

Institution: Nottingham Trent University
Unit of Assessment: D36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Empowering Female Asylum Seekers and Refugees
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Dr Olga Bailey's research examines the importance of the media in understanding processes of migration and the formation of diasporic identities and cultural practices. Her research had a direct impact on the development of a community interest company, the African Women's Empowerment Forum (AWEF), and therefore supported the empowerment of female asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. Bailey's research findings were used as the basis for strategies to create networks, to give refugee and migrant women a voice, and to communicate their ideas and interests in the public sphere.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>At NTU, Bailey is located within the 'Globalization, Migration and Diaspora' research cluster, a long-established field of research excellence in our Unit. She is a founding member of the Unit's Centre for the Study of Inequality, Culture and Difference.</p> <p>Diaspora, Migration and Media. Bailey's interest in the themes of diaspora and migration date back to the symposium 'Re-imagining' Diasporas, which she organized with colleagues at Liverpool John Moores University (November 2003). The event, which opened up critical, interdisciplinary dialogues to re-imagine diasporas, initiated further projects after her arrival at NTU in 2005. These included Bailey's work on the co-edited collection <i>Transnational Lives and the Media</i> (2007) and her chapter within it; her research on Latin migrant women, identity and the media published in the collection <i>Mediated Crossroads</i> (2008); and her role as co-founder of the Diaspora and Migration section of the European Communication Research and Education Association in 2005. Her research recognizes the importance of media in understanding processes of migration and the formation of diasporic identities and cultural practices.</p> <p>Alternative media and the empowerment of migrants and asylum seekers. These ideas are developed in her research on ethnic minorities and community media (in <i>Understanding Alternative Media</i>, 2007), and on ethnic minorities, identities and the politics of communication online. Her research findings demonstrate that alternative media are paramount in the communicative landscape of diasporas and migrants (2011). Not only do alternative media offer spaces to re-imagine the self and forms of belonging, but they are also indispensable to migrants in their struggles for empowerment, particularly in relation to political and cultural representation. Bailey's research resulted in an invitation from Maggie O'Neal, principal researcher for the AHRC-funded programme 'Making the Connections: arts, migration and diaspora', to organize a workshop, 'Destitution and the role of Ethnic-minority Media in Representing Asylum Seekers' (NTU, April 2007) as part of the programme. This event proposed that the media's misrepresentation of asylum seekers is a political issue both because the right of asylum seekers to speak in the public sphere has been denied by mainstream media and because the media plays a powerful role in shaping 'commonsense' views about asylum seekers and refugees.</p> <p>Participative Action Research. Bailey's research also explored the political and cultural forms that migrants use as expressions of identity, recognition and empowerment. She developed these ideas through her work with AWEF by engaging in a form of participative action research in which the researcher has a commitment to support social change in the communities with which they engage. This research emphasized how the creation of AWEF was a process of self-empowerment as the organization became a communicative space to develop migrant women's abilities and skills to deal with issues of destitution and exclusion and to make a positive contribution to the community. This formed the basis of further research findings published which have been published in <i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i>. These findings have informed events for professionals who work with female asylum seekers and refugees.</p>

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- Olga Bailey and R. Hirindranath (2006), Ethnic minorities and the politics of communication in multicultural Britain and Australia. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 2 (3), pp. 299-316.
- Olga Bailey (2007) Latin Americans, Identities and Media in Britain. In: O. Bailey, M. Georgiou and R. Harindranath, eds, *Transnational Lives and the Media: Re-Imagining Diasporas*. London: Palgrave, pp. 212-30.
- Olga Bailey (2008), Diasporic identities and mediated experiences in everyday life. In: I. Rydin and U. Sjöberg, eds., *Mediated crossroads: identity, youth culture and ethnicity: theoretical and methodological challenges*. Göteborg: Nordicom, pp. 17-38.
- Olga Bailey (2011) Reconfiguring Ethnicity: the web as technology of representation and resistance. In: M. Christensen, A. Jansson and C. Christensen, eds, *Online Territories: Globalization, Mediated Practice and Social Space*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 256-72
- Olga Bailey (2012). Migrant African women: tales of agency and belonging. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35, (5), pp 850-867.

Indications of quality: both *Ethnic and Racial Studies* and the *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* are peer reviewed journals. Nordicom is the knowledge centre for the area of media and communication research in the Nordic region and operates under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The overarching impact of Bailey's research has been to influence the development and activities of the [African Women's Empowerment Forum](#) (AWEF), a community organization with an increasingly international mission (1). However, as we go on to demonstrate, there were not only a series of more discrete impacts as part of this process, but also Bailey's participative action research has begun to contribute expert knowledge to shape the working practices of public sector organizations.

