

Section A		
Institution: Durham University		
Unit of Assessment: 31 -Theology and Religious Studies		
Title of case study: The Jesuit Refugee Service and the Public Contexts of Political Theology		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Between 2016 and 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Anna Rowlands	Role(s) (e.g. job title): St Hilda Associate Professor of Catholic Social Thought and Practice	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2015-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Between January 2018 and December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
Section B		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The Jesuit Refugee Service UK (JRS) is a member of the global Jesuit Refugee Service family, serving approximately 670,000 refugees across 50 countries. JRS provides financial, legal, housing, psycho-spiritual and advocacy support to approximately 250 persons living in asylum destitution. In response to Rowlands' research, JRS has: (i) recognised the importance of refugee faith experience, incorporating this into new staff training; (ii) reinforced its commitment to fostering refugee volunteering, countering skills diminution among long-term asylum seekers; (iii) developed materials for national and international advocacy/public education; (iv) reinforced its international commitment to small-scale relational and participatory models of refugee engagement.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>In an article published in 2018 Rowlands showed how an Augustinian understanding of evil as deprivation and distortion of the good can be applied to migrants' experience of indefinite periods of detention while their cases are under review [R1]. The article seeks to demonstrate that resources drawn from the Christian theological tradition can shed unexpected light on a controversial area of current political practice and discourse. JRS UK staff read a pre-published version of her article and invited her to undertake empirical fieldwork with them, to extend and apply her insights through one-to-one interviews with migrants supported by JRS in a situation of destitution. JRS wanted to learn more about the impact of asylum measures on the dignity and well-being of refugees, and be able to communicate findings to policy makers, faith leaders and a wider public. Rowlands undertook participant observation among 250 refugees and interviewed 30 refugees and staff and six policy experts between 2016 and 2018, finally publishing a wide-ranging report [R2].</p> <p>Rowlands' work with JRS enabled her to develop and expand her original theoretical insights in further research outputs. While no direct questions were asked about religiosity, Rowlands found that refugees talked in depth about their cultural-religious identities and experiences when asked about sources of resilience and meaning, and those from Christian contexts frequently interpreted their experiences in the light of biblical themes of exile and dispossession. Rowlands responded to this finding in an article focused especially on the Old Testament Book of Jeremiah [R3] in which she explored connections between her own JRS work with refugees and recent biblical scholarship relating to enforced migration and</p>		

associated themes as represented in scriptural texts. The article is explicitly positioned as an empirical extension of the earlier theoretical work on Augustine [R1]. Thus, the research at JRS not only generated materials for policy engagement, placing refugees' own voices at the centre, but also a more detailed and embedded academic account of the ways that denial of basic human goods shapes refugee living and dying. Thus, collaborative work with JRS both drew on, and contributed to, developing key aspects of Rowlands' theoretical framework. In further publications [R4, R5, R6], she investigates affinities between JRS refugees' descriptions of suffering and loss, and Simone Weil's description of the social production of affliction during the 1930s and 1940s, and by her observations about the ways individuals seek to recreate goods that are lost. This corresponded closely to how interviewees spoke of the importance of refugee-to-refugee support networks to recreate lost communal ties and to resist the social messaging of a hostile environment.

Rowlands' research in this field is original in three related respects. First, it shows how the resources of the Christian tradition can combine with empirical research to illuminate a controversial social and political issue of the present. Second, it seeks to map the religious experience of refugees, an emphasis largely absent from wider academic discussions of migration. Third, in attending to refugees' accounts of their experiences and initiatives it underlines their own agency – in opposition to the tendency to regard them as silent and passive victims.

3. References to the research

[R1] Anna Rowlands, 'Against the Manichees: Augustinian responses to Immigration Detention' in *Religion in The European Refugee Crisis*, ed. Graeme Smith and Ulrich Schmiedel (London: Routledge, 2018) pp.163-186. *This volume is the sole English language collection on the European refugee/solidarity crisis and has had excellent reviews. Routledge is an imprint of Taylor and Francis and is a global leader in academic publishing.*

[R2] Anna Rowlands, 'For Your Welfare and Not for Your Harm: a faith-based report on the experience of the refugee and refugee support community at JRS UK 2017-2019', <https://www.jrsuk.net/for-our-welfare-and-not-for-our-harm/> 52 pages. *The report has been read internationally across academic, practitioner, church and refugee communities, and has been mentioned in multiple news articles. Thinking Faith, the online journal of the Jesuits in Britain, also published an accompanying piece by Rowlands, sharing a link to the original report. This has also been shared widely.*

