rational choice of refugees attempting resettlement.

The case study approach used for this study is exploratory. Within an exploratory approach, the aim is to "create a plan, design, prepare for data collection, data collection, analysis, and share findings" (Yin, 2009, p. 24). Using this approach, I was able to use a logical flow of steps in order to answer the research question: What is motivating asylum seekers to seek out legal registration and subsequent services in Indonesia as opposed to illegal methods of entry to Australia?

The main philosophical assumptions in qualitative research include ontology, epistemology, axiology, and the methodology (Bryman, 2006). Ontology allows the researcher to recognize the beliefs about the nature of reality, including how knowledge is perceived. The epistemological assumption assists the researcher in determining what is considered knowledge. Axiology helps the researcher analyse the role that values have when conducting research. Finally, the methodology is the process used in order to obtain and assess information appropriate when conducting research (Bryman, 2006).

Sample procedure

Selecting participants involved providing a letter of informed consent for their signature. After signing the form, participants were eligible to be interviewed for the study. Additionally, interview results were

checked for theoretical saturation. The interview process was conducted with set boundaries and expectations of knowledge. The interview approach was knowledgeable, structured, clear, gentle, sensitive, open, steering, critical, remembering and interpreting (Kvale, 1996).

According to Bryman, Stephens, & Campo (1996, p. 1), the case study approach "usually employs participant observation, some semi structured interviewing, and the examination of documents". The case study met this description.

Location of the research

The research setting was conducted utilizing personal interviews at Asrama Haji Transit Centre in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Data collection

Throughout the study, the researcher is considered the primary instrument for data collection (Merriam, 2002). This means the researcher has the responsibility to acquire data directly from the participants.

Additionally, I reviewed and analysed other sources including documents, records and reports that were requested or accessed by either direct or indirect contact with the UNHCR, JRS and IOM for the purpose of integrating the acquired information. There were two interviews. The first interview consisted of just one individual who was identified as already being quite fluent in English. The second interview consisted of three individuals, two with a basic English-speaking ability, and one member of the group who was fluent enough to explain the questions again in their native language.

This research included identifying relationships in order to establish a greater comprehension of individual interactions, processes, and events. Additionally, I conducted interviewee observations and reviewed documents in order to cross check the sources of evidence.

Data analysis design

The design of this study is qualitative with an interpretive institution. According to Creswell & Miller (2000, p. 125), "qualitative researchers use a scope not based on scores, instruments, or research designs but a lens established using the views of people who conduct, participate in, or read, and review a study".

Validity and reliability

The validity of the outcomes of this study derived from periodic contact with the members interviewed over a period of five months in order to establish trust between the sample group and the author. This was necessary as earlier advice from the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and IOM staff suggested most refugees were uncomfortable with conducting interviews, particularly when divulging personal details about family or themselves. Trochim (2006) explains that validity, credibility, transferability, dependability and research are confirmed through the further research of others or due to corroborating on research projects. The strategy for reducing bias, in order to increase validity, can only be ensured using extreme caution when gathering data. The credibility of this research was based on strict qualitative research methods with approval from Universitas Islam Indonesia. The results are believable; as information provided was cross-checked by reviewing documentation and is based on information by participants with mutually assuring shared experience to account for saturation of events.

In terms of transferability, the findings may be used to contribute to the body of literature on the topic of the sociology of refugees. However, the data gathered for this research should not be assumed to be easily transferred or generalized to other context settings.

In order to maintain integrity during all interview sessions, I had assistance to help facilitate with clarifying the question and reliability of responses. Both assistants were briefed before interviews in order to clarify what each question was asking. All those that assisted were also qualified English teachers. By having periodic contact with the potential sample group for the research for up to five months, I was able to assess what group dynamics would work best for the interview process. This was important to ensure that group dynamics would work well during the collective interview, or that individuals would not feel discouraged to speak openly in front of others. Additionally, pairing a suitable group of refugees evidently showed that the refugees interviewed were more willing to discuss, elabo-

rate, agree disagree or associate with what the others said in the group. It was necessary to divide the interviews into two groups in order to cater for individual English-speaking ability among the refugees who agreed to be interviewed.

Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations while undertaking this study included data collection procedures, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, risk, benefits, bias, and professional behavior through established channels to speak with officials and security. The study was 100% risk-free. Interviewees were able to stop during the study at any time and were not obliged to answer questions.

Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of the participants and data in the research were ensured. Digital referencing was used rather than names, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants had a clear understanding of what was explained and had the opportunity to ask questions throughout the interview.

Participation was strictly voluntary, free of any coercion or promises of benefits, including financial benefits. It was made clear from the start of the interview process that the results gathered during the interview would not harm or benefit their current application for resettlement and that their identities would be kept secret.

Limitations

The research compiled during the interview process was confined to refugees being held at Yogyakarta's Asrama Haji Transit Centre. Due to the nature of the transit centre and the demographics of the small number of refugees currently being accommodated there, it was difficult acquiring an even spread of age groups as residents were men between 25-35 years of age. As a result, this study was unable to compare the perspectives of women and children, or draw from a sample with a wider age bracket.

Results and Discussion

The participants of the study consisted of four males between 28-34 years of age. The group was made up of one Iranian and three Afghan nationals of Islamic faith. All the individuals who participated had already spent 2-3 years in detention. All participants were considered middle-income earners in their respective countries. Their occupations before departing their countries of origin consisted of owning a car wash business, labourers with qualifications in woodwork, construction and welding, and one farmer who operated heavy machinery. All participants interviewed had completed Junior High School, with each of them emphasising that a higher importance was placed on getting full-time employment. One participant was single, while three of the four participants were married and also had children. However, all four participants made the journey unaccompanied. One participant's reason for leaving was due to his Kurdish ethnicity, which made it difficult to find work, obtain an education or own land and assets legally. One had to leave after having land and assets seized sporadically by the Taliban as well as having family and members of the community become victim to acts of violence. Another participant left after ethnic and communal fighting, while another participant was not comfortable with sharing his reasons for leaving.

Rational choice throughout this study refers to the process of determining options available to asylum seekers seeking passage and resettlement through Indonesia. The limitation of a rational choice model is that real-world choices regularly appear to be situational context-dependent. The way in which individual choice was found to be evaluated in this study was in regards to the social context of the decision, the emotional state of the decision-maker, variable extraneous factors to the choice set, and an array of other environmental factors that appeared to influence the ecological systems surrounding the sample group of refugees in this study and their choices.

Ariely, Loewenstein, & Prelec (2003) argue that once people have predicted the value of their decision in terms of cost to benefit, they respond to changing variables in a manner that is consistent with rational choice theory. They labelled this behaviour 'coherent arbitrariness'. Participants considered time waiting for refugee registration a variable outside their control and a factor they had not fully considered in terms of the actual time the application process would take. This indicated that participants of the study relied mostly on heuristic reasoning or intuition when dealing with unfamiliar situations and context settings. In reality, many of the individual choices were not fully considered. Instead, they are

founded on intuitive reasoning, heuristics or instinctive visceral desires. However, the fact that people rely on intuition and heuristic reasoning is not surprising. The strength of the rational choice model is that preferences are moderately stable. However, the conclusions drawn by participants that ultimately shaped their decision process became problematic because preferences were highly susceptible to context.

In the sense that people have limited cognitive capacity or access to all relevant information, there is no way to reason through every decision rationally. Arguably, instinctive judgments to leave countries of origin may reflect preference maximization, especially in familiar or known environments. However, when people rely on heuristic reasoning or intuition in unfamiliar situations, the results of these decisions can often reflect behaviour far from rational choice models. This is possibly the reason why the sample group, on a micro level, experience so much uncertainty. The analysis of the results of this study also draws on an empirical analysis using an ecological systems model, strain theory and migration theory in order to account for shortcomings in using rational choice to explain the behaviour of refugees.

A point worth emphasizing is that despite the shortfalls of rational choice theory, it remains a useful tool for understanding and comparing the decision-making process of the sample group of refugees and how their thinking shifted before and after arrival in Indonesia. Overall, the results demonstrated that the participants of this study took an optimisation approach based on preferred outcomes according to some consistent criterion which was expressed as becoming free from prosecution, free from fear of loss of life or social exclusion, with the final destination being their secondary concern.

Ecological systems model

Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 22) described the ecological environment as 'a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next'. This, he argued, had to be examined as a whole independently in order to understand how an individual's surroundings shape their personal development or the choices they make. He also argued that sudden changes in the socio-political, economic or environmental system cause increases in reactive migration.

