



'Now I am hopeless': exploring the lived experiences of people refused asylum

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***‘Now I am hopeless’*: Exploring the
Lived Experiences of People Refused
Asylum**

Lucy Taylor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

December 2020

Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.
4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.
5. The word count of the thesis is 102,536

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Abstract

Evidence from NGOs and the charitable sector suggests that people who are refused asylum in the UK lead highly marginalised lives, experiencing levels of deprivation that flout UK and international human rights legislation. However, the number of studies engaging with this largely hidden population is small, with little attention paid to understanding how this marginalisation is engendered, perpetuated and experienced. This thesis addresses this gap by engaging with social theory to understand empirical research findings. Research was carried out with fifteen destitute refused asylum seekers in Sheffield using a qualitative methodology comprising in-depth interviews and participant-led auto-photography and photo-elicitation.

This thesis makes three main contributions to knowledge. Firstly, it expands empirical understanding of the lived experience of being a refused asylum seeker in the UK. In line with previous studies, participants experienced extreme material and social marginalisation. This impacted on their health, wellbeing and social relationships. Secondly, the thesis develops an analytical framework of theoretical concepts to engage with the empirical data that might prove useful to other scholars seeking to understand marginalised groups. Thirdly, novel theoretical insights are generated in relation to the data. Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations is utilised to explain how power disparities between the established UK 'group' and refused asylum seekers underpin participants' marginalisation. Other concepts, including Wacquant's urban marginality (2008), situate the findings in the context of the modern city. Additional analytical lenses, such as Goffman's (1963) work on stigma, provide nuanced insights into participants' day-to-day lived realities, and the way that stigma seemingly perpetuates segregation. The research finds that participants frequently experience their marginalisation as a form of imprisonment, and Foucault's concepts of governmentality and the carceral archipelago help to further understand this, providing new perspectives on what it *feels like* to be a refused asylum seeker in the UK today.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Prior to undertaking PhD research, I had worked as a volunteer at a drop-in service for destitute refused asylum seekers. The people I met were suffering extreme material hardship and deprivation. They lacked stable access to accommodation, were heavily reliant on friends, family and charitable donations for food, and feared for their futures and the futures of their families. Life, for the people I met, was a daily struggle to simply survive. Coupled with this, there was a sense among the people who visited the drop-in service that they had been treated unfairly. They had come to the UK expecting to be treated humanely and to be able to build a life for themselves. What they experienced was vastly different. Their lives of abject poverty following the refusal of their applications for asylum were incomprehensible to them when they had thought the UK to be a developed country that upheld human rights and dignity. Turning to the policy and academic literature, I found that research about the experiences of people refused asylum was scarce. What is more, there had been very little attempt to try and understand, using social theory, why people were experiencing such devastating hardship. As such, this thesis seeks to expand on the existing literature about the experiences of people refused asylum, as well as develop a theoretical understanding about how their marginalisation is engendered, perpetuated, and experienced.

The existing literature about the experiences of people refused asylum suggests that their day-to-day lived realities are deeply impoverished and marginalised (McKenna, 2019; Chakrabati, 2005; Amnesty International, 2006; Refugee Action, 2006; Crawley, Hemmings & Price, 2011). To date, however, most of this literature has originated from a number of relatively small-scale studies from within the charity and voluntary sector (Bloom, 2015). This thesis therefore seeks to add to this body of literature by gathering data on lived experiences. In addition, there has been little theoretical exploration of how these circumstances are engendered, perpetuated and experienced (Healey, 2006). Given the extreme marginalisation of this group, this gap merits attention. The thesis therefor engages with social theory in order to begin to fill this gap in the literature.

According to the UK Home Office (2007a), people who have been refused asylum in the UK:

[S]hould be denied the benefits and privileges of life in the UK and experience an increasingly uncomfortable environment so that they elect to leave.

Home Office, 2007a: p17

However, for myriad reasons, including a belief that their application for asylum has been decided incorrectly, or that their life would be in danger were they to return to their country of origin, many people do not leave the UK following the refusal of their claim for asylum. These beliefs are not unfounded. Freedom from Torture (2019), for example, has suggested that the Home Office's decision making process is indeed deeply flawed, and many people initially refused asylum are eventually successful on appeal. As a result, NGOs working in the refugee sector have consistently argued that the policy is not only ineffective in terms of persuading people to leave the country, but that the destitution engendered by this policy breaches both UK and international human rights legislation (McKenna, 2019; Chakrabati, 2005; Amnesty International, 2006; Refugee Action, 2006; Crawley et al., 2011). Research demonstrates that people living in the UK following the refusal of their claim for asylum frequently lack access to adequate food and shelter and must rely on friends, family and charity to meet these most basic needs, if they are to meet them at all (McKenna, 2019). Given the highly marginalised, impoverished situation of people refused asylum, this thesis seeks to understand how and why such marginalisation might have come about, and how it is experienced.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

In order to try and understand why such marginalised conditions might have occurred the thesis first sought to develop an analytical framework of concepts from social theory, focussing particularly on concepts related to understanding marginality. This combined both inter-group level concepts, such as Elias and Scotson's theory of established-outsider relations (1994 [1965]), with concepts more grounded in the current socio-political context, such as Wacquant's (2008) concept of urban marginality. This enabled the analytical process to be flexible and explore participant experiences from a number of theoretical standpoints.

In light of the limited literature on the experiences of people refused asylum, along with limited application of social theory to understand why such experiences occur, two research questions were developed:

- 1 What are refused asylum seekers' experiences of deprivation, destitution and marginalisation, and how might they be explained?
- 2 What are the social and psychological impacts of material exclusion and being refused asylum, and how might they be explained?

In order to address these questions empirical data were gathered through qualitative fieldwork with people currently living in the UK following the refusal of their claim for asylum. This provided an opportunity to listen to the voices of people rarely heard within dominant discourses on asylum. This was felt to be particularly important given the highly pernicious nature of many of these discourses (e.g., Banks, 2012). The methodology sought to capture alternative accounts through an emancipatory participatory approach combining qualitative interviewing and participant-led auto-photography and photo-elicitation. This was based on an ontological stance which acknowledges the situated and multiple 'truths' of the social world.

1.3 Original Contributions to Knowledge

The thesis will make an original contribution to knowledge in three main ways. It will:

- Fill an empirical gap in the literature, most of which is about asylum seekers rather than refused asylum seekers, who have been largely ignored. The research will thus provide a rich qualitative understanding of the lives of this largely hidden population which are materially distinct from the lives of asylum seekers.
- Theorise this body of research and bring important scholarship to this under-theorised area. Crucially, by developing an analytical framework of theoretical concepts, the research will enable understanding and conceptualisation of the lives of people refused asylum in a multifaced, holistic way.
- Develop an analytical framework that draws on theories specifically relating to marginalisation, that can be used together to gain deeper, broader, more holistic understanding of how the marginalisation of particular groups is engendered, perpetuated and experienced.

This thesis will increase understanding of the day-to-day lives of people refused asylum. It will do this by gathering accounts of lived experiences, thus generating new data in this field. In addition, the thesis will develop an analytical framework of concepts from social theory, specifically related to social marginalisation, that will enable participants' exclusion to be theorised in order to understand how it is engendered, perpetuated, and experienced. This will enable the thesis to address the gap in the literature identified by Healey (2006), who notes that the experiences of people refused asylum are significantly under-theorised by scholars.

It will be revealed that participants are living highly marginalised lives, excluded from work, secure housing, and many of the basic necessities of survival, such as adequate access to food. Given this, the study will ask how such exclusion is engendered in a country that arguably purports to be one that upholds human rights, with a welfare state designed to support this. This will be considered at the inter-group level by turning to Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, which will enable their exclusion to be understood as a facet of their outsider status. This concept will also be used to delineate how people refused asylum come to be characterised as outsiders. Their outsider status, it will be argued, effectively casts them in the role of what Agamben (1998) terms 'homo sacer', a person who experiences 'bare life', who is excluded by the state from all the benefits that citizens are privy to, but who can, nonetheless, still be punished by the state. Given this, it will be suggested that Elias and Scotson's work provides a useful compliment to Agamben's concept, as it can describe underlying mechanisms, in terms of social processes, that bring about the phenomenon of the homo sacer. The experience of being homo sacer will be brought into the current socio-political context by turning to Wacquant's concept of urban marginality (Wacquant, 2008), which enables participant experiences to be situated within the neoliberal, post-industrial city. Yet more theoretical concepts will be utilized to fully understand how participants experience their day-to-day lives, which many characterise as a form of imprisonment. It will be demonstrated that participants feel that they lack control over both their daily lives and their futures. Foucault's (1975) concepts of biopolitics and governmentality will be shown to be useful in understanding the data here.

The thesis will also highlight the intricate relationship between material marginalisation and stigma, and show how this impacts on almost every aspect of participants' lives. By drawing

on a range of theoretical concepts during data analysis, this relationship can be understood both at the interpersonal and the inter-group level

Finally, it will be suggested that the analytical framework employed in this thesis would be of benefit to other scholars exploring experiences of marginalisation, in order that such experiences might be understood more fully.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The next chapter of this thesis, *Chapter Two: Literature Review*, provides an overview of immigration and asylum trends in the UK in order to contextualise the current piece of research within the broader history of UK immigration. It then explores the basis of the current legislation which determines the rights of people refused asylum in the UK today, before going on to detail key aspects of the asylum process and pertinent critiques.

Chapter Three: The Experiences of People Refused Asylum; What We Know So Far, details the literature on what is already known about people who have been refused asylum in the UK. It includes discussions of destitution, work and worklessness, state support available to people refused asylum, as well as housing and health.

Chapter Four: Understanding Marginality: Key Concepts for an Analytical Framework, details the central features of the analytical framework that was used to engage with participant data. Concepts are drawn primarily from work that seeks to understand marginalisation, including Agamben's (1998) concept of the homo sacer, Wacquant's (2008) concept of urban marginality, and Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations.

The thesis then goes on to look at the methodological approach and methods used in carrying out the research in *Chapter Five: Making the Invisible Visible: Researching the Lived Realities of People Refused Asylum*. More traditional interview approaches are discussed alongside participatory approaches including auto-photography and photo-elicitation, and my positionality as the researcher is considered.

Chapter Six: Extreme Material Deprivation, Destitution and Marginalisation is the first of three findings chapters. It details participants' expectations prior to their arrival in the UK, as

well as their experiences of material exclusion, including reliance on friends, family and charity for access to food, shelter, clothing and other basic necessities.

The second of the findings chapters, *Chapter Seven: Social and Psychological Impact of Material Exclusion and Being Refused Asylum*, looks at participants' social and psychological lives. It discusses the ways in which their social relationships, including friendships and relationships with children, were impacted by the refusal of their application for asylum and the ramifications of this. In addition, it explores the way in which the state, which could control many aspects of participants' lives, acted to make participants feel imprisoned.

The final findings chapter, *Chapter Eight: Stigma*, looks at how participants learned that they belonged to a stigmatised group, before going on to examine how this impacted on their social relationships. The chapter then moves on to discuss the way that some participants stigmatised members of other marginalised groups as well as members of their own 'group'.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion, draws together key findings from the thesis and outlines the main contributions to knowledge. Implications for policy are discussed as well as where future research might seek to expand on the current study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This is the first of two chapters reviewing literature that provides insight into the experiences of people whose asylum claims have been refused. As one of the key aims of the thesis is to understand the lived realities of people refused asylum, it is important to delineate the context in which these experiences arise. The present chapter, then, looks at the history and policy relevant to understanding the current context in which these realities are situated. The chapter begins with an overview of trends in asylum applications and recognition rates¹ over the last few decades, before discussing the history of immigration and asylum in the UK, and considering the positions, perspectives and discourses that have framed political, legal and popular understandings and responses to asylum. The chapter then moves on to outline the current policy context in which the lived experiences of participants are played out.

Chapter Three then explores what is currently known about the lived realities of those refused asylum in the UK who remain in the UK after the refusal of their claim for asylum.

2.2 Overview of Immigration Asylum Trends

Levels of Immigration and Asylum

As world events, including the end of colonialism, international conflicts, and more latterly globalisation, have interacted with domestic situations, such as fluctuations in economic wellbeing and racial disharmony, the number, characteristics, and diversity of migrants, as well as the UK policy context into which they arrive, has altered (Vertovec, 2007). Despite traditionally being a country of net emigration, immigration *to* the UK has long been a contentious issue and the main focus of debate surrounding migration in the UK (Castles, Korac, Vasta & Vertovec, 2002). However, since the mid-1990's UK net migration has generally increased year on year (ONS, 2019; Castles et al., 2002). Between 1992 and 1999, for example, net migration rose from -13,000 to 163,000 (Walsh, 2019). This figure rose again slightly in the mid-2000s, following the expansion of the European Union (EU) in 2004 (Walsh, 2019). Between 2010 and 2012 policy implemented by the Conservative Government,

¹ A short Glossary of Terms is provided in Appendix 1

aimed at reducing net migration to below 100,000, led to a decrease in net migration from 256,000 to 177,000 (Walsh, 2019). However, this has since increased again, and in the year ending March 2019 this figure was 226,000, although this was lower than the peak of 343,000 in 2015. The current level of net migration appears to have been broadly stable since 2016 (ONS, 2019).

In line with increasing international migration generally, the number of displaced people globally is increasing. There are currently 25.9 million refugees globally, of which fifty per cent are under eighteen years of age (UNHCRb, 2019). Consequently, the number of people seeking asylum has increased. The UK saw a peak in applications for asylum in 2002 at 84,132, before these rapidly declined to 17,916 in 2010. Since 2010 numbers have steadily risen again, and between June 2018 and June 2019 32,693 people applied for asylum in the UK. This represented a twenty-one per cent increase on the previous year, but is far below the 2002 peak (UNHCR, 2019c). Similar increases were also seen in other EU countries (UNHCRb, 2019). It is worth noting, however, that as a proportion of total UK immigration, the percentage of asylum seekers is relatively low. For example, in 2018 only six per cent of immigrants to the UK were asylum seekers (Sturge, 2020).

Country of origin information shows that asylum seekers chiefly originate from regions of new or ongoing conflict. Globally, the top five countries of origin in 2018 were the Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia, reflecting regions of instability or conflict (UNHCR, 2019). In the UK these differed slightly and comprise Iran, Iraq, Albania, Eritrea and Pakistan (UK Gov, 2019). In addition to being indicative of regions of new or ongoing conflict, additional factors, such as former colonial ties, also influence who seeks asylum in a given country (Crawley, 2010). It is important to recognise, however, that for the vast majority of refugees globally, the destination country is directly adjacent to the country of origin, and that countries in 'developed' parts of the world hosted only sixteen per cent of total refugee numbers in 2018 (UNHCR, 2019).

Recognition Rates

The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was developed following World War Two to protect the rights of European refugees from the pre-1951 period.

In 1967 the convention was amended, removing both temporal and geographical constraints. The protocol describes a refugee as:

A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality... and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country... or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

United Nations, Treaty Series, vol 189, p.137

When the 1951 Convention was established almost all applications for asylum in the UK were granted. However, since this time asylum recognition rates have dropped dramatically. In the 1970s and 1980s approximately fifty per cent of asylum applicants either received asylum or were given exceptional leave to remain. However, as the number of applicants rose in the mid-1990s, the percentage of applicants granted asylum fell to around twenty per cent (Berkeley, Khan & Ambikaipaker, 2006). This, argue Berkeley et al. (2006), was primarily due to policy reform and the introduction of 'safe third countries', to which applicants could be returned rather than having their applications processed in the UK. However, the media and political narrative during the New Labour era of Tony Blair tended to be that the fall in recognition rates constituted 'evidence' that some, if not the majority, of asylum applicants were 'bogus' (Somerville, 2007).

When asylum applications peaked in 2002 at 84,132, recognition rates on initial application fell to only ten per cent, with another twenty-four per cent being given exceptional leave to remain (Berkeley et al., 2006). Recognition rates fell still further over the next two years. In 2003 the percentage of applicants granted asylum was six per cent, with eleven per cent granted humanitarian protection. In 2004 those granted asylum or humanitarian protection fell yet further to four per cent and nine per cent respectively, its lowest rate to date (Sturge, 2020). However, recognition rates rose to forty-one per cent (including asylum and other forms of leave to remain) in 2014, before declining slightly by 2019 to fifty-two per cent (Sturge, 2020). Nonetheless, the Coalition Government that succeeded New Labour, and indeed the subsequent Conservative Government, have maintained, and in many ways fortified, the pejorative tone of

the preceding administrations' narrative, using this to legitimise attempts to reduce net migration to below 100,000 per annum (Robinson, 2013). Whilst these figures are useful in delineating the number of successful applications, very little is known about those applicants whose applications for asylum are refused.

Despite the availability of statistics detailing recognition rates, there are no government statistics on the number of people refused asylum living unsupported in the UK, as the government is not required to collect these data. Since 2015, data on the number of people refused asylum that have been deported or assisted to return to their country of origin have been collected via 'exit checks'. However, there are no statistics about refused asylum seekers that have left the UK without government assistance, or about how many remain in the UK unknown to government (Walsh, 2019). In 2018, 370 people refused asylum were returned to their country of origin via enforced return. This term has not been well defined by the UK Government, although 'forced return', which this can be considered, has been delineated by organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration (2019)². In the same year, 404 people left as part of the voluntary return scheme. However, 5159 people were refused asylum in the same year (Home Office, 2019). Whilst many of these people will have been appealing their decision or preparing fresh claims, the disparity between the number of people leaving the country and the number refused asylum suggests that many are indeed remaining in the UK after the refusal of their claim. However, this number is unknown (AIDA, 2020b).

The chapter now explores key points in the history of immigration and asylum in the UK, before examining the current policy context and asylum system.

2.3 History of Immigration and Asylum in the UK

Immigration and asylum in the UK has a long, complex and contentious history. Whilst there is not the scope here to cover the extensive history of immigration to the UK, some salient moments that help contextualise or have resonance with current immigration and asylum debates in the UK are explored.

² See Appendix 1

Huguenots

The UK has experienced periods of mass immigration which have engendered strong political and public reactions for a variety of reasons. The early 18th century, for example, saw the resettlement of thousands of Huguenots, German Protestants from Palatine (a region in Germany) in the UK, primarily in London. This was preceded by the 1709 Naturalisation Act, which allowed immigrants to pay a small fee to be granted the same legal rights as those born in the UK. Fleeing from economic hardship brought about by religious persecution, these migrants were welcomed by UK economists as a source of both skilled and unskilled labour. However, in order to gain public support for the arrival of the migrants, the political rhetoric of the time cast them as refugees from oppressive Catholic rule in Europe. There are striking resemblances between these eighteenth-century policies and what occurred under the recent Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government whereby economic migration continued to be encouraged even as politicians pledged to reduced net migration in the face of increasing public discontent. Indeed, the German Protestants were initially welcomed and accepted by the general population, with wealthy individuals and families providing housing and food (Otterness, 1999, 2006). However, when numbers increased, refugee camps had to be set up to house them and a committee was established to find employment for this largely unskilled group. The oppositional Tory party began to question the extent to which this 'influx' would benefit the economy when the government had to establish a charitable organisation to raise funds to support the large number of refugees (O'Reilly, 2001).

In addition, the rhetoric of religious persecution was undermined when a significant minority of refugees were found to be Catholic, and thus not to have fled from Catholic persecution. With increasing social unrest, the government sought to disperse the migrants to various rural agricultural locations within the UK and Ireland. However, this was largely unsuccessful and many returned to London within a few months having been poorly received by rural communities. Again, there are echoes of this in the experiences of more recent immigrants to the UK from Poland and Eastern Europe who experienced significant social tension in areas such as Peterborough where many had located for agricultural work (Hickman, Crowley & Mai, 2008). Eventually, many of the Huguenots were sent to the British American colonies due to the increasing hostility towards the immigrants in London. The failure of this programme of economic immigration was used by the subsequent Tory Government to undermine the merits of immigration. They rescinded the Naturalisation Act, arguing that it represented a

‘pull’ factor to potential immigrants (O’Reilly, 2001; Somerville, 2007). As will be shown, the idea that certain policies represent a ‘pull’ factor for migrants is a theme that emerges time and again throughout the UK’s history of immigration.