[R3] Anna Rowlands, 'Temporality, Dispossession and the Search for the Good: Interpreting the Book of Jeremiah with the Jesuit Refugee Service', in *Political Theology*, Vol 19:6, 2018, pp. 517-536. DOI: 10.1080/1462317X.2018.1502908. *This leading international journal in the field of political theology is published by Routledge, and is in its twentieth year of publication. The journal also acts as a network for exploring the intersection of religious and political ideas and practices, often responding to current affairs with special edition volumes, such as this one on migration.*

[R4] Anna Rowlands, 'On the Promise and Limits of Politics: Faith-based Responses to Asylum Seeking' in *Fortress Britain? Ethical Approaches to Immigration Policy for a Post-Brexit Britain*, (London: Jessica Kingsley Press, 2018), pp. 68-93. THEOS THINK TANK publication. *This edited volume was commissioned and edited by THEOS, a well-respected public think tank, working on religion in public life. It is a one-of-its-kind in the UK, regularly contributing to mainstream media sources and convening key figures from public life.*

[R5] Anna Rowlands 'Catholic social teaching and forced migration' in *Pope Francis: A Voice for Mercy, Justice, Love and Care for the Earth*, eds. Barbara Wall & Massimo Fagioli (NY, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2019), pp. 40-58. *This major volume provides an unprecedented historical and theological analysis of Pope Francis' papacy, with chapters collected from papers given at an international conference held in 2018, edited by a leading Francis scholar.*

Orbis Books, the publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, is a leading international specialist in religious publishing.

[R6] Anna Rowlands, 'Reading Simone Weil in East London: destitution, decreation and the history of force' in *Suffering and the Christian Life*, eds. K. Kilby & R. Davies (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 113-132. *This paper was presented at an international conference and has been requested for two university departmental seminar presentations. It has formed the basis for an invite to be part of two collaborative funding bids on Weil's work.*

4. Details of the impact

Rowlands' applied research had significant impact on staff and refugees at JRS, leading to increased awareness of the importance of refugees' own agency and to corresponding changes of practice at national and international level. This impact has been achieved both by her direct involvement in the work of JRS and by her report, 'For our Welfare and not for our Harm', as the Director of JRS UK confirms in an appreciative Foreword [E1, p.6]. The research has also opened up extensive media opportunities which have enabled Rowlands to counter widespread misconceptions and misinformation about refugees and to seek to change the terms of public discourse in this politically sensitive area.

In the course of their interviews with Rowlands, almost all refugees highlighted the fundamental importance of faith to sustain them through the protracted and disorienting immigration process. As one Muslim refugee stated: 'Faith for me is the main thing. This is why I've been able to fight for 17 years' [E1, p. 34]. This faith-dimension to the refugee experience was previously not adequately recognised within JRS UK, as its Director acknowledges in confirming the significant impact of Rowlands' involvement. She writes: 'Dr Rowlands' research shed new light on the experiences and self-understanding of the community we serve, and we have reshaped key aspects of our practice in response to this. Dr Rowlands' findings have directly influenced our practice in the two following areas: creating spaces for faith expression and deepening the role of refugee volunteering' [E3]. In light of the findings that refugees valued the space to explore their faith experiences (across traditions), this led JRS-UK to (i) create new spaces in core provision for refugee faith sharing; (ii) change recruitment and induction practices for staff to include awareness of religious needs; (iii) run a series of seminars with Rowlands for core staff on faith literacy. Immediate service users and beneficiaries included around 250 refugees and staff (between December 2017 and March 2019) [E3]. The Director goes on to note that 'for many refugees, the process itself of being invited to speak about their experience and comment on social policy in a way that respected their agency and their particular analysis of UK policy was itself a transformative experience. Many who took part in the interviews told staff how much they appreciated being part of the research and the way that Dr Rowlands gave them space to speak about what matters' [E3].