His initial articulation of Ecological Systems Theory identified four main components. These included the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, which he suggests are nested around an individual like a set of concentric circles.
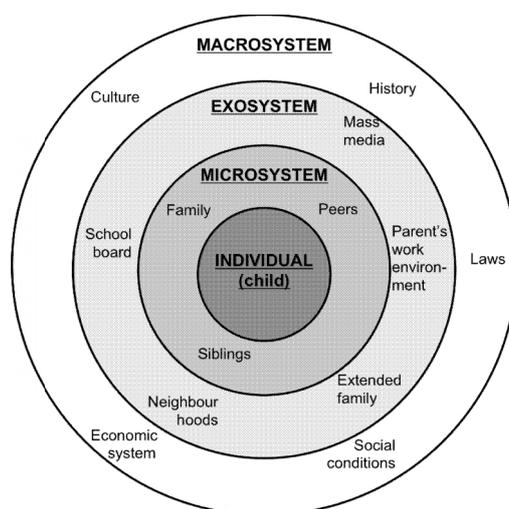

Figure 1. Nested Model of Ecological Systems Originally Proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979)

Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 22) viewed each system as arising from a setting, which he defined as 'a place where people can readily engage in face-to-face interaction'. At the lowest level of Bronfenbrenners system is the microsystem where the main individual plays a direct role; this involves their experiences and social interactions with others.

The Mesosystems, within which Microsystems are nested, involve social interactions between other individual settings within a system. For example, 'a Mesosystem could involve a meeting between

a parent (from the child's family setting) and teacher (from the child's school setting) about a child's classroom behavior'. Exosystems include settings that influence the individual, but where the individual does not participate. Finally, Macrosystems, within which Exosystems are nested, include broad cultural influences or ideologies that have direct consequences for the specific individual; for example, societal views on higher education versus societal pressures to leave school early and find full-time employment. In addition to these four systems, Bronfenbrenner (1986a, 1986b) later introduced the Chronosystem. This system is representative of changes throughout time in terms of change and continuity that influence each of the other systems. Transitions such as a child's transition from middle to high school, or the beginning of puberty, are part of the Chronosystem.

Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 68) clearly defined both the Microsystem and the Mesosystem in terms of social interactions. For example, he noted that the analysis of the Microsystem 'must take into account the indirect influence of third parties on the interaction between members of a dyad' because by only focusing on dyadic social interactions, we ignore the wider social context which encompasses the social forces influencing the individual; the latter being the case for the participants interviewed. Here we can start to understand how the decision by participants of this study to leave began to be shaped, particularly when support from family and community within the individuals Microsystems could be used as individual justification or approval to seek out better opportunities or more favorable circumstances in another host country.

Similarly, Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 25) defined Mesosystems as resulting from, other types of interconnections, the 'intermediate links in a social network'. The results of this study found that when pressure accumulates due to push factors within the Macrosystem, these push factors created a chain reaction that through the Chronosystem managed to influence the individual as well as their relationships in the Microsystem. The consequential social trends that are shaped as a result of these social interactions were revealed to have made it easier for the participants of the study to obtain acceptance and understanding of their decision by family members or seek out other sympathetic individuals within their Micro and Macrosystem that could assist them, which ultimately shaped their decision-making process. However, the problem was that individuals of this study still only had access to very limited information. As such, primary spatial dimensions and a secondary interactional dimension begin to correlate when determining available choices, particularly when assessing risk.

Giddens draws attention to the 'ubiquity of risk' in modern society, and the subsequent reactions people have when facing danger (Giddens, 1990, pp. 24-136). Turner (1987, 1988) added to Giddens work and others in formulating a sociological theory of motivation that encompasses 'conscious' and 'unconscious' individual needs, and relating these needs to the ecological system within which action occurs. In addition, (Turner, 1988) stresses the importance of 'group inclusion, trust, security, symbolic and material gratification, self-conception and inter-subjective understanding'. This, he suggests, is directly linked to goal achievement, 'power and social exchange and decision making'.

Rational choice theory

Results from the interview process indicated that prior to departure, all participants were unaware or had been misinformed about the process of registration for refugee status, until detention by authorities in Indonesia several months after arrival. Haug (2000) uses the 'subjective expected utility theory' in order to understand the migration decision-making process while using an 'extended resource concept'. Expected utility assumes that actors choosing to migrate have only limited access to information. Potential asylum seekers according to this model would seek to maximise assessed utility subjectively (minus the costs assessed as needed for migration) in relation to economic, educational, cultural and social resources in a host destination.

