Home journeys: im/mobilities in young refugee and asylum-seeking women’s negotiations of home

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Aims

This academic article looks at the experiences of young female asylum seekers and refugees aged between 16 and 25 years who, in legal, policy and migration research terms, are placed along the borders of the adult/child category divide. It focuses on how these women recreate a sense of home in West Yorkshire.

Methodology

The study on which the article is based took place between September 2007 and October 2008. Data was obtained through a photography task [where the participants were asked to take

photos illustrating what did and did not make them feel at home] and semi structured interviews with 23 young refugee and asylum seeking women who were living in West Yorkshire at the time of the study. A theoretical sampling method was used to select the participants and focused on variables such as age, nationality, immigration status, length of time in the UK and household type.

Key issues

The article examines the young women's perceptions of 'home' and how they prioritise particular elements [for example safety, family, acceptance, normality/routine and so on], in terms of their importance and achievability, with reference to their life experiences so far. It also highlights some of the challenges the young women faced when trying to achieve the elements of 'home'. The article itself focuses on just six of the young women's accounts to enable a more detailed analysis of each young woman's experience.

Conclusions

The article states that 'home' for the young women involved in the study is a fluid and evolving concept and the experiences of 'home' for these young women varied depending on their particular circumstances – although safety and normality/planning for the future were the elements most commonly identified.

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