The First Border Controls

The first semblance of a border control system occurred in 1793, largely in response to Huguenot immigration and the way these migrants were received. The Aliens Act of that year required that refugees possess identity documents and register with the state upon entering the UK. Individuals who did not comply with this requirement could be detained indefinitely or deported. The requirement that migrants register with authorities, and that they can be deported should they fail to comply with such policies, is evident in present day policies, particularly in relation to asylum seekers, as well as at a number of points throughout the UK’s history of immigration. The Aliens Act, like many subsequent pieces of legislation, clearly established a separation between the rights of citizens and the rights of those seeking ‘asylum’. This was in fact the explicit aim of the bill:

[A] bill for suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, as far as it should relate to the persons of foreigners.

UK, 1793, 33 Geo 3 c 4

Whilst immigration continued over the next one hundred years, including immigrants fleeing famine in Ireland, legislation changed very little. The act was updated in 1836, and again in 1905. The 1905 update restricted entry routes, screened entrants and refused entry to migrants deemed ‘undesirable’ (Somerville, 2007). It did, however, also include a policy of asylum for migrants fleeing from political or religious persecution. While the professed rational underpinning tightened immigration controls was to limit the number of poor or criminal migrants, one of the key aims of the Act was to restrict entry of Eastern European Jewish migrants fleeing persecution. This represented a change in the underpinning reasons for exclusion. Where previously border controls were invoked in response to a threat, e.g. Napoleon, the new legislation excluded migrants who were deemed ‘undesirable’ due to their ethnicity (Flynn, 2005a).

In 1914 the Act was again updated. Established in the context of the First World War, it was renamed the Aliens Restriction Act (1914). The Act imposed still greater limits on entry to the UK, exit from the UK and, for the first time, restrictions on free movement within the UK for immigrants. Immigrants were required to register with the UK Government, a policy which enabled German nationals to be systematically rounded up, detained and potentially deported. This approach to managing migration can be seen in the way that United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) is currently able to detain and deport asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers, as well as in the 'no choice' dispersal accommodation allocated to these individuals. In addition, the Aliens Restriction Act limited the type of employment that immigrants could undertake. These increasingly draconian policies were initially expected to be revoked once the war was over. However, this not happen and, in fact, these policies were reiterated in the 1919 amendment to the Aliens Restriction Act, and then renewed on a yearly basis without debate on either the necessity or ethical underpinnings of the policies. The political rational for this was to protect British jobs for indigenous British men returning after the war (Tabili, 1994).

Collapse of the British Empire

The next significant wave of immigration to the UK followed the collapse of the British Empire after the Second World War. In contrast to the 1919 Aliens Restriction Act, the 1948 British Nationality Act granted British citizenship to 600 million people in the former British colonies. Hansen (2000) has described this as the last piece of purposefully inclusive immigration legislation, with all subsequent legislation being underpinned by notions of immigration control. He describes the motivation for encouraging this migration not only as driven by economic incentive – to boost the depleted workforce following the war - but also by the colonial guilt and optimistic internationalism of the Labour Party. There were no visa requirements for migrants entering from the former colonies. Migrants came first from the West Indies, then India and Pakistan (Hansen, 2003). In total 500,000 migrants came to the UK between 1948 and 1962 (Hansen, 2003).

By 1971 approximately one million migrants had settled in the UK from the former British colonies (Hansen, 2003). In addition to primary migrants (the first person from a family to migrate, primarily for economic reasons), family reunification policy meant that, as full British citizens, primary migrants from the former colonies could be joined by family members (Hansen, 2003). Although encouraged by the UK Government, the rapid influx of people from

the former colonies during this period gave rise to public discontent, with popular opinion holding that immigration should be halted, and that those migrants already in the UK should return to their country of origin (Phillips & Phillips, 1998). This hostility was directed primarily at black and South Asian immigrants, who were discriminated against in the workplace and blocked from entering certain professions. Public unrest culminated in the 1958 Notting Hill race riots where predominantly West Indians were attacked. Although the riots themselves were shocking to the general public, opinion polls taken shortly after found widespread support for immigration control, particularly in areas with a high proportion of migrants such as London and the West Midlands (Hansen, 2003).

Appealing to public fears of an ‘immigrant takeover’, the Conservatives gained many previously Labour held seats in areas such as the West Midlands. Government policy, grounded in economics and feelings of colonial responsibility, had not taken account of the social impact of mass immigration, and was at odds with public opinion. However, there was no policy response until the government established the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 (Dummett & Nichol, 1990; Layton-Henry, 1992). In line with the economic reasoning behind its migration policy, the Act restricted immigration to those issued with government employment vouchers, students, members of the armed forces, individuals who were able to support themselves without a job, had a job offer prior to coming to the UK, or possessed skills that were in shortage within the current UK workforce. Established by the Conservative Government, and criticised by the opposition as racist, the system comprised three tiers of skills shortages. Caribbean and Asian migrants tended to be placed in tier C, the lowest skilled category (Flynn, 2005a).

In 1968 Enoch Powell made his infamous ‘Rivers of blood’ speech in which he decried mass immigration, particularly from the former colonies. Despite leading to his sacking from the shadow cabinet, he became a popular figure among some members of the public. The influence of public perception at the time can be seen in the 1968 update to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act which made the granting of British nationality to members of the former colonies contingent on having a close ancestral connection to the UK (Somerville, 2007). This key change was also implemented in response to mass immigration following the Kenyan Asian crisis, whereby Kenyan Asians were excluded from the Kenyan labour market. Many had refused Kenyan nationality at the end of colonial rule and held British Passports. These

migrants, having British passports, were not asylum seekers; however, the legislative response to their arrival has a great deal of resonance in some of the pro-active policy responses to potential influxes of asylum seekers more latterly. The express motivation of the amendment was to stem the flow of these previous commonwealth members seeking refuge in the former ‘mother country’, and was criticised by Commonwealth Secretary George Thompson as being racist and ‘*contrary to everything we stand for*’ (BBC, 2012). It is notable, however, that in the same year that the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was amended, the Race Relations Act (1965) was strengthened, arguably demonstrating a divergence or duality of approaches to race and immigration within the British political establishment. Indeed, eventually, in 1971, following the expulsion of Asians from Uganda under the rule of Idi Amin, the restrictions were loosened, allowing 27,000 refugees to legally enter Britain. However, the 1971 Immigration Act ended the right of unrestricted immigration to members of the former colonies. Almost all of the previous legislation, including economic migration and family reunification, was abandoned, and strict border and immigration controls established. One of the main changes to arise following this legislation was that, due to the cessation of family reunification policy, individuals from New Commonwealth countries who wished to join family members or build a new life in the ‘mother country’ had to apply for a work permit or seek asylum, thus re-categorising a significant number of migrants (Somerville, 2007).

2.4 The Basis of Current Legislation

The Immigration Act of 1971 forms the basis of current UK immigration and asylum laws. One of the most notable aspects of these laws is that they are flexible and able to change in response to domestic and world events. As migration patterns altered, moving away from the former colonies and towards refugees leaving former soviet countries, the former Yugoslavia and conflict in Somalia, the legislature reacted by increasing immigration controls relating to these countries in an attempt to limit the ‘influx’ (Kyambi, 2005). The central tenet of these reactive laws was to restrict the number of asylum seekers, rather than migrants more generally, from entering the UK, and in this there are echoes of previous policy, such as the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962) which distinguished between ‘desirable’ skilled economic migrants and those perceived to be unskilled, and thus undesirable, migrants seeking to claim asylum. The distinctions made between the indigenous population and new migrants is thus not new, but a common thread woven intricately through the UK’s history of immigration.

This increasing focus on asylum became manifest in UK law under the Conservative Government in the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act. Whilst the Act did include the 1951 Refugee Convention, it simultaneously introduced a number of restrictive, exclusionary policies. These included new technology to search freight carriers at Calais, and a ‘fast-track’ decision making procedure for asylum claims that were deemed to be ‘without foundation’ (Somerville, 2007; Ward, 2004; Home Office, 2005). Asylum seekers were also allocated inferior housing and inferior social welfare to the British born population. The UK Government argued that these measures would act as deterrents to ‘fraudulent’ asylum seekers (Schuster & Bloch, 2005). The (erroneous) idea that most asylum seekers were, in fact, economic migrants who sought to either work or receive welfare benefits, was widely propagated by both the UK press and politicians at that time (Schuster & Bloch, 2005; Bloch & Schuster, 2002).

1997-2007: New Labour, a Divided Approach to Immigration and Asylum

The New Labour Government of Tony Blair is said to have heralded a new attitude towards immigration in UK politics (Somerville, 2007). Mulvey (2011) characterises this as a reductionist ‘dual approach’, arguing that asylum seekers and refugees were essentially depicted as ‘unwanted’ and economic migrants as ‘desirable’. Although this dichotomous approach had been present in previous immigration legislation, the approach at this time does need to be understood in the context of increasing globalisation. In contrast to the general loosening of restrictions on economic immigration, particularly within the EU, refugees and asylum seekers were ever more problematised by the New Labour administration, and restrictive policies became the dominant feature of asylum legislation. New measures were introduced both in the UK, and in Europe more widely, to curb the number of new asylum applications (Home Office, 2005).

The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act tightened immigration and asylum policy further, again with the aim of reducing the number of asylum seekers. This tightening of the Act was premised on the idea that many asylum seekers were ‘bogus’, thus morally ‘justifying’ these restrictive changes (Somerville, 2007). The Act further criminalised the immigration process for migrants who could not enter the UK legally due to visa restrictions. Furthermore, penalties for transporting migrants were extended to cover haulage vehicles, and immigration officers were legally allowed to use ‘force’ when dealing with ‘illegal’ immigrants. Asylum seekers could also be arrested, searched and fingerprinted. In addition, the degree of flexibility in the

application of the Act was further increased (Cohen, 2002). The Act also saw the creation of the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) which segregated asylum seekers from the mainstream UK benefits system. In addition, prior to 2002, asylum seekers could apply for a work permit if they had been waiting for six months or more for a decision on their asylum claim. After 2002, this was revoked, with Labour suggesting that as decisions on asylum cases were being made more quickly, the right to work after six months was no longer relevant. However, in 2005, asylum seekers who had been waiting for a decision for a year or more were again allowed to apply for a work permit (Gower, 2020). This long waiting period is much more restrictive than other European countries, as well as the USA and Canada (Refugee Council, 2018). Again, these measures were all enacted against a background of ever more pejorative political and media narratives about immigration, and more specifically asylum seekers, as well as hardening public opinion (Schuster & Bloch, 2005).

9/11 and the Securitisation Narrative

Whilst there are numerous instances of New Labour's depiction of asylum seekers as a threat to state sovereignty that predate the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York (for examples see Maughn, 2010), this event marked if not the start, then certainly the concretisation of a nation-state/securitisation narrative that underpinned increasingly exclusionary asylum policy. The securitisation of asylum policy is marked by the conflation of asylum seekers with terrorism. This became manifest in the 2001 Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act. The Act was passed as an emergency measure in the wake of 9/11, and specifically connected asylum seekers with terrorism. In relation to the Act then Prime Minister Tony Blair stated that:

It will increase our ability to exclude and remove those whom we suspect of terrorism and who are seeking to abuse our asylum procedures.

HC Deb 4 October 2001, vol. 372 c671

The absolute conflation of asylum with terrorism firmly establishes the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy that is so endemic to the popular narrative about asylum seekers today (Maughn, 2010). This divisive presentation has been proposed to have been used in order to legitimise not only exclusionary policy, but the effective criminalisation of asylum seekers (Buzan, Waeber & De Wilde, 1998; Zucconi, 2004).

In 2002 the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act removed the right to appeal a negative asylum decision if the original claim was deemed to be ‘unfounded’, and increased the monitoring of asylum seekers (Ward, 2004). Mulvey (2011) argues that the negative reductionist portrayal of refugees and asylum seekers as unwanted and/or threatening created an atmosphere in which the public perceived immigration as being in crisis, and proposes that it was this sense of ‘moral panic’ around the perceived immigration crisis that led to and legitimated the string of restrictive pro-active policy initiatives during the New Labour years.

Coalition and Conservative Governments: 2010 – Present

A similar approach is suggested to have characterised the Conservative–Liberal Democrat Coalition Governments and subsequent Conservative Government from 2010 onwards, with immigration policy becoming yet more restrictive (Partos & Bale, 2015). This has been attributed in part to the rising threat from UKIP and other right-wing political forces (Partos & Bale, 2015), with the Coalition Government pledging to reduce net migration to below the tens of thousands from the hundreds of thousands (Cameron, 2011). Ultimately, this goal was not met, in part because ministers were unable to prevent freedom of movement between EU countries prior to the 2016 referendum on EU membership. However, immigration from outside of the EU, over which the government had full control, was also not reduced notably at this time. Indeed, many Conservative moderates were against reducing immigration for economic reasons (Partos & Bale, 2015).

In an attempt to reduce the number of new migrants, routes of entry, qualifying criteria, and opportunities for skilled and unskilled migrants from outside the EEA decreased (Robinson, 2013). The focus on asylum, however, in both political and media discussions, reduced somewhat during this period, perhaps in line with the large drop in applications from the peak of over 80,000 in 2002, to around 20,000 in the decade to 2015 (Partos & Bale, 2015). However, although policy relating to asylum did not change substantially during this time, some have argued that this is because there was very little room for it to do so, given the already incredibly restrictive policies put in place by previous governments, as well as the UK’s obligations under international law (Partos & Bale, 2015). Instead, the emphasis shifted to seeking out and deporting people who had been refused asylum, but who remained in the UK (Gowers & Hawkins, 2013). The ‘go home’ vans, part of then Home Secretary Theresa May’s ‘hostile environment’ policy, are perhaps the most salient emblem of this policy turn, and

reflect the ethos of policy which dictates that those who remain in the UK without the correct permissions should be denied all but the most basic of human rights (Home Office, 2007a).

In addition, new initiatives aimed at cutting costs within the immigration system and dealing with the backlog of immigration cases came to the fore (Gowers & Hawkins, 2013). Repeated failings by the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) led to its abolition in 2013, when it was replaced by the UK Border Force, UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), Immigration Enforcement, and Operational Systems Transformation, which divided between them the previous enforcement and processing roles of the UKBA. However, the performance of the UKVI to date has not improved on the UKBA's record, with the backlog of cases, as well as the time taken to process applications, increasing, despite the reduction in applications for asylum (Bulman, 2018).

2.5 Asylum Policy and Process

This section of the chapter gives a brief overview of current asylum policy, the process of seeking asylum, and some criticisms of this process. As will become clear, the current system is deeply rooted in previous policy and the contentious history of asylum and immigration in the UK. This section is intended to provide background that enables deeper understanding of several issues raised in *Chapter Three: The experiences of people refused asylum; what we know so far*, including the reason why many people refused asylum choose to remain in the UK following the refusal of their claim.

Applying for Asylum

Asylum applications can be made either 'in-country' or at a port of entry (AIDA, 2020). In-country applications are processed by the Asylum Intake Unit in Croydon, South London or, when a person is already detained, at a detention centre (AIDA, 2020). Applicants then undergo a screening interview where they are asked about their reasons for claiming asylum, route of travel, health, family information, and whether they have claimed asylum in the UK or another European Union country previously. Biometric data is also collected at this point (AIDA, 2020; Consonant, 2020).

Asylum seekers are then given an application reference number and allocated a 'case owner' who is responsible for the management of their application throughout the process, including

the final decision. Port of entry applicants undergo the screening interview at the port before being allocated a case worker.

In 2007 the UKBA introduced the 'New Asylum Model'. This set out five categories of claimants including Third Country Claimants (Individuals believed to have claimed asylum elsewhere in the EU), Non-Suspensive Appeals (asylum seeker's country of nationality is considered to be 'safe'), Minors (claim by an unaccompanied child or a child from an asylum-seeking family), Detained Fast-Track (Initial decision on a claim can be made in 2-3 days, applicants detained), and General Casework (all other cases).

For the purposes of this research project, it should be noted that the majority of people refused asylum in the UK have been through the General Casework route. This is because Third Country Claimants and Non-Suspensive Appeals are denied the right to apply for asylum as they are either returned to the country in which they first sought asylum, or are ineligible because their country of origin is deemed safe by the Home Office, Minors are subject to different child protection procedures because of their age, and the Detained Fast-Track route is suspended at present following legal challenges (AIDA, 2020).

Applicants are issued with an Application Registration Card (ARC). This photo identification card confirms that the applicant has registered an asylum application and states the restrictions imposed by their immigration status, including the prohibition of paid employment (Gov.UK, 2020). Applicants are allocated to one of the regional asylum centres and placed in accommodation in that area. Area and housing allocation are operated on a no-choice basis under Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999). Applicants are also given a basic subsistence allowance of £37.75 per single adult per week.

Following the initial screening interview applicants attend a 'first reporting event' a few days later (AIDA, 2020). The applicant must confirm their details and is told about the requirements of reporting to the UKVI whilst their application is processed. This may include reporting in person, by telephone or being electronically tagged (Consonant, 2020).

Approximately one week later the applicant will attend an Asylum Interview. They must tell their case owner the reason they wish to seek asylum, must prove that they are who they claim

to be, and provide any documentary evidence in support of the case. The applicant is then given a copy of the transcript of the interview. The applicant is entitled to bring a legal representative to the interview; however, this is not compulsory and the onus of responsibility for accessing legal representation is on the applicant, not the UKVI.

The Decision-Making Process

During the decision-making process the case owner reviews the applicant's reasons for seeking asylum, taking into account interview material, documentary evidence, country of origin information and language analysis to establish the credibility and validity of the claim (Gov.UK, 2020). In addition, failure to initially present at the Croydon screening centre within the twenty-four hour timeframe, possession of false travel documents, and illegal entry to the UK can all adversely affect the outcome of a claim (Consonant, 2020; Crawley, 2010). According to the Home Office these decisions are usually made within six months, however, there is currently no time limit on how long it should take to process an application and decisions frequently take far longer than this (AIDA, 2020; Consonant, 2020; Gov.UK, 2020).

Successful Applicants

Successful asylum applicants are either granted 'leave to remain', whereby they are given refugee status and allowed to remain in the UK initially for five years, or granted humanitarian protection. Again, this is for a five year period, after which they become eligible to apply to settle in the UK (Gov.UK, 2020).

Once an applicant receives refugee status they become eligible to work and access the mainstream UK benefit system. From the time of a positive decision refugees have 28 days to leave their Section 95 accommodation and find employment/access the UK benefit system (Gov.UK, 2020).

People Refused Asylum

In 2019 48% of initial applications for asylum were refused (AIDA, 2020). Following a negative asylum decision Section 95 support, including all finance and accommodation, is terminated after 21 days (Gov.UK, 2020). This is a central part of UK Government policy, which states that:

For those not prioritised for removal, they should be denied the benefits and privileges of life in the UK and experience an increasingly uncomfortable environment so that they elect to leave.

Home Office, 2007a, p17

Refused applicants with dependent children are the exception to this rule and usually remain on support until they either leave the UK or make a successful appeal against their asylum decision (Gov.UK, 2020). Once any and all appeals have been lodged and refused, refused asylum seekers are expected to leave the UK as soon as possible. If they do this voluntarily, they are entitled to apply to the UK Government for help to return to their country of origin. If they do not do this, refused asylum seekers can be forcibly removed (Blanchard & Joy, 2017).

State Assistance for People Refused Asylum

People refused asylum are not completely without recourse to state assistance. Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act (HM Government, 1999) provides basic, no choice accommodation and £35.39 financial support per week in the form of an 'ASPEN Card' (previously an Azure card). This is a payment/voucher card that can be used in a limited range of shops to buy food and (most) toiletry items. There is no cash provision for those on Section 4.

The Immigration and Asylum Regulations (HM Government, 2005) state that in order to be eligible for Section 4 support people refused asylum must be destitute. In addition, they must also meet one of the other criteria listed in Section 4 of the IAA 1999, including 'taking all reasonable steps to leave the United Kingdom', being 'unable to leave the United Kingdom by reason of a physical impediment to travel or for some other medical reason', having 'no viable route of return', applying for a 'judicial review of a decision in relation to his asylum claim', or the necessity of 'provision of accommodation... for the purpose of avoiding a breach of a person's Convention rights, within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998'.