This model is also an extension of rational choice theory whereby asylum seekers will compare the total amount of utility that can be gained from another location's specific social capital in relation to comparing the benefits of staying at the place of origin or the place of destination that is being considered. In short, the attractiveness of host destinations is determined to a large degree by the social capital it offers. The results of this study indicate that the sample group of refugees were prepared to make their decision based on the cost/benefit of migrating to a new destination it terms of the financial cost of physically travelling to a new destination, the social cost of leaving behind friends and family versus the benefits of social capital in a chosen destination. But again, results of this study indicated that the sample group were totally unaware of the process involved in registration, how long it would take to get to

Australia or how long they would be away from their families. What this suggests is that when forming decisions, asylum seekers do not fully consider the costs that they will incur in order to obtain the perceived benefits of social capital in a chosen destination. Participants further stated that they were convinced they would eventually get to Australia, but once it became apparent that this process would be more difficult than anticipated, or less than a certain outcome, all participants then chose to seek out legal means of refugee registration and resettlement. Again it should be emphasised that the steps involved with this process were unknown until after detention by Indonesian authorities, and their decision was based largely on heuristic reasoning; that is, until more could be determined, in which case the refugees of this study expressed multiple times that they would have used legal means of registration.

According to Haug (2000, p. 129), *"The decision to migrate is made on the condition that the subjectively expected total utility of migration less the opportunity costs caused by the loss of use at the place of origin is higher than the total utility of staying at the place of origin"*. In the case of one participant who was of Kurdish ethnicity, which was also confirmed by the UNHCR, these were the challenges he faced. The utility of staying was almost non-existent because the participant did not have legal access to social capital in his own country due to his ethnicity. For example, the participant could not use a national hospital, buy a home, or get a driver's licence, and was unable to work or have his marriage recognised by the state. This again highlights the situation that many asylum seekers face; an imminent, pressing situation that usually negates an informed (as much as possible given access to limited or incorrect information) response in order to ensure survival given their drastic personal circumstances.

Haug's model also considers the costs that occur when trusting persons interact with those who are not trustworthy (Haug, 2000, p. 127). She discusses different kinds of risk and perceived risks faced by asylum seekers. Perceived risks come from two different groups; one group views migration as a risky action (Massey, 1993), while another considers migration as 'risk-averting' behaviour (Stark, 1991). However, Elrick & Brake (2005) suggests it is a matter of perspective as migration can reduce insecurities, but at the same time travelling to a new destination in itself is a risky business until resettlement is concluded. Nonetheless, according to Haug (2000, p. 128), migration is usually always a risky investment, and it can be assumed that a person who chooses to migrate would be an individual who is a 'risk-loving person', or an individual whose social and economic capital in their country of origin are so low he or she will choose to migrate without considering social support networks abroad.

The participants of this study however, did not indicate they were risk takers and it was found that the individual opportunity cost of all participants to stay in their country of origin was extremely low. Of the four participants who were interviewed, three stated that despite having support to leave, they had no support networks in Australia, while one indicated that he did. Participants stated that they travelled on commercial flights until reaching Indonesia, from where they then proceeded to go by boat to Australia. The participants of the study said they had considered the risks in terms of personal safety. Additionally, all four participants stated that the risk of travelling to Indonesia or to Australia by boat did not outweigh the risk of them remaining in their countries of origin. Interestingly, all four participants of this study said they would not go through the ordeal of travelling by boat again, and if they had known of the registration process in advance, or know what they know now through first-hand experience, would have proceeded directly to the UNHCR in Jakarta. Although all the participants of the study recognised that migration was a risky action, they believed it was a lesser risk than staying in their country of origin, and their actions can therefore be considered risk-averting behaviour. Under certain circumstances, the choice to move may be made after due consideration of all relevant information. This is then rationally calculated in order to maximize net advantage. On the other end of the scale, the decision to move may be made in a state of panic in a situation that leaves little option but to escape from fear or threat of loss of life. In between these two extremes, many of the choices made by asylum seekers are a response to skewed anxiety facilitated by a failure or collapse of the social system to guarantee fundamental individual economic, political and social needs.