The creation of an organization for female migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. AWEF aims to give voice to the voiceless and empower women migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to take charge of their lives. Since 2007, when Bailey joined the embryonic organization as a trustee/strategist, she was 'pivotal in helping to shape the organization, making it sustainable' (2). By playing a key role in helping to 'strategically position AWEF as a grassroots organization', Bailey shaped the development of AWEF from a charitable and community organization to their registration as a community interest company in 2011 (2). AWEF has had a significant influence on the lives of women in Nottingham from the African diaspora: 'They have worked very closely with destitute women asylum seekers and refugees supporting them with law advice, shelter, food and emotional support' (3).

Developing networks and communities for migrant and refugee women. Bailey's research findings were central in helping to secure a grant of £10K for AWEF from Awards For All. This grant proved central to AWEF's development as it enabled them to identify and forge links with other refugee-led organizations and demonstrated the value of networking to the future of the organization. Networking would become crucial in creating AWEF UK which, since 2011, has championed the creation of an umbrella organization of thirteen 'Refugee Community Organizations' to help charities with community building. AWEF has become increasingly international: for example, AWEF UK has become a member of the Diaspora Volunteering Alliance (4).

Supporting empowerment and developing Communication Strategies to give female migrants, refugees and asylum seekers a voice. From 2007-2011, Bailey continued to work closely with the group. She used her research findings to increase the political awareness of the women involved and to support their process of self-empowerment. She was Chair of the 'Still

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Women: Voice of the Voiceless' programme. Through discussion sessions and regular meetings, Bailey not only enabled the group to analyze social policies which impacted negatively on female asylum seekers, but also helped the group to find a means to address these issues to a wider audiences, including local authorities, politicians and the third sector. For example, Bailey played a key role in AWEF's community engagement event 'Thank You, Nottingham' (27 March 2010) which was attended by (among others) the Lord Mayor of Nottingham Cllr Jeannie Packers, MPs Alan Simpson and Lilian Greenwood and the venerable Arch Deacon of Nottingham Peter Hill.

As the organization grew, Bailey developed strategies to help the women involved use their voices: 'her knowledge of communication strategy was instrumental in the detailing of the most effective ways of raising awareness for the organization and structuring the operations' (2). As a result of these self-empowerment processes, AWEF has extended its resistance beyond the local and into the public sphere by actively engaging with policy-makers, NGOs, and local and national governments to create awareness of the problems faced by asylum seekers. For example, in 2009 the Executive Director Faith Gakanje was invited to Downing Street. She met the Prime Minister and presented the views of AWEF and other partner NGOs on the issue of institutional discrimination against asylum seekers. Bailey's work with AWEF on communication strategy has impacts beyond the organization. The group has organized a series of events to disseminate its ideas about changing British society's perception of asylum seekers and refugees, and the self-perception of these groups.

Creating jobs for Refugee Women. Bailey's 'skills were priceless in the development of the business plan' (2). By helping to make AWEF economically sustainable, Bailey has supported the organization's entrepreneurial activities. For example, AWEF secured two Rayne Fellowships to develop food and fashion business in order to create jobs for African women refugees.

Shaping Professional Practices and Policy. As a form of participative action research, Bailey's work with AWEF has generated further research findings. These can be used to shape the work and policies of public and voluntary sector professionals who work with female asylum seekers and refugees. A first workshop on 'Refugee Women, Empowerment and the Challenges of Everyday Life' was held at NTU in May 2013. It was attended by professionals from refugee action groups in the East Midlands and Faith Gakanje. This forms the blueprint for future workshops designed to share ideas about best practice and focusing on the themes of networking, communication and empowerment.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- (1) AWEF's website gives evidence of the mission, activities and influence of the organization:
<http://awef.org.uk/?id=home>
- (2) Named Source 1: Executive Director of the African Women's Empowerment Forum. A full testimonial from AWEF's Executive Director corroborating Dr Bailey's involvement in AWEF – and her impact on its development – is available on file. Quotations are taken directly from this testimonial.
- (3) Named Source 2: Equality and Diversity Officer for the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham. This quotation is taken from a testimonial corroborating the significance of AWEF's activities in Nottingham (on file).
- (4) Evidence of AWEF's involvement in the Diaspora Volunteering Alliance:
<http://www.diasporavolunteeringalliance.org/member/african-women-empowerment-forum-awef>