The Right to Appeal/Fresh Claims

The majority of people refused asylum have the right to appeal their decision. Appeals must be lodged within fourteen days of the refusal of the initial application (AIDA, 2020). Initial appeals are lodged with the First Tier Tribunal, however, if an applicant is unhappy with the

decision made by the First Tier Tribunal, they may then appeal to the Upper Tribunal, and in some instances to the Court of Appeal.

The other option is to make a second, ‘fresh’, asylum claim. This may be based on evidence that could not be obtained by the asylum seeker at the time of their first application, comprise new evidence, or follow a change in UK asylum law (AIDA, 2020).

2.6 Criticisms of the Asylum Process

Criticisms of the UK asylum process are many and varied, coming from charities and NGOs, the United Nations, academics and parliamentary committees. Freedom from Torture (2019) describe the systemic failures of the current asylum process as both ‘inhumane and inefficient’, as a system that exacerbates the hardships of people who have already experienced suffering prior to arriving in the UK. The main criticisms fall into the following categories:

Credibility Assessments

Caseworkers should undertake an holistic assessment of applications for asylum to assess the potential risk to the individual should they be returned to their country of origin (Home Office, 2015). Research has persistently identified flaws in how the credibility of asylum cases are assessed (Amnesty International, 2004; Amnesty International, 2013). This criticism is borne out by the high proportion (between eighty and one hundred per cent) of cases overturned on appeal due to a flaw in the assessment of credibility (Amnesty International, 2004; 2013; Clayton, Crowther, Kerr, Sharrock & Singer, 2017).

Negative credibility assessments tend to be related to inconsistency (UNHCR, 2006; ICIBI, 2017). Caseworkers often fail to consider possible explanations for inconsistencies, including problems of recollection, and difficulty disclosing psychologically traumatic information, such as torture or sexual violence (Refugee Council, 2013; Freedom from Torture, 2011). Poor interpreting services, poor understanding of the environments in which people had been persecuted, and of who is at risk from persecution, as well as inadequate awareness of the issues affecting particularly vulnerable groups also led to flawed credibility assessments (Freedom from Torture, 2019; Refugee Council, 2010; House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2013).

In addition, medical evidence was frequently not considered once a caseworker had already decided that a case lacked credibility for another reason, and thus evidence was not being considered ‘in the round’ (Freedom from Torture, 2016; Amnesty International, 2013).

Failure to Apply the Correct Standard of Proof

The Home Office is aware that the circumstances of fleeing from persecution mean that people may well not have access to their official documents, or documents proving that they have been or risk being persecuted. However, applications are frequently denied because people cannot produce documentary evidence of these things (UNHCR, 2005; Freedom from Torture, 2016). This finding is particularly the case for medical evidence and evidence of persecution on the basis of gender or sexuality (Freedom from Torture, 2016; UNCAT, 2019; UKLGIG, 2018).

Culture of Disbelief

The erroneous belief that asylum seekers come to UK because of ‘pull’ factors, such as generous welfare provision, and that, therefore, many are ‘bogus’, is suggested to underpin current asylum policy and a culture of disbelief within the Home Office which leads to the high level of erroneous asylum refusals (Refugee Action, 2017; Freedom from Torture, 2019; HOCHAC, 2018). Rather than giving claimants the ‘benefit of the doubt’, as per UN and Home Office guidelines (Amnesty International, 2004), caseworkers use inconsistencies in accounts, incorrect application of country of origin information, and a ‘refusal mindset’ to justify negative outcomes (IAC, 2008).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how, despite traditionally being a country of net emigration, the issue of immigration has almost always been highly contentious. However, as immigration, in line with levels of displaced people globally, increased from the mid-1990s onwards, narratives demonising migrants seeking asylum became particularly prominent under the governments of Blair and then Cameron. Despite asylum seekers constituting only a very small fraction of new migrants to the UK (six per cent in 2018), the demonisation of this group has persisted. As recognition rates fell over the past three decades media and political narratives positioned this as evidence that many people seeking asylum were ‘bogus’. What is more, politicians and media outlets frequently suggested that any assistance given to asylum seekers acted as a ‘pull factor’, an argument found also in the Naturalisation Act of 1709. In fact, there are many

parallels between past and present policy and narratives relating to those wishing to seek asylum in the UK. This is particularly notable in attempts to separate the rights and entitlements of migrants from those of citizens (e.g., Aliens Act, 1973; 1905; 1914; Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act, 1993).

Current asylum policy and process is noted to be deeply rooted in previous policy and recurring pejorative narratives about migrants seeking asylum. This policy has been widely criticised as deeply inhumane.

The next chapter explores the lived realities of people refused asylum in the UK and demonstrates the ramifications of the exclusionary policy detailed here.

Chapter Three: The Experiences of People Refused Asylum; What We Know So Far

3.1 Introduction

NGO and campaign groups such as Oxfam and Amnesty International have argued that current UK Government policy seeks to deliberately impoverish refused asylum seekers in order to incentivise them to leave the country, a policy goal which, they argue, both fails in its objective and creates levels of destitution that flout both UK and International human rights legislation (McKenna, 2019; Chakrabati, 2005; Amnesty International, 2006; Refugee Action, 2006; Crawley et al., 2011). Consistent with this argument, the experiences of asylum seekers who remain in the UK after their claim has been refused are generally understood to be difficult, marginal and impoverished (McKenna, 2019; Bloom, 2015; Refugee Action, 2006; Crawley et al., 2011). Beswick and McNulty (2015) in their study of fifty-six destitute refused asylum seekers in South Yorkshire found that the lives of their participants were characterised by an inability to meet their most basic needs for food and shelter, by poor health, and by vulnerability due to the precarity of their situations. These findings are echoed in McKenna's (2019) report for the Destitute Asylum Seeker Service in Glasgow which utilised interviews with twenty-four destitute refused asylum seekers, as well as case workers, immigration lawyers and staff from a variety of public sector organisations including health and social care workers. The main difficulties faced by destitute refused asylum seekers in McKenna's study arose from an inability to apply for mainstream benefits or homelessness assistance, being prohibited from working, an inability to access education, and difficulties accessing health care. Across studies, destitute refused asylum seekers have been found to be overwhelmingly reliant on friends, family, charities and church groups for accommodation, food, clothing and other basic necessities (McKenna, 2019; Beswick & McNulty, 2015; Gillespie, 2012). However, studies suggest that these resources can be highly inconsistent and are frequently unable to meet destitute refused asylum seekers' essential needs (Beswick & McNulty, 2015). Within this context of highly restricted rights and opportunities, there is clearly a need to understand the lived experiences of people refused asylum in the UK.

To date, however, what is known of these experiences has come, as indicated above, from predominantly small-scale, qualitative research studies carried out by campaign groups such as the British Red Cross and Refugee Action (Bloom, 2015). The studies vary widely in scale, as well as in methods used and the specific groups and contexts with which they are concerned, often focussing on one geographic region, or one immigrant group in particular. Participants are often recruited from charitable services, thus arguably neglecting those individuals not in touch with these organisations. In addition, the nature of the organisations conducting the research means that there is an inherent political agenda. While this does not necessarily negate the validity of conclusions drawn from these studies, it is important that any findings reported are considered in this light. In addition, the number of studies originating from the charitable sector is relatively small, and thus the references that appear in this chapter often appear time and again, reflecting this limited data pool. While there has been some interest from academics in the issues faced by people refused asylum, as discussed in Chapter Four, again this literature is limited, with the bulk of academic research looking at asylum seekers rather than those refused asylum. It is also important to note that the UKVI has carried out no research on the impact of its policy on people refused asylum in the UK. As such, what is known about the experiences of people refused asylum who remain in the UK after the refusal of their claim is fairly limited.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the current literature and thus provide some background based on the currently available evidence. As highlighted above, the experiences of people refused asylum are overwhelming characterised by destitution, a reality suggested to impact almost all aspects of refused asylum seekers lives. As such, this chapter begins by looking at how destitution is defined, before moving on to discuss how and when people refused asylum become destitute, and then the lived realities of this situation. The literature focusses on the experiences of people refused asylum, bringing in some data relating to the experiences of asylum seekers more broadly to add context. It does not consider the wider literature on the experiences of other immigrant groups in the UK, and is thus not a comparative review of the situations of people refused asylum and other immigrant populations. Whilst such an enquiry would certainly be a useful piece of future research, enabling the experiences of refused asylum seekers to be situated within the broader literature, the present review of the literature confines itself to exploring the lived realities of this particular group and, in later chapters, to seeking to examine the experiences of participants in this study with recourse to

social theory, an under-researched aspect of the migration literature. As an under-researched group, it is necessary first to gain understanding, before moving on to more comparative analysis.

3.2 Defining Destitution

The United Nations considers housing, food, clothing and healthcare to be fundamental human rights (United Nations, 1948; Human Rights Council, 2010). As such, if people refused asylum become destitute due to UK Government policy (Home Office, 2007a; Home Office, 2007b), this can be understood as a violation of these rights. The UK Immigration and Asylum Act (1999) defines a person as destitute if:

(a) he does not have adequate accommodation or any means of obtaining it (whether or not his essential living needs are met); or

(b) he has adequate accommodation or the means of obtaining it, but cannot meet his other essential living needs.

HM Government, 1999

In addition to the above definition, NGOs including Oxfam and the British Red Cross have devised their own definitions of destitution. For example, the Red Cross defines:

Destitute refugees and asylum seekers as anyone who has claimed or is in the process of claiming asylum, and is without any form of statutory support.

British Red Cross, 2013, p11

In this way, the Red Cross definition is specific to asylum seekers and refugees. Whilst it does not mention explicit needs, as the IAA definition does, it specifically links destitution to the (lack of) provision of state support. In their study for Oxfam, Crawley et al. (2011) define destitution among asylum seekers as:

a situation of extreme poverty or economic marginalisation, in this case among asylum seekers, for whom legitimate access to resources is prohibited through legislation and policy.

Crawley et al., 2011, p21

The Oxfam definition is thus broader, as all legislation, including the right to work, not just the right to receive state support, is encapsulated in the definition. One further definition that merits inclusion here is the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015) definition, which describes destitution as the condition of those who:

Suffer an enforced lack of the following minimum material necessities: shelter, food, heating, lighting, clothing and basic toiletries.

Or

Have an income level so low that they are unable to provide these minimum material necessities for themselves.

Fitzpatrick et al., 2015, p32

This definition usefully delineates both the 'enforced' aspect of many forms of destitution, as well as the specific material deprivations that coalesce to make a person destitute. McKenna (2019), in her discussion of the Joseph Rowntree definition, usefully notes that Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) define a 'low' income as £70 per week, excluding accommodation costs, for a single adult. This is almost double the amount received by a person refused asylum on Section 4 support.

It is also worth looking to the experiences of those who have been refused asylum and are destitute for their definitions of destitution. In contrast to the definitions above, the way in which destitution is conceptualised by people refused asylum reveals a far more complex, psychologically emotive narrative than the more materially focussed definitions above, and it is in this way that the qualitative nature of the studies conducted to date are best able to elucidate the experiences of this group. Crawley et al. (2011), for example, whose report for Oxfam utilised peer researchers to gather forty-five accounts of destitution among asylum seekers living in Swansea, found that destitution was not perceived simply as a lack of material assets, but as the denial of '*possibilities for the future*' (Crawley et al, 2011, p12) which resulted

from existing outside of the state. A sense of hopelessness, lack of agency, and curtailed freedom were endemic to the experiences of destitution relayed by interviewees, with one peer researcher stating that:

Destitution means taking every right from somebody. Destitute asylum seekers are living ghosts.

Crawley et al., 2011, p22

While highlighting the lack of rights associated with destitution, as the more formal definitions do, this individual also articulates perfectly the way that the removal of rights can be seen to strip those refused asylum of their former selves; they are shadow-like, insubstantial, a 'ghost'. In addition to the ghost analogy, another way that one individual described their ostracised existence was that of being in a '*golden cage*' (Crawley et al., 2011, p23). The cage is 'golden' because the country in which he is metaphorically (and at times literally) imprisoned is one of economic prosperity. In much the same way as an actual cage or prison cell, the metaphorical 'golden cage' can be seen to represent a boarder, creating a rights-based apartheid segregating people refused asylum from the rest of the populace. Blanchard and Joy (2017), whose report for the Red Cross examines the experiences of fifteen refused asylum seekers across a number of UK locations, as well as six Red Cross staff members, cite the experience of a woman, Enaya, who has been refused asylum and exhausted all her appeal rights, who describes her life in a similar fashion, stating:

I don't want life to just stop here. It's not life! I feel like I am in a prison and there is nothing I can do.

Enaya, Palestine, in Blanchard & Joy, 2017, p25

These analogies suggest that the ramifications of exclusionary social policy extend far beyond being able to meet one's basic needs, ultimately leading to a feeling of stasis and entrapment. The material deprivation is experienced equally as psychological deprivation and marginalisation.

Whilst all these definitions of destitution are useful in clarifying exactly how NGOs, charitable groups and those experiencing destitution understand the concept, for the purpose of this piece

of research the IAA (HM Government, 1999) definition will be primary. This is in order that the discussion of destitution in the sections below can be understood in relation to the UK Government's definition of the concept, as this is the institution that determines policy in relation to people refused asylum.

The chapter now moves on to explore when and why people experience destitution, before discussing the existing literature on the lived realities of destitution for people refused asylum.

3.3 Becoming Destitute

During the process of claiming asylum applicants are provided with housing, allocated on a no choice basis, and a basic subsistence allowance of £37.75 under Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999). When an application is refused all support is rescinded within twenty-one days (with the exception of those with children who should continue to receive Section 95 support until they leave the UK). Removal of support applies not only to those applicants from countries which the Home Office has deemed 'safe' for people to be returned to, but also to those from countries to which people cannot be returned because of ongoing conflict or other significant threats to safety. It is at this point that many people refused asylum become destitute (Scottish Parliament Equalities and Human Rights Committee, 2017; Amnesty International, 2006). Following removal of support people refused asylum are suggested to be largely dependent on charities, friends and acquaintances to meet their most basic needs for food and shelter (McKenna, 2019; Aida, 2020). This is in line with the UK Government's policy that life in the UK should be made as uncomfortable as possible for those refused asylum so that they choose to leave (Home Office, 2007a). In order to understand why this policy causes such high levels of destitution, apart from its overt intent to do so, it is important to understand why people 'choose' to remain in the UK after their application for asylum is refused. In part, this can be understood by turning to *Chapter Two, Section Six: Criticisms of the asylum process*, which highlights systemic flaws in the way that asylum applications are assessed, and high rates of success on appeal. The next section of this chapter further explores the reasons why people stay.

3.4 Why People Stay

Many people who are refused asylum do not leave the UK upon refusal. There are numerous reasons suggested as to why people may 'choose' to face a life of destitution in the UK rather

than return to their country of origin, including the belief that their life is at risk or that they will be persecuted, that the outcome of their asylum case is incorrect, that the process is poorly and inequitably implemented, as well as the need to gather evidence to make a fresh claim (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Refugee Council, 2012b; Crawley et al., 2011). In addition, research suggests that there is significant mistrust of the asylum system among people refused asylum, which stems largely from negative experiences of the asylum process and the belief that the refusal of their asylum claim is unjust. This belief is arguably not without merit given the high proportion (forty-one per cent in 2019) of negative asylum decisions that are overturned on appeal (AIDA, 2020). In the context of these arguments, Crawley et al. (2011) suggest that the removal of state support is therefore a poor incentive for people to leave the UK.

In addition to an unwillingness to leave the UK, Blanchard and Joy (2017) found that some people refused asylum are unable to leave. This can be due to a lack of flights to their country of origin, the refusal of their country of origin to recognise them as a citizen (i.e. they are stateless), and an inability to obtain correct travel documentation. Because they have exhausted their appeal rights, the authors suggest that there is a significant risk that these individuals will simply drop off the radar in order to avoid contact with the authorities, and then become destitute (Blanchard & Joy, 2017). Refugee Action (2017), reviewing two hundred and thirty-seven case files from their Asylum Crisis projects in London and Manchester, as well as interviewing thirty-six asylum seekers, suggest that destitution also arises when those eligible for support are wrongly denied it, or because those who are eligible for support face long waiting times before their application for support is granted (Refugee Action, 2017).

The chapter now moves on to explore the existing literature on what life is like for people refused asylum who live destitute in the UK. The discussion begins by looking at the impact of worklessness, before moving on to examine specific aspects of destitution concerning housing, food and health.

3.5 Work(lessness)

The vast majority of people refused asylum are prohibited from undertaking legal paid employment (Gov.UK, 2020). The UK Government considers the right to work a significant ‘pull’ factor for potential asylum seekers and, as such, working is prohibited until a positive

asylum decision is made or the applicant has been waiting for a decision for more than one year (Thielemann, 2003; Doyle, 2009, Refugee Council, 2018).

Research suggests that most people refused asylum have worked prior to coming to the UK in a variety of roles ranging from teaching, working as a chef, to academia (Refugee Action 2006, Doyle, 2009; Refugee Council, 2018; Taylor 2009). Furthermore, in Doyle's (2009) survey of two hundred and ninety-two Zimbabwean asylum seekers in four UK locations for the Refugee Council, who could not legally be returned to Zimbabwe due to the ongoing political situation, most believed that they would be able to work to support themselves in the UK and were keen to do so, a finding echoed in other research (e.g. Refugee Council, 2018). What is also of note, is that participants often wished to return to their country of origin if the situation in the country improved (Doyle, 2009). However, they felt that their inability to work whilst in the UK had reduced the chance that they would one day be able to do this, because they had been unable to accrue the financial or skills resources necessary to rebuild their lives there. The impact of this policy, at least for Zimbabwean asylum seekers, therefore appears to contradict the government's objective of returning asylum seekers to their countries of origin if the humanitarian circumstances improve. In addition, it suggests that the assumption implicit in all restrictive government policies - that asylum seekers wish to remain in the UK on a permanent basis - is, at least in the case of Doyle's (2009) study, erroneous.

Because of these restrictions, people refused asylum appear to be largely reliant on charitable donations, friends, family, or state support under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999) to meet their basic needs (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; McKenna, 2019; AIDA, 2020). This situation has also been found to make people refused asylum particularly vulnerable to exploitation, both in terms of illegal working and via transactional relationships such as providing care, sex or other services in exchange for food or a place to stay (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017). This is particularly thought to be the case for those who have exhausted their appeal rights as they are highly unlikely to be in receipt of any government support (Blanchard & Joy, 2017). Given the small number of studies that have looked at these issues it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions, however, what research is available suggests a fairly bleak picture.

3.6 Illegal Working

Illegal working represents one way of alleviating the poverty of destitution. Reports are conflicting as to the level of illegal employment undertaken by destitute refused asylum seekers with some suggesting a fairly high incidence (Refugee Action, 2006; Taylor, 2009) and others proposing that although poverty means there is pressure to work illegally, fear of arrest, detention and deportation mean that most refused asylum seekers do not do so (Amnesty International, 2006). The reasons for these differing conclusions are many and may stem from potential under-reporting of illegal working by participants in order to protect themselves and others, as well as studies not having access to those who are working illegally as they have disengaged from services. It is thus difficult to draw any clear conclusions about rates of illegal employment among people refused asylum.

For those individuals who do work illegally, research suggests that the decision to do so is often seen as a stark choice between letting their family starve or working illegally (Burnett & Whyte, 2010; Community Links & the Refugee Council, 2011). Despite differing in the levels of illegal work reported, studies found that the type of work undertaken is typically low skilled, cash in hand work which is low paid (between £1 and £3 per hour), with poor working conditions that can be dirty, dangerous, violent and pose significant risk to the employee's health and wellbeing (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Refugee Action, 2006; Amnesty International, 2006; Crawley et al., 2011; Burnett & Whyte, 2010). Burnett and White (2010), in their study of illegal working among fourteen refused asylum seekers, reported that types of work included cleaning, washing cars, working in factories, and as kitchen porters and drivers. Taylor (2009) suggests that employers are often members of the refused asylum seeker's community. It should be noted, however, that the nature of this 'community', i.e. the refugee community, the asylum seeker community, a specific immigrant group community, or a religious community, is not specified in Taylor's (2009) report for PAFRAS (Positive Action For Refugees and Asylum Seekers) in which fifty-six interviews were conducted with destitute asylum seekers from twenty countries of origin. Burnett and Whyte (2010) report that hours are long and the nature of employment unstable, lasting from a few days to a few months, with the threat of dismissal ever present. Injured workers were often required to either continue working despite their injuries, or were fired. The dangers of these environments are suggested to be compounded by a reluctance among people refused asylum to seek medical assistance for fear of being detained or deported by the authorities.