Strain theory

According to Agnew's general strain theory, 'negative experiences or aversive behaviors of others could elicit negative emotions' (Agnew, 2011). The way in which individuals perceive events and situations in terms of social strain can prompt reactions depending on internal and external factors. Conflict and violence or failed political systems were identified in this study as factors that were a source of strain and negative emotions that left the sample group of this research feeling discriminated against because of

their ethnicity, or being subject to violent actions under extremist groups. In Jang, and Johnson's (2003, p. 79-105) study on social strain theory, they found that individuals were more likely to feel inner-directed negative emotions as a reaction to personal problems. All participants expressed the view that there was no future for them in their own country, and that by staying they were limiting their prospects for any kind of future.

Social strain theory may better explain how social tensions due to political systems and directed violence have caused these people to take action and why they were prepared to potentially engage in 'deviant activity' in order to attempt illegal entry to Australia by boat. Nonetheless, this study found that the sample group, once registered for refugee status, felt less tension from society as their lives or quality of life was not under direct threat. As mentioned earlier, the participants of this study indicated that if they had known what they know now, they would have chosen to register earlier through the UNHCR as this was measured to be the safest and most reliable option available to them after arriving in Indonesia (UNHCR, 2016). This is arguably due to the participants of this study being able to re-evaluate their decisions from a position free from societal tensions or crime. During this study, the refugees interviewed indicated that they did not feel stress or PTSD because of the first-hand experience or trauma they faced either coming from their country or attempting to enter Australia illegally via boat, but rather the anxiety of not being able to track the process of their application or stress associated with concerns about the safety of family.

Migration theory

'Push-pull' theories in effect treat migration as the result of low socioeconomic status or insecurity in a country of origin, relative to that in politically stable host countries. The limitation of migration theory is that it fails to account for the actual direction of certain movements and the fact that there is still hardly any migration from some of the poorest regions of the world that are viewed as moderately stable (Richmond & Verma, 1978).

Kunz (1973, p. 125-146) addressed this by using the concept of 'kinetic models' of flight and displacement. He differentiated between movements among refugees that included 'anticipatory' and 'acute' refugee movements. He also identified waves of migration, which were the result of flight from potentially dangerous situations. He also mentions the phenomenon of displacement that occurs when people are unable to return to their country of origin following political crises or instances of violence.

Using Kunz's (1973, p.145) identified stages of migration, we can link this to the experiences conveyed by the participants of this study. All participants expressed the view that after changes in their ecological context, such as political and social instability, a process which might be explained as the anticipatory mode takes place. This becomes acute and was then followed by temporary asylum and eventual registration pending resettlement.

An alternative to the 'kinetic' model is a 'systems' approach, that was adopted by Richmond & Verma (1978, p. 3-28) and (Hoffman-Nowotny, 1981). These authors note that migration takes place after complex networks between origin and host states develop which influences the composition of migration.

Zolberg (1989, p. 269) identifies three 'sociological types' of refugees. They are the activists who are commonly dissenters and rebels fleeing from the state they oppose. The second group comprises those of a neutral party of bystanders engulfed in conflict. The third group, such as the refugee of this study are singled out because of their affiliation with a particular social or ethnic group and become victim to violence or persecution as a result of their membership to these groups. The common denominator is violence enacted either by the state or violence beyond the control of the state. When this occurs, the Macrosystem begins to break down causing an impact on the Microsystem and the individual. Therefore, it may not necessarily be direct violence in a physical sense that influences the decision-making process, but the coercive forces surrounding their ecological system that causes asylum seekers to sporadically depart. One participant indicated he had to leave due to a direct threat towards his personal safety, but the other three participants indicated their departure was due to violence that began to break down their context settings.

The above account indicates that political variables are important but not exclusive determinants of reactive migration. Extreme inequalities and distribution of wealth and resources between various countries and regions are among the prominent factors increasing the likeliness of reactive migration. Such inequalities, in combination with political instability, create the conditions that make refugee

movements more likely to occur, unless severely constrained by other factors such as individual financial capacity or the ability to move past borders.

Emerging themes

Extreme poverty and individual financial capacity is still a major deterrent because asylum seekers must have access to some financial capital in order to afford their journey and the interim support. Richmond & Verma (1978) indicates that in many cases 'bribes must be paid, documents acquired, tickets bought and provisions obtained'. The most common theme among participants is that none were aware of the lengthy time it would take to find asylum, and none factored this into their decision-making process or were prepared financially to be trapped in the interim for a considerable time. When asked if they would do things differently if the opportunity arose again, all participants stated if they had known more about the process involved with their registration and the UNHCR, they would have proceeded directly to the UNHCR office rather than spending several months waiting to go to Australia by boat. The experiences of their voyage were described as "insecure, unsafe and uncertain".