Rowlands' research also benefits JRS-UK and others concerned with refugee welfare through her advocacy work in high profile media contexts. The JRS UK Director used material from the report for Sunday worship on Radio 4 in December 2018 and Radio 4 Prayer for the Day in Lent 2018. Dr Rowlands delivered two Radio 4 Thought for the Day pieces based on this research. Each had an audience of approximately 7,000,000 people [E6]. She also participated as an expert commentator in an hour-long Radio 4 Sunday programme broadcast in December 2018 focusing on migration and faith, with an audience of between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 people [E7]. One Thought for the Day broadcast, occurring during Refugee Week, was picked up and re-tweeted by the Archbishop of Canterbury who, at the time of writing, has 150,200 Twitter followers, as his single recommended piece of listening for Refugee Week [E5]. Rowlands led two opening sections to LBC Radio phone-ins on migration, to coincide with a new parliamentary proposal for a 28-day time limit. Rowland's insight into the impact of Covid-19 on the refugee experience also features in the 'Thinking Faith' blog [E8], the online journal of the Jesuits in Britain that offers a faith-based perspective on contemporary issues. Her report [E1] was also used for a THEOS Think Tank publication

on immigration ethics in the UK post-Brexit [E2]. This advocacy has resulted in Rowlands' work being used as a model for work with other people who face exclusion. Pat Jones, from charity Women at the Well, which works to help women whose lives are affected by, or at risk of prostitution, said of Rowland's report: '[it] was immensely helpful in providing a model of how to listen to the voices of people with direct experience of exclusion and write this into a form which will reach further and change understanding' [E9].

At an international level Rowlands' work in this area has been recognised by the Geneva-based International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) [E4], and by the Vatican, as evidenced by the invitation to Rowlands from the Pope's delegate to introduce the new papal encyclical 'Fratelli tutti' to a global audience (October 2020). In her address, broadcast on Vatican Radio, Rowlands points out that in his encyclical, Pope Francis focuses attention on the treatment of migrants, and refers to 'the biblical commands to welcome the stranger, the benefits that come with encounters between cultures, and the invitation to sheer gratuitous love.' Rowlands' work has also been acknowledged by JRS International, which has worked with approximately 670,000 refugees in the last decade across 50 countries. Their Head of Advocacy, based at the Vatican, states that 'Dr Rowlands' report [E1] is an important reminder to JRS that, in its efforts to be more effective and more professional in the resource-competitive world of humanitarian action, it should be careful not to confuse efficiency with effectiveness. Placing refugees at the heart of what JRS does, including the planning and implementation of programmes, may take a lot more effort and time than top-down processes, but Dr Rowlands shows over and over again how refugee participation reintegrates them into a set of social and personal networks that the experience of flight, exile, and destitution has taken away from them' [E3].

In summary, Rowlands' research has brought about beneficial changes of practice in a national and international refugee relief organisation, changes undertaken with a view to ensuring an active involvement of refugees that recognises the importance of their own interpretation of their experiences – an interpretation often articulated through religious language and themes [E1, pp.34-37]. The media work to which Rowlands' research has led is indirectly beneficial to refugees and to concerned agencies and individuals by challenging negative stereotyping and highlighting the importance of refugees' agency and thus their full humanity.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[E1] JRS UK reports: Anna Rowlands, 'For Your Welfare and Not for Your Harm: a faith-based report on the experience of the refugee and refugee support community at JRS UK 2017-2019 and 'Out in the cold: Homelessness among destitute refugees in London, JRS UK, 2018.

[E2] Anna Rowlands, 'On the Promise and Limits of Politics: Faith-based Responses to Asylum Seeking' in *Fortress Britain? Ethical Approaches to Immigration Policy for a Post-Brexit Britain*, (London: Jessica Kingsley Press, 2018), pp. 68-93. THEOS THINK TANK ISBN 1785923099

[E3] Statements from the Director of JRS UK and from the Director of JRS International Advocacy.

[E4] Statement from the Director of the International Catholic Migration Commission

[E5] Tweet from the Archbishop of Canterbury

[E6] Transcripts from Radio 4 Thought for the Day by Anna Rowlands and Radio 4 Sunday Worship by JRS UK Director

[E7] Transcript of Sunday Programme Radio 4 on Migration/Faith, 30 December 2018.

[E8] Thinking Faith blog post on COVID and time/temporality in light of the 'For our welfare not our harm' report, 29 April 2020

[E9] Testimony from Dr Pat Jones on Women at the Well prostitution project research, 27 April 2020.