Of note, however, is that not all of those who might be considered to be exploited felt that they were. Blanchard and Joy (2017), for example, report that due to the desperate position in which people refused asylum find themselves, they may not recognise, or perhaps not acknowledge, their exploitation because they are grateful for whatever employment they can find. In addition, illegal working is not necessarily indicative of a coercive relationship between employer and employee. Nonetheless, scholars argue that the precarious position of those who have not been granted asylum makes them particularly vulnerable to exploitation (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Anderson & Rogaly, 2005; Skrivankova, 2010; Dwyer, Lewis, Scullion & Waite, 2011), and this is arguably yet more true for those individuals who have exhausted their rights to appeal (Blanchard & Joy, 2017). Migrants (not limited to people refused asylum) are suggested to be particularly vulnerable to forced labour (ILO, 2017; Anderson & Rogaly, 2005). In this context the International Labour Organisation (ILO), who conducted around a thousand surveys in each of forty-eight countries, define ‘force’ as threats of physical or sexual violence, restricted movement, debt bondage, the withholding of wages, retention of passports and/or other identity documents, and the threat of going to authorities (ILO, 2005).

As well as activities that may be strictly defined as ‘work’, people refused asylum also appear to be involved in a variety of transactional relationships including the exchange of childcare, cooking, housework or sex for food, money or a place to stay (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Crawley et al., 2011). In the case of commercial sex work, Crawley et al., (2011) found that there was a significant risk of exploitation in terms of both physical abuse and being unable to extricate themselves from the arrangement. Because of their tenuous immigration status and fear of deportation, many of the participants who had been refused asylum and were experiencing destitution.

The literature on work, worklessness and illegal working is, as demonstrated above, limited. This may in part be due to potential participants being a particularly hard to reach group, with some or many not engaging with services such as those provided by the Red Cross and other charitable organisations. Moreover, people refused asylum who are working illegally or who are in a transactional, potentially coercive, relationship, may be unwilling to discuss this due to fear. Perhaps though, the lack of data is a reflection of the relatively low degree of interest

in this area from the academic and voluntary sectors, with studies generally focussing more on issues such as housing. What is apparent, however, is that work for people refused asylum is a largely hidden phenomenon and, as such, its prevalence is hard to determine. However, where illegal working has been documented it appears to be low paid and in poor conditions. The chapter now moves on to look at what support is available from government for people who have been refused asylum.

3.7 State Support for People Refused Asylum

There is a popular perception that the UK benefit system represents a significant ‘pull’ factor for those seeking asylum in the UK (Crawley, 2010; Refugee Council, 2018). This idea underpins the reduction of support for this group that has become one of the UK Government’s main strategies for ‘deterring’ potential asylum seekers, and thus reducing the number of applications (Bloch & Schuster, 2002). However, Crawley (2010) found that three quarters of her forty-three participants, drawn from London, Brighton and Swansea, were unaware of the UK benefit system prior to arrival, and came from countries without similar welfare support arrangements. The majority had no expectation that the UK state would, or indeed should, support them, with some participants disapproving of such a welfare system. Furthermore, it has been suggested that there is no relationship between whether a country has a state benefit system and the number of asylum applications it receives (Thielemann, 2003; Neumayer, 2004). The entrenched perception that the UK benefit system represents a significant pull factor for people seeking asylum is argued not only to impoverish this group, but to lead to racism and intolerance which is not resolved once an applicant receives refugee status (Crawley, 2010; Anderson, 2010). Again, more studies and data would help to elucidate this further.

As detailed in Chapter Two, Section Five, people refused asylum are not completely without recourse to state assistance. Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999) provides basic accommodation and £35.39 financial support per week in the form of an ‘ASPEN Card’ (previously the Azure card). This card can be used in a limited range of shops to buy food and (most) toiletry items. Section 4 support is available to those who are taking all reasonable steps to leave the UK, are unable or unfit to travel, are considered to have no viable route of return at present, have permission to proceed with a judicial review of their asylum application, or are in need of accommodation to prevent a breach of their rights under the Human Rights Act 1998. However, for a number of reasons, many people refused asylum are not in receipt of this

support (Amnesty International, 2006; Crawley et al., 2011; Adie, Baggini, Griffiths, Kilgallon, & Warsi, 2007; Refugee Survival Trust & British Red Cross, 2009; Refugee Action 2006).

The available research suggests that many people refused asylum do not apply for Section 4 support despite being entitled to it (Amnesty International, 2006; Crawley et al., 2011; Adie et al., 2007; Refugee Survival Trust & British Red Cross, 2009; Refugee Action 2006). A variety of reasons are suggested as to why support is not accessed, including a lack of awareness that it is available (Adie et al., 2007; Refugee Survival Trust & British Red Cross, 2009), fear of deportation and/or detention if contact with the Home Office is maintained, and the requirement that recipients are '*taking all reasonable steps to leave the UK*' once it is '*safe and possible to do so*' (Gov.UK, 2020) (Amnesty International, 2006; Refugee Action, 2006). It is suggested that many people refused asylum do not wish to agree to this condition as they have little trust in the ability of government to accurately assess the safety of their country of origin (Amnesty International, 2006; Adie et al., 2007), a concern also highlighted by Freedom From Torture (2019) in their assessment of the current asylum process. It has also been suggested that rumours circulating within asylum seeker/refused asylum seeker communities act to deter individuals from applying for Section 4. These include the (false) idea that Section 4 represents a form of entrapment, whereby those who apply for it are more likely to be deported (Crawley et al., 2011). This disengagement from Home Office support is suggested to contribute significantly to the high levels of destitution amongst people refused asylum (Crawley et al., 2011).

However, even among those who do apply for Section 4, the process of assessment has been found to be generally slow and complex, and, because applicants remain without support while their application is processed, destitution during this period is said to be common (Freedom from Torture, 2019; McKenna, 2019; Amnesty International, 2006; Smart, 2009). Whilst still small in number, the consistency of findings across studies suggests that not accessing Section 4 support is a deeply concerning contributory factor to destitution among people refused asylum. The realities of life both with and without Section 4 support are discussed in greater depth in the sections below.

3.8 Housing

State accommodation for people refused asylum is provided under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999). The accommodation is provided on a no choice basis, usually outside of London and the South East (Home Office, 2018c). There is very little research on the nature of this accommodation. However, The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2017) conducted an in-depth review of asylum seeker Section 95 accommodation and found it to be frequently unsanitary and unsafe, at times infested by rats or mice. In addition, a National Audit Office report found that the private contractors charged with providing this accommodation had consistently missed key performance targets (National Audit Office, 2014). Given these findings, it is likely that the accommodation provided to people refused asylum will be of a similar, if not worse, standard.

Living Without State Housing

People who are destitute following the refusal of their asylum case, and who have no state support, are suggested to be largely reliant on informal resources such as friends, family and charity to meet their accommodation needs. These resources can be highly inconsistent, and frequently people's need for stable, secure housing has been found to go unmet. Because of this, studies have found that people refused asylum can lead highly itinerant lifestyles, moving between friends, street homelessness and shelters (McKenna, 2019; Refugee Action, 2017; Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Beswick & McNulty, 2015). Once again, the pool of studies from which these findings are drawn is relatively small, and thus findings must be treated with a degree of caution. However, given that most of the studies have been conducted or commissioned by organisations working directly with people refused asylum, the data nonetheless provide a useful insight into the lived realities of this group.

Friends and Family

Research has repeatedly suggested that people refused asylum often sleep on a sofa, mattress or the floor in a friend's or acquaintance's accommodation. These friends tend to be other asylum seekers, some of whom have accommodation as they are in receipt of Section 95 or Section 4 support (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Beswick & McNulty, 2015; Crawley et al., 2011). This often means that people have to arrive late at night and leave early in the morning in order to evade detection by accommodation officers. This is crucial, because people in Section 4 accommodation are not allowed to accommodate guests. By lodging with

these friends or acquaintances, people refused asylum endanger the host's ongoing receipt of state support (Refugee Action, 2006; Beswick & McNulty, 2015). In addition, because the nature of accommodation allocated to asylum seekers and people refused asylum tends to be small, conditions have been found to be cramped and can test relationships (Refugee Action, 2006).

The inability to contribute to household expenses due to destitution has also been found to lead people to feel that they have 'overstayed their welcome' (Refugee Action, 2006). This in turn means that people refused asylum frequently move between different friends and acquaintances so as not to be overly burdensome to any one friend or acquaintance (Blanchard & Joy, 2017). This itinerant lifestyle means that people often do not have any space to truly call their own, or have many, if any, of their own possessions. This, in addition to the physical difficulties mentioned, has serious consequences for people's wellbeing (Blanchard & Joy, 2017).

Some destitute refused asylum seekers live with a partner who has a different immigration status to their own. As in the case of people living with friends or acquaintances, this can be very difficult, with people reporting that they feel like a burden as they are unable to contribute towards food, other necessities or bills (Blanchard & Joy, 2017). However, without more data relating to this specific way in which people refused asylum meet their accommodation needs, it is hard to understand what life is like for individuals who live with a partner. More research is certainly needed to explore this aspect of life for people refused asylum.

Charity/Night Shelter

As well as the homes of friends and acquaintances, people refused asylum have also been found to be reliant on charitable resources such as night shelters, the homes of volunteers from refugee charities, and rooms provided by refugee charities for accommodation (McKenna, 2019; Refugee Action, 2017; Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Beswick & McNulty, 2015). However, night shelters in particular are often seen as a last resort, and Blanchard and Joy (2017) report that some of the people refused asylum in their study had spent time street homeless rather than sleeping in a night shelter due to difficulties that can arise in such an environment. As with people who stayed with friends or acquaintances, having no space of one's own was a particular issue associated with sleeping at a night shelter. What is more, sleeping in a night shelter was stated to be particularly detrimental to the mental health of vulnerable clients. This related not

only to the night shelter itself, but to the fact that as the shelter closed during the day, clients often had little to occupy them during this time.

Street Homelessness

Studies consistently show that for a variety of reasons, including feeling like a burden on friends or family, lacking social connections, and being refused support by government, many refused asylum seekers have spent time street homeless (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Refugee Action, 2017; Beswick & McNulty, 2015; Taylor, 2009; Amnesty International, 2006; Refugee Action, 2006; Crawley et al., 2011). Indeed, the risk of homelessness among people with no recourse to public funds, which includes those who have been refused asylum, is suggested to be particularly high (Crawley et al., 2011). Studies have found that the length of time spent street homeless ranges from a few nights to eighteen months (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Beswick & McNulty, 2015). Given these vastly different estimates, more research would help clarify the duration and circumstances of street homelessness amongst people refused asylum. Living on the street is incredibly dangerous, with people reportedly living in abandoned buildings, by canals, in doorways, in bus and rail stations, and in sheds and garages (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Refugee Action, 2006; Crawley et al., 2011). As well as experiencing cold and damp conditions, people were vulnerable to physical attacks and racial abuse, and women in particular reported incidents of sexual assault including rape (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Taylor, 2009; Refugee Action, 2006).

In order to avoid street homelessness some people refused asylum report engaging in transactional relationships, such as providing sex or domestic services, or putting up with abusive relationships in exchange for accommodation (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017). In addition, Refugee Action (2006) found that some individuals would avoid street homelessness by committing minor offences in order to spend a night in jail; however, this was not a common finding and in general studies suggest that people refused asylum prefer to avoid contact with the authorities in order to avoid being detained (Refugee Action, 2006).

The Impact of Insecure Accommodation

There are multifarious impacts of having no stable accommodation. These range from logistical and material concerns to mental and physical health issues (Refugee Action, 2006). One individual in the Refugee Action study, for example, reports that his itinerant lifestyle makes

him feel that people are laughing at him. Describing his lack of access to stable accommodation another says he feels '*trapped*', likening his existence to being in prison. Yet another interviewee reveals the psychological and physiological impact that constantly moving from place to place has had on her:

I have to move about. My skin itches – I itch all over – my mind itches. I can't use my medicines, and I don't sleep any more, not really.

Refugee Action, 2006, p77-78: 42-year-old woman from the DRC

Similarly, an interviewee in Crawley et al.'s (2011) study talks about his friend who has spent time both homeless and moving between friends' houses:

I am living like an animal in the bush, fearing for the lions.

Crawley et al., 2011, P18

The dehumanising impact of destitution for people refused asylum remaining in the UK is evident in the above quotations. The psychological and physical impact of having no stable accommodation goes far beyond the material impoverishment that government policy ostensibly aims to bring about. The chapter now moves on to discuss other aspects of life for people refused asylum, including access to food and other material resources. The physical and mental health implications of being refused asylum are examined in greater depth in Section 3.10.

3.9 Food and Other Material Resources

As with accommodation, people refused asylum are suggested to be largely reliant on informal resources such as friends, family and charity for food and other material resources. Research suggests that access to these can be highly inconsistent and people have been found to be unable to meet their basic needs (Beswick & McNulty, 2015). As a consequence, the British Red Cross report that among their study of fifty-six destitute asylum seekers (including refused asylum seekers) in South Yorkshire, around two thirds of participants experienced hunger on a weekly basis, with around one third experiencing this on a daily basis (Beswick & McNulty, 2015). Whilst such a small sample size makes this finding hard to generalise, Refugee Action (2017) similarly report that destitution often meant that people had to choose between feeding

themselves, or feeding their children, and frequently went hungry, thus adding weight to Beswick and McNulty's findings. In addition, when food was obtained it was often a nutritionally deficient diet of low-cost, high-fat foodstuffs including chips, rice, bread and biscuits (Crawley et al., 2011; Taylor, 2009). It is important to note that the studies conducted only cover those people refused asylum who are, in some way, engaging with services. While hunger appears to be prevalent among this group, there is quite possibly an even greater prevalence among those not engaging with services. However, without further research this is impossible to know.

Section 4 Support

It is arguably possible to define those in receipt of Section 4 support as destitute according to the terms defined by the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999). This is due to the everyday survival difficulties that are reportedly experienced by those in receipt of this support. For example, research suggests that even when supported by Section 4 people are still unable to acquire enough and/or appropriate food for themselves and their families (Blanchard & Joy, 2017). In addition, those in receipt of Section 4 do not receive any cash, and the ASPEN card with which they are issued can only be used in a limited range of shops (mainly supermarkets such as Tesco and Asda) which can be prohibitively expensive compared to markets and charity shops. These shops are often reported not to stock the types of food needed to meet particular dietary or religious requirements. They can also be at some distance from the accommodation provided and, due to the lack of cash provision, using public transport is effectively prohibited for those who are unable to access cash by other means (Reynolds, 2010). Indeed, a lack of cash is cited as one of the main difficulties associated with the ASPEN card. Some people refused asylum report obtaining cash from friends, acquaintances, or people they approach in the supermarket, often using their ASPEN card to buy food for these people in exchange for cash (McKenna, 2019).

In addition to the material issues associated with the ASPEN/Azure card, recipients of Section 4 also report feeling stigmatised when using the card to pay for goods and say they have been treated poorly by some shop staff and with hostility by some shoppers. This was found to cause anxiety and feelings of shame (McKenna, 2019; Reynolds, 2010).

Charity

Research suggests a number of ways that people refused asylum access food. These include food banks, charities that provide cooked meals, vouchers provided by charities for supermarkets such as Tesco, religious organisations such as churches and mosques, and volunteering at a charity in exchange for food (for example at a soup kitchen) (McKenna, 2019; Beswick & McNulty, 2015; Blanchard & Joy, 2017). These resources were vital to people refused asylum, but not entirely unproblematic. McKenna (2019), for example, found that foodbanks were sometimes not halal, or only provided food that needed to be cooked. For destitute refused asylum seekers who lacked cooking facilities due to rough sleeping, or insecure or poor quality accommodation, this meant that they could not meet their food needs by visiting these facilities (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Refugee Action, 2006). An additional barrier noted was that, as in the case of those in receipt of Section 4 support, people often lacked enough cash to travel to the food bank or charity as their accommodation was a significant distance away from these resources (Refugee Action, 2006). Individuals who could not access these resources therefore reported using any small amount of cash they had, often donations from charity or friends, to purchase what was generally low quality, takeaway food (Blanchard & Joy, 2017). Where these strategies failed, people would look through bins outside takeaways or beg on the street (Beswick & McNulty, 2015; Refugee Action, 2006).

Friends and Family

In addition to charitable resources studies found that people refused asylum frequently relied on friends and family for food (McKenna, 2019; Beswick & McNulty, 2015; Refugee Action, 2006). However, in the same way that people reported feeling like a burden to others when sleeping at their homes, people report feeling shame at asking friends for food (McKenna, 2019).

Clothing and Other Material Necessities

In addition to food, destitute refused asylum seekers also have difficulty accessing clothing and other essential material resources (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017). According to Blanchard and Joy (2017), this applies not only to those without state support, but also to those in receipt of Section 4 support. Studies suggest a number of strategies employed by people refused asylum to access clothing, including donations from refugee charities and faith groups, charity shops, volunteering in exchange for clothes, being given a small amount of money by

friends with which to buy clothes, or being given clothes by friends (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Refugee Action, 2006). In Refugee Action's (2006) study, even people who received some assistance from charity or friends had, on average, two sets of clothes. The difficulties associated with a limited supply of clothing are compounded by a lack of access to shower and laundry facilities, and other issues relating to personal hygiene and grooming such as access to shaving equipment (McKenna, 2019; Refugee Action, 2006).

3.10 Health

The right to health, including access to healthcare and other factors that support a 'healthy life', is an inclusive, non-discriminatory, human right identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (OHCHR and WHO, 2008: 1). People who have been refused asylum in England are entitled to free primary care services. However, whilst all refused asylum seekers in Wales and Scotland are entitled to free secondary healthcare, in England only those who are in receipt of Section 4 Home Office support or Section 21 local authority support are entitled to free secondary health care provision. The exception to this is care and treatment that began before a person's claim for asylum was refused. For care or treatment that started after the refusal of their claim there is no access to secondary healthcare unless the individual can pay for their treatment (HM Government, 2014). As most people refused asylum will not have the ability to pay for such treatment, this therefore goes against the OHCHR and WHO principal of equality of access to healthcare for all.

It is also important to note that the right to health also includes the right to be free from 'inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' (OHCHR and WHO, 2008: 1). Whilst this might best be understood as relating to torture in its most extreme form, the degrading and dehumanising circumstances experienced by people refused asylum might also usefully be understood in this light.

The literature relating to experiences of health and wellbeing among refused asylum seekers is slightly larger than for the other areas with which this chapter is concerned, and comes from both the campaign sector and the medical profession. There are two ways in which the mental and physical health of people refused asylum appears to be worse than for the general population. Firstly, experiences prior to arrival in the UK are suggested to impair health

(McKenna, 2019; Ray, 2010, Cheal & Fine, 2012). Studies make particular mention of the large number of asylum seekers that have experienced torture, including the use of sexual violence and rape, as well as other distressing experiences encountered before fleeing their country of origin (McKenna, 2019; Fisher, 2004; Burnett & Peel 2001; Ashton & Moore, 2009). Secondly, the longer a person has been in the asylum process, the lower they score on quality of life measures, and the greater the level of physical and mental health complaints reported by study participants (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Beswick & McNulty, 2015; Laban, Komproe, Gernaat & de Jong, 2008). In particular, destitution and associated poor living conditions are suggested to seriously impair both the physical and mental health of refused asylum seekers (McKenna, 2019; BMA, 2012). Before moving on to discuss particular issues of physical and mental health among people refused asylum, the chapter now briefly discusses some factors that appear to impair access to healthcare, another factor that can have negative consequences for health.