This study, in conjunction with UNHCR (2016) reports, has also found that reactive migration appears to be based on the demography of the economically selective, young, the healthy, the able-bodied and those with material assets that could be exchanged or used rather than foreign currency. UNHCR (2016) reports indicate that the demography of refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia may also be gender selective due to adult males being more 'pre-emptive' than women and children, who are often left with limited options, except reacting to events outside their control.

It should be noted that not all predisposing factors and consequential political, financial and social tensions are actually generating large-scale reactive migration. The results of this study found that the sample group of refugees in Yogyakarta all had some additional enabling circumstances aside from political and social tensions that influenced their choice to find passage through Indonesia to Australia.

Implications and recommendations

If policies are to be decided based on attaining the 'greatest good for the greatest number of people,' the parties involved would need to find a utility index capable of measuring how beneficial different policies would be for different POCs. Perhaps that project could be further advanced by developing an index of self-interest, determining how beneficial various outcomes are to the individual person.

Enabling actions such as allowing refugees access to adequate information in a timely manner, and allowing them to commence legal means of registration and resettlement in an efficient manner, depends on governmental action and non-government agencies that can establish response missions, refugee camps, produce travel documents, ease entry requirements and establish asylum application procedures. Acknowledging generous immigration programs and measures to promote human rights by international agencies may also accommodate reactive migration and eventual resettlement while under-cutting organized criminal networks. An area of weakness appears to be the UNHCR's information campaign designed to inform asylum seekers about refugee registration. In order to direct or deter asylum seekers towards UNHCR and IOM services, a stronger focus should be placed on either this type of campaign or information channels between the UNHCR, IOM and Indonesian authorities who are often the first point of contact for asylum seekers arriving in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study has examined complex typologies affecting the ecological systems surrounding the sample group of refugees being accommodated in Yogyakarta. Voluntary movements by participants resulted from a combination of 'push' and 'pull' factors (this included economic, political and social forces), underpinned by a range of opportunities and challenges. The refugees of this study were identified as being discriminated against in their own country because of their affiliation with a particular social or ethnic group that fell victim to violence, persecution or exclusion as a result of their membership of these groups.

Many of the choices being made by the asylum seekers in this study were in response to anxiety facilitated by a failure or collapse of their ecological social system to guarantee individual fundamental needs, in terms of socio-political, economic and environmental needs. I found that participants of this study took an optimisation approach based on preferred outcomes according to some consistent criterion

which was expressed in terms of becoming free from persecution, and free from fear of loss of life or social exclusion. The decision to migrate was taken on the basis that the subjectively expected total utility of migration, less the opportunity costs caused by the loss of use at the place of origin, compared favourably to the total utility of migrating to a host destination.

Individual choices by the refugees in this study was evaluated with respect to the social context of the decision, the emotional state of the decision-maker, variable extraneous factors to the choice set, and an array of other environmental factors that appeared to influence the ecological systems surrounding the sample group of refugees and their choices. Although all the participants of my study recognised that migration was a risky action, they believed it was a lesser risk than staying in their country of origin, therefore their actions were considered risk-averting behaviour.

Under certain circumstances the choice to move might be made after considering all relevant information. This was then rationally calculated in order to maximize 'net advantage'. However, it was found that asylum seekers in this study did not fully consider the costs that they would incur in order to obtain the perceived benefits of social capital in a chosen destination

Due to limited cognitive capacity or access to all relevant information, there was no way to reason through every decision rationally. The results of this study found that judgments to leave countries of origin reflected preference maximization, especially in familiar or known environments. However, when asylum seekers relied on heuristic reasoning or intuition in unfamiliar situations, the results of these decisions often reflected behaviour not based on rational choice models. Nonetheless, once participants had predicted the value of their decision in terms of cost to benefit, they responded to changing variables in a manner that was consistent with rational choice theory.

This study found that the sample group, once registered for refugee status, experienced less tension from society as their lives or quality of life was not under direct threat. This further indicated that if the sample group of refugees in this study had access to better information, they would have chosen to register earlier through the UNHCR after being able to re-evaluate their decisions from a position free from societal tensions or crime.