Accessing Healthcare

A number of factors have been suggested to lead to people who have been refused asylum being less able or willing to access healthcare services than the wider UK population. For people coping with the day-to-day survival necessities of seeking food and shelter, the priority is to meet these most basic needs, with attendance at or even seeking out healthcare appointments found to be a much lower priority (McKenna, 2019; Kang, Tomkow & Farrington, 2019). It is therefore argued that the heavily structured appointment system operated by most GP practices acts to exclude people refused asylum (Kang et al., 2019). In addition, asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers are noted to experience forms of cognitive impairment, such as memory impairment and concentration difficulties, which are exacerbated by malnutrition and depression. This can reduce their ability to both organise and motivate themselves enough to seek help for physical and mental health concerns. More material barriers, such as a lack of writing implements to make notes of appointment times, have also been suggested to make it difficult for people to attend appointments (Ray, 2010). A lack of cash to travel to appointments is also noted to be problematic, and this is a difficulty faced both by those without Section 4 support and those with Section 4 support, as they are not provided with any cash (McKenna, 2019; Reynolds, 2010). As a consequence, accessing healthcare appointments can be difficult and people report missing appointments and thus compromising their access to these services (Reynolds, 2010; Ray, 2010).

In addition, the often itinerant nature of destitute refused asylum seekers' lives is highlighted as a barrier to accessing a GP (Gillespie, 2012), as moving between catchment areas often requires the individual to register at a new surgery. Having no fixed address can also mean that people do not receive appointment letters and can miss appointments because of this (McKenna, 2019). People have also been found to experience problems adhering to prescribed medications and storing medications appropriately due to homelessness (McKenna, 2019). Ray (2010) highlights the parallels between refused asylum seekers and other homeless populations for whom the current model of primary care provision is not well adapted. These difficulties meant that advocacy by a member of an organisation such as the Red Cross was often seen as an essential part of enabling people refused asylum to access healthcare services (McKenna, 2019).

Research has also proposed that an additional problem facing people refused asylum when accessing healthcare is the language barrier (McKenna, 2019; Crawley et al., 2011; Nellums et al., 2018). This can impede a person's ability to make an appointment and, even if an appointment is made, poor utilization of translation services by GPs, and a reluctance to inconvenience GPs by asking for an interpreter, all reportedly affected the quality of treatment received (McKenna, 2019; Ray, 2010).

Physical Health

The level of physical complaints among asylum seekers has been noted to increase the longer they have been in the asylum system (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Laban et al., 2008). This situation is suggested to be worse among those who are street homeless compared to those who live with friends or in state provided accommodation (Blanchard & Joy, 2017). Whilst some of these physical complaints are pre-existing infections and diseases contracted prior to arrival in the UK, such as HIV/AIDS, TB and Hepatitis A, B or C (Haroon, 2008; Fisher, 2004), other aspects of their presentation relate to the cramped conditions, excessive heat, and long periods of travel experienced during migratory journeys (McKenna, 2019; Haroon, 2008). In addition, research suggests that many asylum seekers have experienced torture, including sexual violence, prior to fleeing their country of origin (Fisher, 2004; Burnett & Peel, 2001; Ashton & Moore, 2009). Asylum seekers are also noted to have traumatic injuries from landmines, amputated limbs, head injuries (including resultant epilepsy and post-

concussion symptoms), partial loss of vision, hearing impairment, and malnutrition (Newell, 2010; Cheal & Fine, 2012; Ray, 2010). People refused asylum who are street homeless are also suggested to be at increased risk from certain illnesses such as TB (Blanchard & Joy, 2017). Psychosomatic illnesses resulting from stress, including heart disease, cancer, gastrointestinal problems, headaches and pain in limbs, are also prevalent in this population (Newell, 2010; Ashton & Moore, 2009; Burghgraef, 2010b; Blanchard & Joy, 2017).

Ashton and Moore (2009) postulate that the health problems experienced by asylum seekers are worsened for people refused asylum as, in most instances, they are no longer eligible for state support and face a life of destitution and poverty, a devastating reality to have to cope with and one that can significantly impact on an individual's physical health (Burghgraef, 2010a; Raynor, 2010; Newell, 2010). The negative health implications of restrictive policies are corroborated by reports from refused asylum seekers that their health has deteriorated since arrival in the UK (Blanchard & Joy, 2017). Poor health is one of the criteria for being given support under Section 4, although a substantial proportion of interviewees in Refugee Action's (2006) report with serious health conditions were found not to be receiving this support. Refugee Action (2006) note that many of those with whom they spoke felt that access to stable accommodation, food and a consistent income would reverse or at least improve both mental and physical health problems (Refugee Action, 2006).

Mental Health

Although not all destitute asylum seekers will have a clinically diagnosed mental health condition, a number of studies suggest that many will experience some kind of mental ill health at some point (McKenna, 2019; Beswick & McNulty, 2015; Ashton & Moore, 2009), with a suggested higher prevalence amongst refused asylum seekers (Ashton & Moore, 2009; Burghgraef, 2010a). Those working with destitute people who have been refused asylum state that they often notice a deterioration in their mental health over time, and that many have contemplated suicide. In addition, accessing mental health services was found to be highly problematic (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017).

Stressors particular to this group are suggested to include loss of family and friends, constant moving and homelessness due to insecure housing, culture shock, lack of employment, problems of language and personal identity, uncertainty about their asylum claim, feelings of

a loss of control over life, the feeling of living in limbo, experiencing racism and hostility, and feelings of shame associated with being dependent on others for survival (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Beswick & McNulty, 2015; Fisher, 2004; Haroon, 2008), all of which, argues Burghgraef (2010b), combine to lead to worsening mental health.

Specific mental health problems identified among this group include low mood, clinical depression, loss of self-worth, self-harm, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, flashbacks and sleep disturbances (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Beswick & McNulty, 2015; Burghgraef, 2010b; Palmer & Ward, 2006; Burghgraef, 2010a; Newell, 2010; Kang et al., 2019).

While many of these illnesses are associated with trauma, the often chaotic nature of life for people who are destitute following the refusal of their claim for asylum, means that, particularly in the case of PTSD, services reported that they were unable to work effectively with patients as a stable secure environment is required to facilitate treatment. For people refused asylum, the trauma is often very much ongoing due to the precarity of their everyday existence (Burghgraef, 2010a). Furthermore, it is suggested that many people refused asylum do not have they type of severe and enduring mental illness that health care services are used to treating. Newell (2010) reports that health professionals state that were refused asylum seekers' circumstances to improve, their mental health would also be much improved. Similarly, Refugee Action (2006) note that many of the people refused asylum with whom they spoke felt that access to stable accommodation, food and a consistent income would reverse or at least improve their mental health problems (Refugee Action, 2006). Indeed, Ryan, Benson and Dooley (2008) suggest that there is a significant relationship between legal status and mental health problems, with levels of mental distress reducing significantly if a person is granted leave to remain. One further factor that has a significant impact on the mental health of people refused asylum is level of social support. This is discussed in the following section.

Social Support

Levels of social support among people refused asylum appear to vary greatly (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Beswick & McNulty, 2015). Given the extent to which people are reported to rely on friends and acquaintances to access vital resources including shelter, food, and clothing, as well as crucial emotional support, strong social networks can be understood as integral to the

wellbeing of people refused asylum. Many people refused asylum report having no friends who can listen to them and provide emotional support (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; Beswick & McNulty, 2015). However, some of the people in Blanchard and Joy's (2017) report for the Red Cross did feel that they could talk to their Red Cross worker about emotional issues. Interestingly, some participants had deliberately chosen not to make friends, stating that other homeless people might be 'bad' or take drugs, and they did not want to associate with these people. Others reported that they felt they had nothing to bring to a friendship, both emotionally and materially. Among those who did have friends, these tended to be other asylum seekers or people they had met through volunteering at local charities. There were other issues that impacted on people's social relationships however, including access to transport. Both people refused asylum without support, as well as those with Section 4 support, were unable to easily access public transport as they had no cash (Reynolds, 2010). As housing was frequently at some distance from the location of friends or services, this led to social isolation which was found to have a detrimental impact on mental health (McKenna, 2019).

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the existing literature on the experiences of people refused asylum in the UK. Whilst this has enabled a broad understanding of the difficulties faced by people refused asylum to be gained, including the high levels of destitution, reliance on friends, family and charity for basic resources, and the impact of being refused asylum on mental health, the relatively small pool of studies in this area means that they cannot provide a truly robust and complete picture.

Furthermore, studies tend to originate from the NGO and charitable sector, and are generally small in scale. There is also minimal literature from the academic sector. This means that there may be a political bias inherent to the studies cited, and also that studies are largely engaging with individuals already accessing services provided by these organisations. This potentially limits understanding of the lives of those individuals not accessing services.

Notwithstanding these caveats, the existing literature does consistently suggest that current government policy is leading to high levels of destitution among people refused asylum. Whilst the government argues that removal of support from people refused asylum will incentivise them to leave the UK, in reality many people do not wish to leave. The reasons for this include

fearing for their lives were they to return to their country of origin, and a belief that their claim for asylum has been denied incorrectly. This belief is supported by high rates of success on appeal. Refused asylum seekers thus appear to be living lives characterised by poor access to food, shelter and other necessities, and by the psychological impacts of both material deprivation and the ramifications of having been refused asylum. They characterise their destitution not just in terms material lack, but in terms of feelings of hopelessness, a lack of agency, and feeling imprisoned and ghost-like.

3.12 Research Questions

Given the evidence that people who have been refused asylum in the UK lead highly marginalised lives, but that understanding of these lives is largely hidden, the following two research questions have been developed. These questions will be explored through engagement with participants via empirical fieldwork, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, and in light of the theoretical concepts discussed next in Chapter 4. This will enable the thesis to address gaps that have been identified in the empirical and theoretical understanding of the marginalisation of this group. The questions are as follows:

1. What are refused asylum seekers' experiences of deprivation, destitution and marginalisation, and how might they be explained?
2. What are the social and psychological impacts of material exclusion and being refused asylum, and how might they be explained?

As one of the main aims of this research is to draw on theoretical concepts that might aid understanding of the highly marginalised lived experiences of people refused asylum. The thesis now moves on to look at a range of theoretical concepts that may help facilitate this.

Chapter Four: Understanding Marginality: Key Concepts for an Analytical Framework

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the analytical framework that enabled me to engage with my data. Some theorists have suggested that looking to theory in advance of data collection is unhelpful. Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory, for example, suggests that empirical observations should be made in isolation from theory, so that researchers do not enter the data analysis process with theoretical presuppositions. However, Elias (1987) argues that this is a sign of immaturity on the part of the researcher, as it fails to acknowledge the way that current social phenomena are not isolated from, but embedded within, the preceding social and historical conditions.

This analytical framework developed somewhere between these two viewpoints. Key elements of the framework did indeed emerge in a 'grounded' way during the data collection and analysis processes. As new challenges arose, or data were collected that did not fit with the initial theoretical lenses through which I had intended to analyse it, additional theories and analytical lenses were sought and integrated. However, at the outset, and in line with Elias (1987) contention above, certain theoretical concepts guided the origins of this framework. These concepts included Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations which describes, based on empirical observation, the way that certain groups come to be marginalised. This theoretical lens was selected due to the highly marginalised position of refused asylum seekers within UK society which, although identified by the policy literature (McKenna, 2019; Beswick and McNulty, 2015; Crawley et al., 2011; Gillespie, 2012; Refugee Action, 2006), has received relatively little attention from a theoretical analysis perspective (Healey, 2006). The applicability of established - outsider theory is discussed in Section 4.2.

However, rather than undertake a theoretical analysis of participant experiences centred on one theoretical perspective, such as Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, a number of analytical lenses, based broadly around social exclusion, were

drawn on to form an analytical framework. This approach has been chosen because, as May (2001) usefully highlights:

...to assume that one theoretical paradigm, as an enclosed system of thought, is capable of fully explaining the social world is rendered problematic. Monolithic social theories... cannot fully explain the workings of societies or understand social relations.

May, 2001, p29

Indeed, as the research progressed this was certainly found to be the case, with no single theoretical paradigm enabling all aspects of the data to be explored fully. Initially, the framework was built around looking at the exclusion of participants at an intergroup level using Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations. This was because, at least in terms of the rights that determined participants' access to work, housing, and other material resources, their membership of the refused asylum seeker 'group' determined their lack of rights. However, as the day-to-day lived realities of participants' lives came to light during data collection and analysis, it was found that the theory of established-outsider relations did not enable me to fully engage with the specific circumstances in which participant experiences were situated. As such, concepts more grounded in the current social world were sought out to explore the more specific, less overarching, details of these experiences. Theoretical perspectives such as Wacquant's concept of advanced marginality (2008) were introduced to more fully ground the research in the here and now. The way in which this concept was utilised is detailed in Sections 4.4 and 4.5.

As it progressed, the analytical framework began to form around two kinds of theoretical perspective, the overarching/higher level or 'grand theory' perspective, and the more specific perspective, grounded in the specific experiences of marginalised populations. Certainly, without recourse to both perspectives this analytical framework would not have enabled the breadth of analytical exploration that occurred in data analysis and which thus informed the findings chapters. Wright Mills (1959) notes:

There have been those who are disparaging of the inability of ‘grand theorists’ to grasp the social problems which are important to specific ‘historical and structural contexts’.

Wright Mills, 1959, p42

Whilst Elias and Scotson’s (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outside relations is by no means a ‘grand theory’ in the traditional sense, it nonetheless speaks to broader social processes that are suggested to be applicable to a variety of different contexts. This contrasts with Wacquant’s (2008) work, grounded as it is in the life and social relations of the post-industrial city. This was determined to be a particularly useful approach for examining the data in this study as participant experiences were situated in a post-industrial city and the participant group, like those in Wacquant’s empirical research, were drawn from a marginalised population. By using Wacquant, I was able to fill the gap that became evident in Elias and Scotson’s (1994 [1965]) theoretical approach, which did not allow me to look in close up at the everyday experiences of my participants in a post-industrial city in an era of neoliberal capitalism, the specific context in which participant experiences played out.

However, whilst considering more context specific approaches to understanding the social world is, without doubt, hugely important in terms of understanding particular details of marginalisation and social exclusion, Elias (1987), conversely, cautions that highly context-specific theories risk a ‘retreat into the present’, neglecting the social processes and historical antecedents that underpin current social phenomena and that, therefore, a more overarching understanding of social processes in the wider sense is needed. Acknowledging the historical antecedents of current policy, as detailed in Chapter Two, and the ensuing material, social and rights-based exclusion of people refused asylum, is integral to fully understanding the everyday lived realities of participants in the here and now, and thus an overarching perspective was crucial in allowing me to gain an holistic understanding of the data. Indeed, Rodger (2012) suggests that by combining Wacquant’s work on advanced marginality with Elias’ figurational sociology, researchers are better able to grasp the specifics of present situations while nonetheless situating them within more overarching social theories. By developing an analytical framework that encompasses both these broader approaches to understanding social relations and more context specific theories, it was hoped that participant experiences could be explored both as a manifestation, or consequence, of life in the modern world, but also as

resulting from more enduring social processes which transcend the present moment and speak to more fundamental ways that societies, and individuals within those societies, interact with and impact upon one another.

As detailed in Chapter Three, the lives of people refused asylum are characterised, overwhelmingly, by extreme deprivation and marginalisation. As such, the chapter begins by looking at a number of theories that seek to understand instances of extreme marginalisation. As was shown in Chapter Three, much of this exclusion and marginalisation occurs because of policy that prevents people refused asylum from working. This prohibition on paid employment is predicated on the person refused asylum's citizenship status. Were they to gain either refugee status or British citizenship, they would then be entitled to work or to claim mainstream benefits, thus alleviating their material impoverishment somewhat. The next section of the chapter therefore draws on Agamben's concept of *homo sacer* (1998), aspects of the literature on citizenship, and the concept of the precariat, all of which highlight the role of the state in the exclusion of particular social groups. Given their lack of UK citizenship, and with very few rights, these concepts provide a useful starting point for examining the experiences of the participants in this study. Citizenship is not dealt with explicitly in Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) or Wacquant's (2008; 2000) approaches to understanding exclusion and marginalisation, and thus by utilising theoretical approaches related to citizenship the analytical framework incorporates an additional perspective that fills a gap in the theories identified so far.

The chapter then goes on to look at how intergroup dynamics, with particular reference to Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, influence patterns of exclusion in Section 4.3, before exploring the contemporary context of social exclusion in Section 4.4. Finally, in Section 4.5, the role of state control and imprisonment in the lives of participants is discussed.

Before looking at the extreme marginalisation of participants in relation to their citizenship status, the following diagram delineates how the theoretical concepts detailed in the coming sections integrate with one another and the data they engage with:

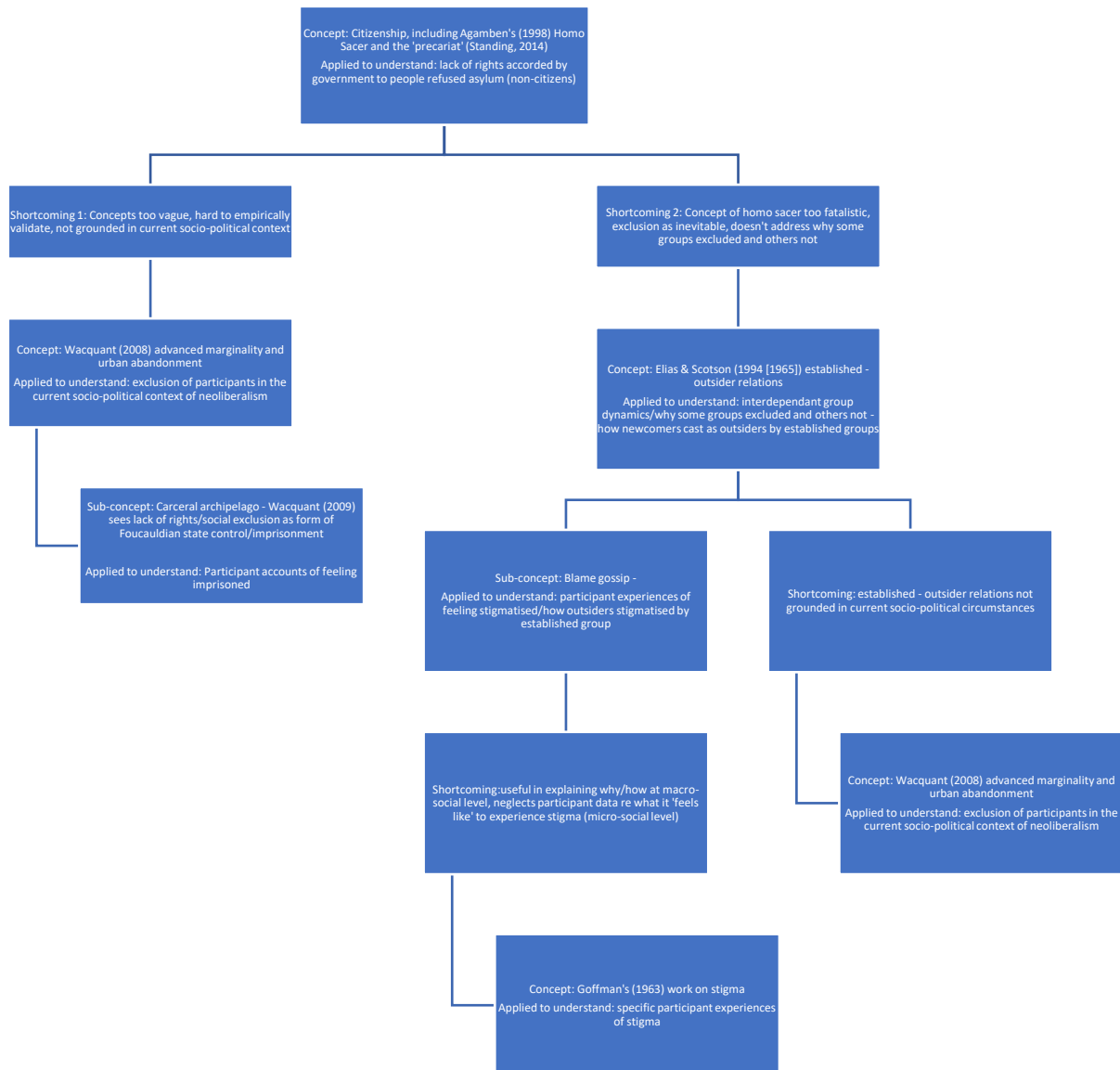


Figure 1: Analytical Framework Diagram

4.2 Understanding Extreme Marginalisation: Agamben, Homo Sacer, and the Concept of Citizenship

As detailed in Chapter Four, people refused asylum are highly marginalised, with lives marked by extreme deprivation. This was found to be the case for the participants in this study. Given the prominence of this finding, theories that engage with extreme marginalisation were sought

out. One of the most prominent theoretical articulations of extreme marginalisation is Agamben's (1998) concept of the 'homo sacer' or 'sacred man'. As such, this concept offered a useful way of exploring the highly marginalised experiences of participants. Homo sacer in Roman law was defined as a person who was excluded by the state and had no rights, but could be killed with impunity by anybody. This resonated strongly with the experiences of participants who felt that although they had very few rights, they were always in danger, with the potential to be detained and deported at any time. Indeed, homo sacer exists in a 'state of exception' or 'inclusive exclusion' whereby they are excluded by the state from all the rights that citizenship would bestow, but are still subject to the rule of law by the state, and thus can be punished by the state. Such an existence is described as 'bare life' by Agamben, as lacking in human dignity and political influence. Participants, as will be shown across the findings chapters, frequently expressed a lack of dignity, of feeling that they had been dehumanised, and that their life was 'bare', and this again reinforced the utility of Agamben's work in this analytical framework. Described as a 'deliberately overarching' theory by Nikolopoulou (2000), Agamben's work links human experience, and specifically social exclusion, to political power. It thus provides a useful theoretical concept with which to begin unpicking the experiences of the participants in this study whose experiences of exclusion are intimately bound up with political power, and their lack of the same. Indeed, Agamben (2000) views refugees as the ultimate embodiment of 'bare life' in contemporary society's new political order.

However, while arguing that refugees experience 'bare life' as a result of their lack of citizenship, and resultant lack of political power, Agamben (1998) nonetheless problematises the concept of citizenship, a legal categorisation bestowed on certain individuals by the state and thus a manifestation of political power, asserting that:

[T]he fates of human rights and the nation-state are bound together such that the decline and crisis of one necessarily implies the end of the other.

Agamben, 1998, p134

As such, as the role of the nation state declines, human rights must equally suffer. Agamben thus asks how, when citizenship is no longer exclusively tied to the nation state, do we understand why certain people have rights while others do not? In line with this, Zembylas

(2010) argues that a critical citizenship approach aligns well with Agamben's perspective in seeking to understand the very notion of citizenship as something bound intimately to the nation state. Such an approach thus allows the concept of homo sacer to be better understood within the changing role of the nation state. Central arguments of this approach are therefore now explored.

Given the role of the state in determining who is deemed 'homo sacer', the concept of citizenship – i.e. who is bestowed with the rights associated with belonging to a particular state, and who is excluded from these - must be considered in order to fully engage with the concept of homo sacer and its origins. The concept of citizenship has its roots in the philosophy of Aristotle and Rousseau, and has, historically, been tightly linked to the right to participate fully in the political workings of the state, principally through having the right to vote (Bauböck, 2005). Marshall (1965) defined citizenship in the modern era as composed of social, political and civil rights. However, Bauböck (2005) argues that in recent times these rights, particularly civil and social rights, have become less bound up with citizenship as the concept of universal human rights has come into being. He makes the point, however, that these 'universal' rights are, nonetheless, often contingent upon an individual's employment or residency within a particular nation state. The concept of citizenship, therefore, is not an absolute. The definition of the concept itself, and indeed what it should confer, is highly contested (Marshall, 1950; Sommers, 1993; Lazar & Nuijten, 2013; Gaventa, 2002; Ferguson, 2013; Gordon & Stack, 2007), particularly given the more fluid and changeable nature of citizenship as it becomes less bound to the nation state and increasingly transnational in nature (Bauböck, 2003; Selasi, 2005).

Even within nation states, some have suggested that in practice the rights bestowed by the state on its citizens are differentiated, with a spectrum of entitlements, rights and exemptions (Chatterjee, 2012). Going beyond the concept of simple citizenship, Hammar (1990) introduces the term 'denizens' to describe foreign nationals who are long-term residents, but not citizens, within a particular state. These denizens enjoy most, but not all, of the rights of citizens. Sitting somewhere in the realm of denizens then, but with very few rights, such as the right to work, refused asylum seekers could thus be seen as existing at one end of a spectrum of rights. However, whether they exist at the very end of such a spectrum, or outside of the rights of citizenship altogether, the concept merits inclusion as the legal definitions that govern who is

a citizen and who, like refused asylum seekers, is not, does, unquestionably, determine the rights and entitlements of the participants in this study and whether or not they experience, in Agamben's (2000) terms, 'bare life'.

One way that the position of people refused asylum might be understood within the broader concept of citizenship is in terms of the concept of the 'precariat'. In his explanation of how a lack of rights defines the condition of the precariat, Standing (2014) states that:

Rights are thus seen as a badge of citizenship, and only citizens have all the rights established in their own country. It is in this sense that most migrants are denizens – people with a more limited range of rights than citizens.

Standing, 2014, p4

And:

Many denizens not only have limited rights but also lack 'the right to have rights'. Asylum seekers denied refugee status are an example.

Standing, 2014, p9

According to Standing, therefore, it is the lack of entitlement to rights that is the defining characteristic of people refused asylum's legal status within the UK, and which defines them as members of the 'precariat'. The concept of the precariat, however, has been problematised for a number of reasons. Munck (2013) suggests that it is too Eurocentric and neglects to acknowledge that the forms of precarity emerging in the global north have long been the norm in the global south. In addition, Banki (2013) argues that Standing's (2014) iteration of the concept fails to adequately acknowledge '*precarity of place*' and '*the specific challenges of noncitizen living*' in relation to migrants, something that this piece of research seeks to explore. The concept has also been critiqued as being too inclusive, incorporating such a wide and diverse range of actors that it begins to lose its usefulness as a theoretical concept (Alberti, Bessa, Hardy, Trappmann & Umney, 2018). Despite these shortcomings, the concept nonetheless merits inclusion in the analytical framework for the way that it articulates what might be understood as the modern incarnation of homo sacer. Indeed, Irazabal (2018) describes the precariat as just this, and thus enables scholars to draw links between excluded populations through time, from the Roman homo sacer, to the refused asylum seeker in twenty-

first century Britain. This, in turn, allows more overarching theories to link to present day social realities, enabling the social processes that underlie such exclusions to begin to be elucidated.

However, there are also a number of pertinent critiques of the concept of *homo sacer*, and Agamben's (1998, 2000) work in particular, that do need to be carefully considered. The first comes from Shinkel and van den Berg (2011) and their study of urban marginalisation in the Netherlands. The authors argue that although Agamben's concepts, such as 'bare life', are useful, as they delineate the way that modern political life is increasingly defined by those who are included in the life of the state only through their exclusion from it, he does not state how widely these concepts are applicable, and that as such, scholars wishing to empirically validate his theoretical assertions are hindered as the concepts are too 'pure' and not sufficiently grounded in the current socio-political context. This was certainly found to be the case in the present study where data concerned the day-to-day experiences of participants. In order to address this shortcoming, the authors suggest that Agamben's work should be utilised in conjunction with Foucault's concept of governmentality (1975) which articulates the mechanisms of power in populations. By doing this, the authors argue that it can be better applied to contemporary urban exclusion which, they suggest, is intricately bound up with power. During fieldwork and data analysis Foucault's work was found to be useful to a certain extent, however, engagement with Wacquant's work on urban abandonment and advanced marginality (2008) provided a way to more fully situate the present research within the life of the modern city, a distinct shortcoming of the concept of *homo sacer*. As such, Wacquant's work was drawn on during the data analysis process to a much greater extent. These concepts are discussed in Sections 4.4 and 4.5 of this chapter.

A further critique that merits exploration is Gündoğdu's (2012) suggestion that Agamben's concept is too fatalistic, arguing as it does that the refugee is both emblematic and paradigmatic of the new political order, that it is, in essence, inevitable. Gündoğdu asserts that the concept fails to address the underlying reasons why certain groups come to be seen as legitimately excludable while other groups do not, and in this sense I agree with Gündoğdu. Whilst the figure of the 'refugee' is undoubtedly central to the current socio-political climate, failing to interrogate why this is so seems to neglect a crucial aspect of understanding the experiences of refugees and migrants more broadly. Exploring why refused asylum seekers might be particularly vulnerable to exclusion is a key question of this piece of research, indeed, so much

so that the theoretical starting point in the development of this analytical framework was Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations which specifically explores how intergroup relations can lead to the exclusion of particular groups. Whilst Gündoğdu does not specifically suggest how this shortcoming might be overcome, one way to address it is to explore how different groups within societies interact with and impact upon one another as, ultimately, intergroup relationships determine who holds the balance of power within any set of interdependent actors.

Agamben's work, and the wider literature on citizenship discussed in this section, allowed me to consider the way that citizenship impacted on participant rights, and particularly to engage with data where participants articulated a lack of rights accorded to them by the government while simultaneously feeling that they could be punished by government. However, this was not sufficient to understand fully the reasons why the state came to be so powerful relative to the non-citizen refused asylum seekers. In addition, the concept of *homo sacer* was found to be too vague to fully engage with the day-to-day lived realities of participants' lives in the modern city, and it was suggested that Wacquant's concepts, including advanced marginality, would enable a more detailed picture of what it is like to be '*homo sacer*' in modern Britain, to be developed. The next section of the chapter turns to figural sociology, and in particular the work of Elias and Scotson, which specifically aims to interrogate interdependent group dynamics in order to understand the underpinnings of intergroup relations. In this way the gap identified in Agamben's work, and thus in my understanding of why people refused asylum come to be excluded, can begin to be addressed.

4.3 Group Dynamics: A Figural Approach to Exploring Marginalisation

Figural sociology, with its focus on the long-term social processes by which some groups come to be excluded whilst others do not, allows for a means of looking at why people refused asylum might be particularly vulnerable to exclusion. In this way it addresses the gap identified in Agamben's (1998) work on the *homo sacer* which was not able to adequately explain why certain groups or people come to be '*homo sacer*'. Described by Kilminster (2007) as a '*sociology of the human condition*', which sought to transcend economic, individualistic or psychological rational for understanding society, figural sociologists argue that the social world is not static, but constantly in a state of flux depending on where power resides within a given set of interdependent social actors. By acknowledging the mutability of social group

dynamics, homo sacer can begin to be understood not as an absolute or inevitable consequence of lacking citizenship, but as resulting from current intergroup dynamics.

Elias (2000; 1994 [1965]) is one of the foremost proponents of this approach to understanding society. In their work 'The Established and the Outsiders' (Elias & Scotson, 1994 [1965]), Elias and Scotson detail the way that longevity of residence and levels of interdependence between different social groups impact the way that 'established' groups treat newcomer groups, casting them as 'outsiders'. The theory of established-outsider relations that came out of this work has particular resonance with the experiences of people refused asylum in this study, who might well be understood as 'newcomers' among an 'established' UK population. By incorporating the theory of established-outsider relations into the analytical framework it is hoped that Gündoğdu's (2012) critique of Agamben's work on the concept of homo sacer, in which he suggests that it does not adequately explain *why* some groups are excluded whilst others are not, can be addressed.

Within the theory of established-outsider relations (Elias & Scotson, 1994 [1965]) it is argued that social exclusion is dependent not on the specific characteristics of the excluded, but on the figural power dynamics between interdependent groups. Elias and Scotson suggest that when an old 'established' group encounters a new 'outsider' group there is a tendency for the established group to band together in order to preserve their group identity, or 'we-image', in the face of an assumed threat to the group's identity and social norms. Basing their theory on observations of neighbourhood relations in a town in the British Midlands, to which they gave the pseudonym 'Winston Parva', they argue that established groups tend to define themselves according to the 'best' or most nomic behaviour of their group, imbuing them with group 'charisma' and associated high status. Conversely, they suggest that established groups tend to homogenise outsider groups, defining them according to the worst, or most anomic, behaviour of the outsider group, imbuing all members of the group with 'group disgrace' and low status. Both Pratsinakis (2018) and Loyal (2011), apply this theory at the international level, arguing that such an approach enables scholars to understand immigrant-native relations and, in particular, exclusionary migration policy. As such, the theory seemed particularly applicable to understanding the experiences of participants in the present study who had come to the UK from other countries seeking asylum.

The theory of established-outsider relations proposes that the contrasting definitions of the two groups become narratives of ‘praise gossip’ and ‘blame gossip’ that permeate not only the established group but the outsider group, informing the opinions of both. This occurs, suggest Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]), due to the difference in longevity of residence between the old established group and the newcomer outsider group. The relative longevity of residence and sense of shared history of the established group means that they possess strong internal group cohesion. This cohesion is suggested to supersede any internal group divisions when the group is faced with the ‘threat’ of the newcomers. Elias and Scotson contrast the established group members with the newcomer outsider group who, in the case of Winston Parva, had arrived somewhat piecemeal from a number of different UK locations, and thus were largely unknown to one another. Because of this they lacked the established group’s strong internal group cohesion. This lack of cohesion meant that negative blame gossip could not be countered by members of the outsider group. In relation to this, Slater (2012) suggests that dominant narratives created by those in power about less powerful groups creates ignorance of other possible narratives about less powerful groups. In Elias and Scotson’s terms, this serves to preserve the positive ‘we-image’ of the established group, enabling them to disidentify with the outsiders, seeing them as fundamentally different and, more importantly, of lesser human worth, than themselves, thus undermining any potential threat to their collective norms and values.

There are striking similarities between the newcomers to Winston Parva and the refused asylum seekers in the present study that made the theory of established-outsider relations particularly useful as a concept for engaging with the data. For example, the ‘established’ population (for the purposes of this research those that have UK citizenship) is not homogenous, and there are significant social, political and economic divisions within UK society. However, research suggests that attitudes toward asylum and immigration transcend these divisions, with people across social categories holding broadly negative opinions about asylum seekers (Duffy & Frere-Smith, 2014). In addition, much like the newcomers to Winston Parva, asylum seekers arrive in the UK not as a preformed group, but as a very heterogeneous mix of families and individuals from a vast range of countries, and from many different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds (UNHCR, 2019b). They, like the newcomers to Winston Parva, are ‘grouped’ by the established population. The established group’s dominance in terms of access to positions of power and the mechanisms of propagation of ‘blame gossip’ allows them to

present the new group, the asylum seekers, as an homogenous group, and not only that but a deviant, threatening group based on the behaviour of an anomic minority. This is evidenced by the overwhelmingly negative presentation of asylum seekers in the media (Khan, 2012; Lyn & Lea, 2003; Greenslade, 2005) which can be understood as blame gossip. Again, this reinforces the relevance of this concept to the present study.

One aspect of the concept that was revealed to be particularly pertinent in the data analysis phase of the research, was that blame gossip narratives led to a suspicion among the poorly cohered members of the outsider group that others of the group did indeed possess the negative traits ascribed to them by the established group. However, individual members of the outsider group viewed themselves as the exception to these ascribed negative traits. Participants often discussed very similar opinions to these, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight. Of note, this desire not to be associated with the bad reputation of the group is also suggested to perpetuate segregation within the outsider group, and thus maintain the power imbalance between the two groups.

In addition to enabling blame and praise gossip to be disseminated, the strong internal cohesion of the established group in Winston Parva allowed them to restrict access to local amenities and positions of power, with membership limited to members of the established group. This further reduced the potential for integration between the established group and outsider group, and thus for the lessening of the imbalance of power. Again, this echoes the way that the UK Government is able to restrict access to positions of power and key institutions, such as the media and government, so that people refused asylum cannot access or participate in these. It is thus very difficult for the newcomer refused asylum seekers, like the newcomers to Winston Parva, to influence dominant narratives or participate fully in the life of the community.

Whilst Elias' focus on group dynamics was of huge benefit, as it enabled the underpinning mechanisms of social exclusion to be explored, there are some shortcomings that need to be addressed. As will be shown in Chapter Eight, participants often disliked the 'refused asylum seeker' label ascribed to them by the UK legislature and, while some accepted it as their current situation, it was not the primary way that they identified themselves, basing this instead on ethnicity, class or country of origin. In line with this, Petinseva (2015) points out that although group interdependencies are important in terms of rights, group belonging is often multiple –

one can be an insider in one situation and an outsider in another. Indeed, other identities, such as class or ethnicity, meant that some participants were ‘established’ in other group belongings, which facilitated some access to resources or a sense of belonging that the ‘refused asylum seeker’ grouping did not. Despite this caveat, however, the dominant grouping variable in terms of participants’ rights, and thus to a large extent the material deprivation and marginalisation that so significantly impacted their day-to-day lives, is their refused asylum seeker status, and the concept therefore merits inclusion for this reason. However, the benefits of using a multifaceted analytical framework approach, whereby shortcomings such as these are acknowledged and addressed as far as possible, are reinforced by identifying such shortcomings.

Petinseva (2015) also draws attention to the emphasis placed on the long-term nature of social change in figurational sociology. Writing specifically about established-outsider relations in respect to new migration, she highlights how the change from outsider status to membership of the established group, or vice versa, can happen fairly rapidly due to the speed with which policy in this area can change. This, of course, only relates to established/outside status in terms of access to rights, and individuals may continue to feel or indeed be treated as, an outsider even after more rights have been granted. Nonetheless, the present study found that participants articulated that the distance from outsider to established group member could be as short as gaining refugee status or leave to remain, both of which, although not granting full citizenship and the rights of citizenship, would imbue an individual with significantly greater rights than being a refused asylum seeker. This critique thus highlights the potential instability of the established/outside status of refused asylum seekers, who are hoping always to cross the line from ‘outsider’ refused asylum seeker to ‘established’ refugee/UK citizen.

By engaging with figurational sociology and intergroup relations the analytical framework was able to address one of the key gaps identified in Agamben’s (1998) work on the concept of *homo sacer*. While exclusion is still suggested to be linked to the power of the state, the reasons why the state might hold such power can begin to be elucidated with recourse to concepts such as longevity of residence and group cohesion. As discussed, the propagation of blame gossip is suggested to be central to ensuring the cohesion of an established group when confronted with a newcomer outsider group. Blame gossip, or stigma, as it might otherwise be termed, is

discussed in the next section of this chapter as it had particular resonance with the experiences of participants in this study.

Blame Gossip and Stigma

This section of the chapter has so far discussed possible figurational underpinnings of *why* refused asylum seekers are excluded. One of the key means by which an established group is able to exclude an outsider group, and to perpetuate this exclusion, has been suggested to be blame gossip, which acts to stigmatise and homogenise members of an outsider group according to the behaviour of an anomic minority. This stigmatisation is suggested to be possible because members of the established group ‘disidentify’ with members of the outsider group. In addition, due to the stringent ‘us’ and ‘them’ boundaries drawn up by the two gossip narratives, Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]) argue that it becomes taboo for any member of the established group to have social contact with a member of the outsider group. Indeed, any established group member noted to be breaking the taboo on social contact would themselves become subject to blame gossip. This therefore acted to maintain the segregation of the groups as members of the established group were unwilling to compromise their own standing within their group by associating with members of the outsider group.

In addition to the material impacts of being a member of an outsider group, in terms of lack of rights and lack of access to amenities, it became clear during fieldwork that, in line with Elias and Scotson, participants were having to deal with life as a member of a stigmatised group. Indeed, refused asylum seekers are acknowledged within the literature to be a highly stigmatised group (Crawley, 2010; Carnet, Blanchard & Ellis, 2014; Blinder, 2015). Understanding this stigma as a product of figurational group dynamics, however, enables it to be situated within a broader understanding of intergroup relations, thus connecting it to the wider analytical framework. Stigma is thus identified not as an isolated phenomenon, but as an integral part of intergroup relations, which is essential if an holistic understanding of social exclusion is to be gained. What it more, it allows for an understanding of stigma that is not tied to the individual characteristics of the stigmatised, but to social processes and power relations. Indeed, Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]) argue that there is a:

...similarity to patterns of stigmatization used by high power groups in relation to their outsider groups all over the world... in spite of cultural differences.

Elias & Scotson, 1994 [1965], p xxvi

However, although this suggested universality means that stigma can be seen as dependent on group figurations in a variety of contexts, and thus a means of understanding *why* and *how* particular groups become stigmatised, Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) work lacks a detailed enquiry in to what it is like to experience stigma, a shortcoming that, as we will see in Chapter Eight, became apparent once the analysis of participant data began. Whilst there are of course myriad approaches to understanding stigma (e.g., Durkheim, 1982 [1895]; Goffman, 1963; Link & Phelan, 2001), there is not the scope to explore these fully here. Freund (2015) and Kuzmics (1991) suggest that the gap in Elias' work, which operates at a macro-social level, is usefully filled by Goffman's (1963) work on stigma, as it offers a micro-level analysis of the concept. This micro-level attention to detail proved useful when analysing specific experiences of stigma relayed by participants. The utility of Goffman at this micro-analytical level, along with the fact that scholars had previously usefully interwoven Elias and Goffman, meant that Goffman's (1963) seminal theorising on stigma was chosen as the analytical concept with which to further explore participant data relating to experiences of stigma.