Many of the comparable results related to the way in which individual choices change as peoples' environments change. Once the participant's Macrosystem setting became stable and there was a higher degree of access to information, the refugees interviewed shifted their approach to seeking asylum, rather than returning to their country of origin and reattempting to enter Australia via boat. More importantly, participants stated they would have pursued legal methods of registration in Indonesia sooner had they understood the system in advance. Should there be changes to the systems and information channels currently in place, as mentioned above, it is likely that many more asylum seekers would hand themselves over to Indonesian authorities and the UNHCR for appropriate processing.

In order to expand this preliminary study there is a need for additional work involving a larger sample group with representation by women and children. Additional studies may be able to focus on whether the utility function we need for policy-making can be extracted from choice data. In addition, such studies could focus on what would be the best way to use that information.

During this study, I discussed social strain theory, which argues that 'individuals were more likely to feel inner-directed negative emotions as a reaction to personal problems'. As mentioned above, the refugees interviewed indicated that they did not feel stress or PTSD because of the first-hand experience, but rather the anxiety of not being able to track the process of their application. For further sociological studies, researches may wish to adopt social strain theory in order to consider the social and psychological process that occurs when resettlement applications are rejected and how this could potentially expose some to criminal networks and subsequent 'deviant' activity.

Acknowledgements

References

Agnew, R. (2011). An overview of general strain theory. In R. Paternoster & R. Bachman (Eds.), *Explaining Criminals and Crime*. Los Angeles: Roxburry Publishing Company.

Ariely, D., Loewenstein, G., & Prelec, D. (2003). Coherent arbitrariness: stable demand Curves without stable preferences. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *118*(1), 73–105.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986a). Ecology of the Family as a Context for Human Development: Research Perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, *22*, 723–742.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986b). Recent Advances in Research on the Ecology of Human Development. In R. K. Silbereisen, K. Eyferth, & G. Rudinger (Eds.), *Development as Action in Context: Problem Behavior and Normal Youth Development* (p. 287). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg. http://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-02475-1

Bryman, A. (2006). Paradigm Peace and the Implications for Quality. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *9*(2), 111–126.

Bryman, A., Stephens, M., & Campo, C. à. (1996). The importance of context: Qualitative research and the study of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *7*(3), 353–370.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, *39*(3), 124–130.

Elrick, T., & Brake, B. (2005). *Migration Decision Making and Social Networks* (EU Marrie Currie Excellence Grant Project, KNOWMIG.).

Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Haug, S. (2000). *Social Capital and Counter Migration*. Opladen: Leske & Burdich.

Hoffman-Nowotny, H. (1981). A Sociological Approach Towards a General Theory of Migration. In M. M. et al. Kriti (Ed.), *Global Trends in Migration*. New York: Center for Migration Studies.

Jang, S. J. and Johnson, B. R. (2003). Strain, Negative Emotions, and Deviant Coping Among African Americans: A Test of General Strain Theory. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, *19*(1), 79–105.

Kunz, E. (1973). The refugee in flight: Kinetic models and forms of sisplacement. *International Migration Review*, *7*(2), 125–146.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publication.

Massey, D. S. (1993). Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, *19*(3), 431–466.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis* (1st ed.). New York: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publication.

Richmond, A. H., & Verma, R. B. P. (1978). The economic adaptation of immigrants: A New theoretical perspective. *International Migration Review*, *12*(1), 3–38.

Stark, O. (1991). *The Migration of Labor*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.

Taylor, S., & Brown, B. R. (2010). Difficult Journeys: Accessing Refugee Protection in Indonesia. *Monash University Law Review*, *36*(3), 138–161.

Trochim, W. M. K. (2006). Qualitative Validity. Retrieved June 8, 2016, from http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qual.php

Turner, J. H. (1987). Toward a Sociological Theory of Motivation. *American Sociological Review*, *52*(1), 15–27. http://doi.org/10.2307/2095389

Turner, J. H. (1988). *A theory of Social Interaction*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

UNHCR. (2016). *Monthly Updates on Asylum Seeker and Refugee Registration Resettlement and Rejection*. Yogyakarta.

Yin, R. K. (1993). *Applications of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publication.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publication.

Zolberg, A. (1989). The Next Waves: Migration Theory for a Changing World. *International Migration Review*, *23*(3), 403–430.