Goffman (1963) distinguishes between 'stigmatised' individuals, who are shunned by the wider population, 'normal' individuals, who do not possess a stigma, and the 'wise', people who are aware of and sympathetic to the stigmatised and who, crucially, are accepted by stigmatised individuals as deserving of trust (as opposed to other 'normals', who may not be). He describes three main types of stigma: overt stigmas, such as physical deformities; deviations in personal traits, such as mental ill-health, imprisonment, or homelessness; and tribal stigmas, associated with belonging to a specific group, such as a particular religion or race. All stigmas, argues Goffman, are inherently linked to some form of deviance from social norms. As adherence to social norms is so central to Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, and particularly the way in which group cohesion is maintained, Goffman's conceptualisation of the origins of stigma can be seen to be linked to wider social processes and group dynamics as asserted by Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]). This thus reinforces the utility of Goffman's work on stigma as a useful adjunct to Elias and Scotson's work, and as a

key component of an holistic analytical framework that enable in-depth analysis of the experiences of the participants in this study.

However, it is worth noting that not all stigmatised individuals are immediately identifiable as belonging to a stigmatised group; they are *discreditable* rather than *discredited* (Goffman, 1963), their stigmatized identity only becoming apparent via revelation of a stigma symbol. In the context of people who have been refused asylum, this might include an identity card. It is arguable that people refused asylum can be understood as being *discreditable* as they live, in the context of the present research, in a fairly cosmopolitan city, where their appearance does not indicate that they are a refused asylum seeker, and in this way the concept offered a useful means of engaging with participant experiences of learning that they were members of a stigmatised group as discussed in Chapter Eight. As such, Goffman's work offered a much more nuanced understanding of the stigma associated with being a member of the 'outsider' group than that provided by Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, which in turn enabled a far richer understanding of participant experiences.

Goffman's (1963) work on stigma also proved helpful when analysing participant data related to experiences of social rejection. Goffman (1963) discusses the way that stigmatised individuals often try to avoid contact with 'normal' individuals due to a fear that they will experience social rejection, reducing their social circles to include only those who share their stigma, or to close family members. Again, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight, social withdrawal was evident among some participants, reinforcing the usefulness of this concept.

A further aspect of Goffman's conceptualisation of stigma is his reasoning about why members of the 'normal' group will not associate with members of a stigmatised group. For Goffman (1956), this is primarily due to embarrassment arising from being in a social situation with someone they consider to be of lower rank than themselves. In critiquing Goffman, however, Kuzmics (1991) suggests that although he acknowledges the role of social status and rank, Goffman neglects the wider social drivers that underpin stigma and perceptions of rank, and the way that these impact upon feelings of embarrassment within the 'normal' population. In the present study, participant experiences of stigma will be informed by the current socio-political climate, the UK's history of immigration policy and attitudes as detailed in the preceding chapter, as well as by broader figurational group dynamics as suggested by Elias and

Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations. This critique further reinforces the importance of utilising a number of conceptual lenses to form an analytical framework, combining figurational approaches to understanding intergroup relations, with more micro-level understandings of social relationships, in order to avoid an a-historical understanding of stigma (Kuzmics, 1991).

This section has sought to identify useful theoretical concepts for exploring stigma experienced by participants. Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations was helpful as it allowed participant experiences of stigma to be understood as a phenomenon not linked to the individual characteristics of the stigmatised, but to intergroup dynamics and relative power. However, when analysing the data, the theory of established-outsider relations was not sufficient to fully engage with participants' day-to-day lived experiences of stigma. As such, Goffman's (1963; 1956) theorising of stigma was introduced to the analytical framework to meet this need. By combining macro and micro level approaches to understanding experiences of stigma the analytical framework was able to engage more holistically with both the origins and experiences of stigma reported by participants.

In the introduction to this chapter (Section 4.1) it was noted that one shortcoming of a wholly figurational approach to data analysis is that it is not grounded in the current social circumstances in which the research is taking place and is thus, perhaps, too abstract to allow researchers to fully grasp what is happening in the data. Powell and Lever (2017) suggest that figurational approaches to understanding social phenomena are usefully complimented by recourse to social theory more rooted in the contemporary socio-political milieu, enabling both broader social processes, as well as the specific social context, to be understood. The chapter thus now moves on to discuss theories of social exclusion in the contemporary context, with the aim of 'rounding out' the analytical framework still further.

4.4 Understanding the Contemporary Context of Social Exclusion

Powell and Lever (2017), in their work on European Roma, argue that Wacquant's (2008) concept of the 'ghetto', a spatially delineated instrument of segregation of a particular race or class of people, offers a means of understanding the social, spatial and psychological manifestations of the stigmatization that arises from figurational group dynamics in which one social group becomes the 'outsider'. Whilst there are clear differences between the contexts of

Wacquant's work and the present study, including the less spatially confined nature of refused asylum seekers' accommodation, the socio-economic parallels, particularly with relation to the retrenchment of the welfare state, cannot be ignored. What is particularly interesting, and links Wacquant's work to the discussion of stigma in the previous section, is his argument that any understanding:

...of the novel forms of urban poverty crystallising in advanced societies at century's turn must begin with the *powerful stigma attached to residence in [these] bounded and segregated spaces*.

Wacquant, 2008, p169, author's emphasis

That is, Wacquant (2008) sees stigma as central to comprehending the urban ghettos of the post-industrial city. Writing about the experiences of individuals living within the Parisian banlieue 'Quatre Mille', he states that '*For many people, the Quatre Mille is experienced as a shame*' (Wacquant, 2008, p172). It is not simply that these residents experience shame, that there is shame associated with living there, but that living there is principally defined and experienced as 'a shame', as its fundamental defining characteristic. This further emphasises how stigma or shame is not a component part of urban marginalisation or exclusion, but arguably runs through and infuses every aspect of it. This shame and stigma, combined with the material deprivation inherent to life in the ghetto, is shown to impact on everything from residents' social relationships and mental health, to their treatment by the police when they reveal, through the production of identity cards for example, that they come from the defamed Quatre Mille (Wacquant, 2008).

Although the participants in this study cannot be considered to be 'ghettoised', time and again in both fieldwork and data analysis the overlap between material marginalisation and stigma became apparent, and the usefulness of Wacquant's work to understanding participant experiences became increasingly evident. Wacquant (2008) also makes the point that residents of the Quatre Mille can manage their stigma, in Goffman's (1963) sense, as they are not immediately identifiable, by a '*phenotypical or cultural marker*' (Wacquant, 2008, p181), as coming from the Quatre Mille, and in this way there are again similarities between the populations that Wacquant has studied and the 'discreditable' refused asylum seekers of this study. Wacquant also notes that the stigmatised status of these residents:

[S]timulate[s] practices of internal social differentiation and distancing that work to decrease interpersonal trust and undercut local solidarity.

Wacquant, 2008, p183

This empirical observation demonstrates clearly why Wacquant's work is, as Powell and Lever (2017) suggest, an extremely useful compliment to the figurational sociology of Elias. What Wacquant notes is the realisation, in a contemporary context, of a lack of trust between outsider group members, which seems to suggest that they will always struggle to achieve the cohesion of the established group. In this way Wacquant's work further empirically validates Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) original study of established-outsider relations, and emphasises its utility in the contemporary context. What is more, participants in this study reported similar feelings of mistrust among what might be considered members of the same 'group'. By turning to both Elias and Scotson's work, as well as Wacquant's, their experiences could be considered in terms of the modern city, but also as part of broader figurational processes that transcend specific contexts.

Scholars seeking to understand the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers have also drawn on the concept of the ghetto to examine the spatial seclusion of refugees in European cities (Kreichauf, 2018) and their detention at ports and borders (Malloch & Stanley, 2005). Whilst the present study does not analyse detention practices per se, Wacquant's work on marginalised populations, and particularly his concepts of urban abandonment and advanced marginality, were nonetheless found to be helpful owing to the extreme material deprivation experienced by refused asylum seekers in the UK. Wacquant (2008) defines advanced marginality as:

[T]he novel regime of sociospatial relegation and exclusionary closure (in Max Weber's sense) that has crystallised in the post-Fordist city as a result of the uneven development of capitalist economies and the recoiling of welfare states.

Wacquant, 2008, pp2-3

Of note here is that Weber's (1978) notion of social closure echoes the work of Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]). Weber defines social closure as:

...the set of processes whereby a collective restricts 'access to the opportunities (social or economic) that exist in a given domain.

Wacquant, 2008, p80

This understanding of social closure as a process enacted by a more dominant social collective, usefully allows links to be drawn between the processes delineated in Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) work, and the more recent iteration of social marginality articulated by Wacquant, again demonstrating the utility of using both conceptual approaches together. According to Wacquant:

The incapacity of the governments of the advanced countries, that is, the refusal or reticence of their ruling classes converted to neoliberalism to check the social and spatial accumulation of economic hardship, social dissolution and cultural dishonour in the deteriorating working class and/or ethnoracial enclaves of the dualizing metropolis promises to engender civic alienation and chronic unrest which pose a daunting challenge to the institution of citizenship.

Wacquant, 2008, p7

Whilst Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]) certainly see the exercise of power by an established group as instrumental to the exclusion and stigmatisation of the outsider group, Wacquant identifies 'neoliberalism' as the ideology currently justifying the exclusion of less powerful social groups by more powerful ones. It is in this way that Wacquant's work enables the contemporary political/economic context to be understood alongside the figurational group processes that arguably underpin it. This is particularly helpful as Wacquant has been criticised for depicting socially marginalised groups '*as a deprived people flattened by circumstances that fix them in place*' (Measor, 2013, p135). By combining Wacquant's understanding of urban marginality with the more fluid nature of figurational sociology, which allows for power relations to change over time, this critique can be addressed, and allow both the mechanisms and specifics of social exclusion to be explored.

Another point to note from the above quotation, is that Wacquant explicitly links the concept of citizenship, and its potential to unravel, to the way in which neoliberal policies result in the exclusion and impoverishment of certain groups within the post-industrial city. Like Standing

(2014), Wacquant (2016, 2008) sees these excluded groups and individuals as members of the precariat, who are subject to control by a neoliberal state. Wacquant does not detail the experiences of asylum seekers or refused asylum seekers in his work, however, despite differences between refused asylum seekers, who are less spatially bounded, and Wacquant's ghettoised populations, the socio-economic parallels including the recoiling of state support for vulnerable groups, meant that Wacquant's work did prove useful when analysing participant data in the present study.

What is also of interest, is that Wacquant (2009; 2008) sees the lack of rights and social seclusion of advanced marginality as a manifestation of Foucauldian state control, and also as a form of imprisonment. Indeed, he cites a young resident of the Quatre Mille who states that: *'It's a jail. They... are in jail, they got tricked real good'* (Wacquant, 2008, p172). This sentiment was echoed in an eerily similar way by one participant during fieldwork, and is discussed in Chapter Six, suggesting the pertinence of understanding social marginalisation as a form of imprisonment. In this way, Wacquant offers a conceptual understanding of prison that is confined not solely to the prison building, but to the 'walls' and 'boundaries' erected by exclusionary social policy, which effectively restrict spatially, socially and politically the movements of excluded groups. An understanding of extreme marginality as a form of imprisonment enabled the exclusion described by participants to be explored not only as a lack of material goods or rights, but as something that 'walls in' the excluded and confines them within the boundaries of their 'outsider' position.

This section of the chapter has moved on from the concept of stigma to look at marginalisation in the contemporary context. However, an integral part of Wacquant's work on marginalisation in the modern city, the concept of the ghetto, is suggested to be the physical manifestation of stigma arising from figurational group dynamics. In this way Wacquant's work is shown to be a useful contemporary compliment to the work of Elias and Scotson and their theory of established-outsider relations. In addition, Wacquant's work intimately links social exclusion to experiences of stigma among marginalised groups. Wacquant's work is also suggested to enable the current political and economic circumstances of social exclusion, such as neoliberalism, to be helpfully integrated into the analysis of participant data, while still allowing for broader social processes to be acknowledged.

What became evident when analysing participant data was the extent to which participants experienced their exclusion as a form of imprisonment, and Wacquant's insights into how a lack of rights along with social seclusion could be considered in this light provided a useful starting point not only for exploring these experiences within the data, but for tying them to the overall analytical framework that was emerging. As such, the chapter now moves on to discuss the role of the state and the concept of imprisonment as concepts that were useful when analysing participant experiences.

4.5 State Control and Imprisonment

As mentioned at the end of the previous section, Wacquant (2009) sees the lack of rights and social exclusion of extreme marginalisation as a form of imprisonment. Looking more broadly to Wacquant's (2009) work on imprisonment, he suggests that western neoliberal states have increasingly become penal states, and that the rise in the prison population is directly correlated to the decrease in welfare provisions for the most marginalised sections of society. Rather than considering crime as a consequence of social situation, it is generally depicted simplistically as a moral and behavioural failing by the individual, despite the fact that the prison population is overwhelmingly made up of those from the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum (Ministry of Justice, 2010a). If the spatial boundaries of this concept are expanded, then refugees can also increasingly be found in the growing number of detention facilities at ports and borders throughout the world (predominantly without having committed any crime other than traversing a border) (Welch & Schuster, 2005).

Whilst Foucault (1975) saw incarceration as the state's attempt to modify behaviour through the rehabilitation of offenders to fit societal norms, Wacquant (2009) suggests that rehabilitation is not the primary function of the penal system, but rather that making an example of certain sections of society as 'bad' serves to legitimise welfare cuts, to contain a potentially 'unruly' population, and to present these 'unwanted' segments of society as undeserving. Given the general lack of criminal activity (with the exception of border crossing) associated with migrants, the function suggested by Wacquant merits consideration. By incarcerating 'illegal' immigrants their 'criminality' is highlighted for all to see. This further, in a very simple symbolic sense, reinforces the habitus of asylum seeker as criminal, as deviant. In a similar vein, Malloch and Stanley (2005) suggest that the imprisonment of refugees and asylum seekers is a means of assuaging '*public fears concerning supposed 'risk' and potential dangers*

to 'security' (Malloch & Stanley, 2005, p53), a fear they argue is fostered predominantly by negative media and political narratives about these groups. This arguably suggests a link between Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) concept of 'blame gossip' and the detention of refugees and asylum seekers.

The present study, however, does not examine those people refused asylum who are incarcerated within a prison building or detention centre. Nonetheless, the above theoretical lens is still highly pertinent to understanding the treatment of refused asylum seekers who might usefully be understood as existing within what Wacquant (2009) describes as the 'carceral archipelago'. This is defined by Wacquant as the experience of being within the criminal justice system without being physically incarcerated within the prison building. Wacquant (2009) also discusses the concept of the 'carceral-assistential net' which regulates and incapacitates the precariat, thus adding a further analytical dimension to the concept of the precariat detailed in Section 4.2. This can be seen as applicable to people refused asylum for a number of reasons. Firstly, they must report on a regular basis to the UKVI so that their whereabouts and compliance to the conditions of their stay in the UK can be monitored. In addition, they are issued with identity documents, such as ARC cards, as well as ASPEN cards which enable them to purchase food and other essentials in a limited number of shops, thus they are 'assisted' by the state whilst the issuing of these cards means they are also being monitored. What is more, many people refused asylum are dependent on the state for housing, another form of highly constrained 'assistance', as they are not allowed to move freely and can, thus, usefully be understood as being incarcerated in a geographical sense. As such, these concepts proved invaluable when seeking to explore participant experiences.

In addition, Foucault's (1975) concepts of biopolitics and governmentality added another analytical lens that was helpful when exploring participant data relating to feeling imprisoned. Although Foucault has not been drawn on extensively in this thesis, as Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations provided the main overarching theory of power and group relations in the analytical framework, his work was particularly useful when exploring participant experiences of feeling imprisoned.

Foucault suggests that in modern societies, power is evident principally as disciplinary power '*that has taken control of both the body and life*' (Foucault, 1998 [1976], p252-3). According

to Foucault, power is manifest in the way that people and their activities are constantly monitored by the ‘gaze’ of institutions (2002 [1969]), most notably governments, which gather data or knowledge about individuals and their activities. This understanding of powerful organisations as institutions that gather data is absent from Elias and Scotson’s (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, and thus Foucault’s work enables this gap to be filled. One finding that arose in fieldwork was the extent to which participants felt that they were constantly in danger and constantly being watched. As well as turning to Wacquant, as detailed in the preceding section, the analytical framework also therefore draws on Foucault’s ideas around imprisonment as they proved particularly useful to understanding this feeling of being ‘watched’.

Foucault (1975) uses Bentham’s concept of the panopticon to illustrate how monitoring by others becomes self-monitoring. In the model of the panopticon prisoners are monitored by a central tower, whereby all prison cells are potentially visible to the guards at any one time, but the inmates cannot see whether or not they are being watched due to the particular lighting of the cells and the tower. Foucault extrapolates this to the wider society, whereby people are frequently, but not constantly, monitored. However, they cannot be sure, at any given moment, whether they are being monitored or not. In this way:

Surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action.

Foucault, 1975, p201

As such, because individuals can never be certain whether or not they are being watched, they begin to monitor their own behaviour, policing themselves for fear that they could, potentially, be under surveillance. Whilst such power is asserted by Foucault to be bi-directional, with monitored populations also being ‘vehicles of power’, the power imbalances inherent to social dynamics necessarily lead to a mismatch in power between majority and minority groups. It is in this way that the monitoring of refused asylum seekers, along with the government’s control over housing allocation, and the lack of the right to work, can be understood as a form of imprisonment.

By engaging with concepts that link social exclusion to imprisonment the analytical framework was able to situate participant experiences of feeling ‘imprisoned’ within a broader

understanding of social exclusion and the role of the state. The way that participants' lives were monitored and 'assisted' via Azure cards, housing assistance, reporting to the immigration authorities, and their constant fear that they may be detained and deported, was central to their experiences of being refused asylum in the UK.

4.6 Conclusion

This analytical framework has set out key concepts that informed the research tools employed in fieldwork, were used in the analysis of participant data, as well as prior to and during the writing of the findings chapters. The framework developed over time to meet the needs of the data being gathered, as well as shortcomings identified in particular theoretical concepts. As such, the framework is multifaceted, drawing on a number of different concepts that meet the needs of the data in terms of considering the experiences of participants in relation to social theory

By turning to theories of social exclusion at both an inter-group level and those more rooted in the current social, political and economic realities, the process of data analysis was not limited by a narrow focus on a single theoretical paradigm, and as such findings are hopefully neither too abstruse, nor too confined to the current socio-political context. By engaging with concepts at both the inter-group and contextually specific levels, it is hoped that the study findings can be understood to be relevant to the particular time and place where the research was carried out, but also to more enduring social processes that transcend specific contexts and speak to more fundamental patterns of inter-group dynamics.

Chapter Five: Making the Invisible Visible: Researching the Lived Realities of People Refused Asylum

5.1 Introduction

There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.

Arundhati Roy, 2004

Like Roy, Back (2007) suggests that we live in a culture that '*speaks rather than listens*' (Back, 2007, p7). Those who are heard are those who are most voluble, those with the best or most catchy sound-bites. As such, argues Back, we have lost the ability to listen to the less vociferously told stories of those who are less able to grab our attention. However, Back sees sociology as uniquely capable of listening to these other voices, and to the complex realities of today's social world.

The previous chapter outlined the analytical framework for this thesis. The framework drew on a number of theories of social exclusion and suggested that the extreme marginalisation experienced by people refused asylum might be understood from such a theoretical standpoint. Of particular relevance to the research methodology is the argument that exclusionary social policy is legitimated through the proliferation of dominant narratives, or 'voices', at the expense of alternative ones. It is argued, based on Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, that the obfuscation of alternative narratives is a product of the figural group dynamics between the relatively homogenous UK 'group' and the far more heterogeneous refused asylum seeker 'group'. The relative homogeneity, group cohesion and shared norms of the established UK group is suggested to allow this group to restrict access to positions of power and to institutions, such as the media, where alternative narratives of seeking asylum, or being refused asylum, might be voiced.

This chapter begins by looking at ontological (views about the nature of reality) and epistemological (views about the nature of knowledge) approaches to understanding the social world and conducting social research that might facilitate alternative accounts of one aspect of seeking asylum, being refused asylum, to be gathered. It then goes on to discuss how the

approaches most pertinent to the present research might best be embodied within fieldwork praxis. Finally, a step-by-step account of the fieldwork method and data analysis process is given.

5.2 Conducting Research with Marginalised Groups: Methodology

In line with Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) assertion that figurational group dynamics determine which narratives become dominant within a social environment, Foucault (1975; 1980) suggests that the reason why knowledge is 'partial or incomplete' is that the 'knowledge' which forms the majority of information to which people have access is intimately bound up with power:

[T]here is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations.

Foucault, 1975, p27

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function *as true*.

Foucault, 1980, 131, my emphasis

For Foucault then, there is no absolute 'truth' or 'reality'. He argues that power not only determines which narratives become dominant, but asks us to consider whether, because of this, what we understand to be 'true' is indeed a verifiable 'truth', or rather the reification of a subjective point of view. As such, he rejects an objective ontological stance, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of the social world which incorporates the complexities of view point and power relations. Beginning from such a standpoint May (2001) argues that:

[A] recognition of the partiality and situated nature of knowledge can provide for the possibility of enhancing understanding by challenging dominant ways of thinking.

May, 2001, p25

One means by which researchers and theorists have sought to counter dominant ideas is by seeking to critically evaluate the interrelationships between individuals, groups and the wider social and economic milieu. Horkheimer (1975 [1937]), in his argument for a critical theory approach, suggests that:

Critical thinking is the function neither of the isolated individual nor of a sum-total of individuals. Its subject is rather a definite individual in his real relation to other individuals and groups, in his conflict with a particular class, and, finally, in the resultant web of relationships with the social totality and with nature.

Horkheimer, 1975 [1937], p210-211

However, acknowledging that knowledge is partial and situated, and should thus be critically investigated, does not mean that ‘reality’ as a researchable or identifiable entity, albeit one that may be specific to a particular individual or group, has to be considered entirely intangible. Perlesz and Lindsay (2003), for example, suggest that a critical realist stance enables the researcher to operate at a midpoint between a truly empiricist and a truly constructivist approach. The researcher therefore adopts:

[A] critical realist ontology in which... reality does exist but can never be perfectly apprehended.

Perlesz & Lindsay, 2003, p28-9

They therefore argue that although ‘reality’ exists, it is elusive and difficult to fully comprehend. This, however, does not mean that as researchers we should abandon attempts to gain an understanding of alternative world-views.

Both critical theory and critical realism share an emancipatory approach to understanding the social world and conducting social research (Harvey, 1990). This is embodied in the way that research praxis based on such approaches is conceived. However, there is no particular method which is deemed to be uniquely suitable for an emancipatory approach, rather:

Critical social research requires that empirical material is collected. It does not matter whether it is statistical material, anecdotes, directly observed behaviour, media content, interview responses, art works or anything else. Whatever provides insights is suitable.

Harvey, 1990, p6

Given the power dynamics that have been argued in Chapter Four to be inherent to dominant narratives about asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers, it was felt that a fitting research methodology would be one that enabled alternative narratives to be gathered from those people about whom dominant narratives speak, but whose voices are rarely heard, thus enabling dominant narratives to be countered and challenged. For this reason, a qualitative methodology has been chosen in preference to a quantitative approach. While quantitative methodologies can capture the ‘facts’, or perhaps more accurately the specifics, of a situation, they are ill-equipped to explore lived-experiences (Saunders, Lewis & Thornill, 2012). As such, a phenomenological approach, which explores what it *feels like* to be refused asylum seems more appropriate. Furthermore, statistics and quantitative descriptors can serve to dehumanise marginalised populations, defining them, for example, as ‘poor’ or ‘homeless’, and in other reductive ways that fail to explore the complexities, subjectivity, depth, and breath of these realities (Saunders et al., 2012; Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 1996). In line with the methodological approach discussed in Section 5.2, a qualitative approach allows for the possibility of multiple ‘truths’, dependent on personal perspective and experience, that a quantitative approach to understanding the social world cannot.

The methods used in this study include more traditional interview methods, along with visual approaches to data collection. A number of possible methods are discussed within this chapter, along with the reasons why certain methods were ultimately chosen over others. Before detailing these, I first reflect on my own positionality and its relation to the research process, in order to explore the way in which my own position, in relation to my research participants, may have impacted the research process.

5.3 Reflexivity and Positionality

This research aims to ‘give voice’ to less frequently ‘heard’ perspectives on seeking asylum, specifically on being refused asylum. As such, and as discussed above, the amelioration of power dynamics is integral to the research methods and methodology that have been chosen.

In later sections of this chapter specific methods are discussed, along with the way in which certain methods may help to ameliorate power imbalances within the research process. The present section explores my own positionality in relation to the research process. In considering the role of power in the creation of knowledge, my own position needs to be acknowledged and reflected upon, and the power dynamic between *myself* as the researcher and research participants explored.

Gibson-Graham (1994) argues that the *self* is not something absolute that one brings to the research process, but something created by both researcher and participant as part of the research process. Indeed, the self is hugely complex and multifaceted, not easily comprehended by the individual or reduced to categories such as class or gender (Rose, 1997). In addition, as doctoral researchers become more acquainted with their *self* as a researcher, as distinct from their *self* prior to undertaking doctoral research, their identity is suggested to shift and develop as they grow academically and professionally (Throne, 2012). As such, the *self* is suggested to be fluid, altering in different contexts in response to the environment. In this way, discussion of researcher positionality within the research process is an imperfect art, given the impossibility of truly knowing ourselves or our environments (Rose, 1997). However, that is not to say that we should do away with it, rather that we should acknowledge its inherent limitations whilst attempting to understand the ways in which our positions as researchers influence the research process.

My position as white, middle-class and English, as well as my life experiences, set me apart from my research participants. I have never had to leave my country of origin, and never experienced persecution for my religious beliefs, political views, or sexual orientation. I have never experienced conflict or lost or been separated from members of my family because of this. I have never had to apply for asylum in a foreign country and been denied it, and have always taken my citizenship status for granted. I have never experienced destitution, homelessness or food poverty. Whilst these seemed to be the most pertinent ways in which I differed from my participants, there were undoubtedly myriad others. In this way, when entering the research process, I felt very much that I was ‘other’.

As the research progressed these differences actually, surprisingly, became less apparent as similarities began to arise. Many of my participants might also be considered middle-class, and

certainly identified as such. Their current situation as people refused asylum who were destitute, however, was markedly different from my own, relatively comfortable, life. Not only were there differences in economic wellbeing, but there was also the sense among some participants that the sort of life that I was living, with opportunities for education, relative financial security, and prospects for the future, was something that they had previously enjoyed, but which had been taken away from them. The fact of my having been born middle-class and English, as opposed to middle-class in a conflict-afflicted country for example, was often the primary reason why our circumstances differed so markedly, far more so than cultural background.

However, these apparent similarities were not unproblematic. The similarities in age between myself and some participants, as well as our similar levels of education and the good rapport developed during the research process, led to some participants asking me to meet up outside of the research context as ‘friends’, an offer which I declined, often awkwardly, for fear of blurring the line between researcher and friend. In this way, I worried that I was not ‘other’ enough, and that I had not delineated the boundaries of the relationship well. I felt uncomfortable that in trying to create good rapport I had managed to mislead participants into a sense that we were developing a friendship. I worried that by not maintaining a friendship with some participants I was letting them down, adding to the multiple losses they had already experienced, and further contributing to the social isolation that they had spoken about during interviews.

I had chosen to conduct the interviews away from the organisations where participants were recruited so as to avoid any conflation of my role with that of the organisation that provided them with advice and in some cases financial resources. However, this meant that interviews generally took place in coffee shops, or at times in participants’ homes, much less formal environments more commonly associated with spending time with friends, and on reflection I wonder whether this contributed to the sense among some participants that we were becoming friends. By meeting in informal environments such as these I had hoped to ameliorate some of the power imbalance that can arise from conducting interviews in more formal settings, and on the whole this approach was beneficial. Most of the interviews flowed well and good rapport was developed between myself and the participant. In order to prevent the interview being reminiscent of a more formal interview, such as those participants’ will have had with Home

Office officials, I did not sit opposite to participants or across a table. Instead, I sat at an angle to them on the same side of the table or we chose ‘comfy’ seats where there was perhaps a small coffee table between us. This did seem to make the atmosphere of the interview more relaxed and is a practice I would employ again in future. However, I do worry now that in attempting to ameliorate the power imbalance I created a false sense of friendship between myself and some participants which may ultimately have led to participants feeling that I had misled them. However, this was never mentioned by participants.

There was another unforeseen difficulty of conducting the interviews in the less formal setting of a coffee shop. This location meant that it was necessary to purchase drinks for myself and the participant. Two participants refused to let me buy them a coffee and could not afford to purchase one themselves. As we were in a coffee shop, I felt obliged to buy a drink for myself, which then made me, and I suspect the participants, feel awkward as it was a visual reminder during the interview of our different financial situations. Although my fieldwork practice was designed to ameliorate power dynamics between myself and interviewees, these incidents served to highlight the disparities in our economic status. Indeed, one participant, Anzan (M, 46, India), specifically spoke about how being unable to buy a coffee for a woman was one reason why he did not date, and was a source of shame for him.

My first and only spoken language is English. Among my participants, only two spoke English as a first language, although several were reasonably fluent English speakers. Among the participants who did not speak fluent English, their ability varied widely. This had implications for the quality and depth of data that could be collected (Hassink, 2007). This situation can also be considered to be a linguistic power imbalance (Helms, Lossau & Oslender, 2005), with myself, as the fluent English speaker who is essentially directing the course of the research interviews, holding more power than my non-fluent participants. I was cognisant of this power disparity and keen to put in place methodological approaches to mitigate this as far as possible. I offered the use of an interpreter, thinking that this would enable respondents to provide more detailed, nuanced accounts of their experiences, and thus to feel that an accurate account of their answers had been relayed. However, all participants refused this, preferring to limit the number of people with whom they shared their experiences to myself and in one instance a friend who accompanied a participant to the interview. Having spent time at drop-in sessions getting to know potential participants I was able to develop good rapport. Participants appeared

to trust me to record their experiences in a way that was ‘true’ even when linguistic nuance was not possible due to the language barrier. Participants were very candid about their experiences, and it is possible that they may have felt less comfortable sharing sensitive information in the presence of an unknown interpreter. With hindsight, this seems understandable.

5.4 Approaches to Researching Marginalised Groups

5.4.1 Interviews

In order to capture alternative accounts of seeking asylum, specifically the experience of living in the UK following the refusal of an application for asylum, qualitative interviewing methods were considered (as per the reasons detailed in Section 5.2). One approach considered was in-depth life history interviews that focussed on participant experiences both before they arrived in the UK and after their arrival and the subsequent refusal of their claim for asylum. This would provide a longitudinal account of participant experiences in order to contextualise their current experiences.

Another possible method that was considered was a semi-structured interview focussed more specifically on aspects of life as a refused asylum seeker in the here and now. This would be built on a thematic guide with probes to elicit further discussion of issues raised (Fielding, 1988). It is suggested that this method of interviewing is much freer than a structured interview, allowing participants to give personalised answers while maintaining a general structure which enables comparability of interview material during analysis (May, 2001).

However, as my research seeks to understand alternative asylum narratives, it was crucial that the way in which I interviewed participants provided ample opportunity for them to discuss topics that it may not have occurred to me to enquire about, or about which I had no current knowledge. An unstructured interview format, which is far more open-ended, is suggested to best facilitate this (May, 2001). While critics have argued that allowing participants such free-reign may allow them to ‘*talk about an issue in any way they choose*’ (May, 2001, p124), Bryman (1998) suggests that this is in fact advantageous to understanding the point of view of the interviewee, and thus deviations from topic should be seen as a means of increasing the researcher’s understanding of the concerns of the interviewee.

In light of the aim to explore counter narratives of asylum and capture the day-to-day lived experiences of refused asylum seekers, such free-reign arguably provides an opportunity for participants to voice opinions and stories freely without feeling constrained by an overly structured interview process. In addition, a flexible structure can allow the interview to ‘fit’ the participant (May, 2001).

Asylum seekers come from a wide variety of backgrounds, with a multitude of different experiences. As such, it was decided that a semi-structured interview alone might be too restrictive to accommodate the breadth of experience that may come from such a diverse participant group, and thus fail to allow the diversity of participants’ experiences to be captured. As such, qualitative, loosely structured interviews were employed as these are suggested to be useful for gathering alternative narratives from marginalised groups (Segert & Zierke, 2000). Loosely structured interview formats are also suggested to ‘*challenge the truths of official accounts*’ (Anderson, Armitage, Jack & Wittner, 1987, p104), making this approach particularly suitable for this piece of research.

As well as eliciting rich data, semi-structured or unstructured interviewing is also suggested to be an effective way of establishing good conversational flow with participants. In addition, a less structured format is suggested to redress some of the unequal power dynamic inherent in the researcher-interviewee relationship, and aims to place the interviewee in the position of expert, with the interviewer seeking to learn from them (May, 2001). In order to contextualise participant experiences in the here and now and to learn more about participants as individuals, elements of biographical interviewing were incorporated within the semi-structured interview format. Participants were asked, for example, why they had left their countries of origin and about their journeys to the UK. Very little of the data gathered in relation to these questions is used in the findings chapters, which necessarily focus on the narrower remit of the research questions. However, by exploring participant experiences in this broader sense a much clearer understanding of participants as individuals was facilitated.

5.4.2 Lived Experience

Social research, particularly in the field of social policy, is increasingly seeking to capture the ‘lived experiences’ of research participants. However, despite its growing prevalence, the term is ill-defined within the literature (McIntosh and Wright, 2019). As such, the chapter now

briefly discusses the concept of lived experience within social research and its utility for the current piece of research.

Drawing on Boylorn's (2008) definition, McIntosh and Wright (2019) argue that lived experience comprises an individual's subjective perception of their life experiences. However, they argue that within social policy research the term is often employed 'intuitively' as:

[A] free-floating notion, untethered from the theoretical and methodological contexts in which it originated.

McIntosh & Wright, 2019, p453

Perhaps the most prominent context from which lived experience research originated is the field of phenomenology. Phenomenological research has the individual experience at its core and seeks to capture different individuals' 'truths' (Burch, 1990; Moran, 2000), a facet which aligns well with the idea of multiple social truths discussed in Section 2 of this chapter. In addition, lived experience research allows for intersectionalities and competing, or multiple, social identities to be explored within participant data. In this way themes such as class, gender or ethnic origin can be examined in terms of how they relate to the way that participants experience their situation as people who have been refused asylum. However, within phenomenology, the lack of a clear definition of what 'lived experience' actually comprises is problematic (Paley, 2017).

Whilst the definition of the term is perhaps no clearer, the use of a lived experience approach in feminist research and writing is arguably highly pertinent to the decision to use it in the present study. Within the feminist approach, lived experience research seeks to understand the experiences of women in order to gain a different perspective to the more dominant 'male' voice (Smith, 1987). Similarly, the use of lived experience research in ethnography aims to 'give voice' to the lesser-known views of marginalised groups, to both increase understanding of alternative world-views, as well as to attempt to engender political change (Becker, 2007). Again, this approach chimes with the ethos of the current research project which seeks to 'listen' to the voices of those whose voices are seldom heard within dominant discourses. Ethnography generally employs a wider range of methodologies than phenomenological research, including film, photography, and document analysis, as well as the more traditional

interview. It is suggested that this broader lived experience methodology can be particularly helpful in understanding how social policy impacts groups and individuals (Yanow, 2000; Stack, 1997), and can provide a critical lens through which policy can be challenged (Denzin, 1996).

One further point that merits discussion here is McIntosh and Wright's (2019) assertion that the ubiquitous nature of the term 'experience' within the English language can predispose scholars to assume that data gathered through 'lived experience' research represents a form of 'truth' that is somehow more 'authentic' as it stems from the person who has had the 'experience'. They posit that, as such, data from lived experience research may not be critically examined in the way that other data sources would be. The constructed, situated nature of experience can therefore be overlooked (Patrick, 2015; Scott, 1992). However, in the current research, an individual's 'truth', no matter how constructed, is what is sought. It is the perception of reality that is important. Indeed, the social world is comprised of multiple, often competing, 'truths', and to appreciate the diversity of these multiple truths is to begin to gain an understanding of the social world. Scott (1992), however, argues that lived experiences are the endpoints of social processes that lead individuals to experience the world in a particular way, and that it is these causative social processes that need to be understood. In this way, Scott's standpoint resonates with the Elias' (1987) stance that social research must avoid a 'retreat into the present', negating the antecedents of current socio-political situations. By exploring the UK's history of migration, the social processes that underpin group dynamics, and individuals' experiences of life as a person refused asylum, it is hoped that both Scott's and Elias' positions can be addressed.

5.4.3 Visual Methodologies

Given the role of the UK tabloid press, with its use of imagery aiding the creation of caricatured representations of asylum seekers (Banks, 2012), I felt it was important to respond in kind, utilising visual methods to create alternative visual narratives of asylum.

Academia and artists are increasingly coming together to create 'visual sociology', drawing on the strengths and expertise of once disparate disciplines to shed new light on social phenomena in a way that promotes public engagement with non-dominant, alternative narratives. The

strength of visual imagery as a means of communication is highlighted by Ball and Gilligan (2010) who suggest that:

If we consider human history from the perspective of the length of time that humans have inhabited the earth then text-based human communication is a relative latecomer.

Ball & Gilligan, 2010, p4

That is, there is something immediate and primal about the way that an image can speak to an audience that makes it a valuable means of communicating new perspectives on the social world. Indeed, in a similar vein, Barthes (1972) writes that:

[P]ictures... are more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analysing or diluting it.

Barthes, 1972, p110

The use of photography in social research is suggested to provide a novel way of exploring social issues, enabling a greater depth and richness of understanding than can be achieved by more traditional research methods, such as interviewing, alone (Harper, 2012; Robinson, 2011). These reasons by themselves suggest that the employment of visual methods in fieldwork practice would enhance sociological understanding of the subject. However, there are other advantages which also make visual methods suitable for this specific piece of research. These include facilitating participant engagement and the opportunity to create visual narratives that 'counter' existing/dominant visual narratives.

Countering Dominant Narratives Through Visual Methods

The use of photography in social research is not new. Edward Said collaborated with photographer Jean Mohr (Said & Mohr, 1986) when carrying out research on the lives of Palestinians. Of western understanding of the Palestinian people Said writes:

Especially in the West, particularly in the United States, Palestinians are not so much a people as a pretext for a call to arms.

Said & Mohr, 1986, p4

There are significant similarities here between how Said conceptualises western understanding of Palestinians, and the reductionist depictions fostered by the UK media and political establishment of asylum seekers and people refused asylum. Speaking about the popular visual representation of Palestinians, Said suggests that:

[T]he images used to represent us only diminish our reality further. To most people Palestinians are visible principally as fighters, terrorists and lawless pariahs.

Said & Mohr, 1986, p4

In contrast, the vast majority of what it is to be Palestinian is not depicted in popular images:

The thing about our exile is that much of it is invisible and entirely special to us.

Said & Mohr, 1986, pp4-5

That is, what it is to be Palestinian is hidden, completely absent from dominant depictions of this group. The depictions lack nuance, do not explore the day-to-day realities of life, or the wider context in which these lived realities take place. Again, this resonates with the often reductionist depictions of asylum seekers and people refused asylum in dominant media and political narratives (Banks, 2012; Philo, Briant & Donald, 2013).

In addition to being a way of making visible that which is usually hidden, Johnsen, May and Cloke (2008) argue that photography is able to reveal multiple, heterogenous perspectives within a given group. What is more, Lombard (2013) specifically suggests that auto-photography, whereby participants themselves capture images that document salient aspects of their lives, represents an opportunity to challenge 'dominant representations':

Images produced and interpreted by people who know and live in a place therefore differ from images produced and interpreted by others. In the context of uneven power relations, the representation and discussion of such images becomes a way of emphasising the narratives of marginalised urban groups.

Lombard, 2012, p26

The ability of photography to reveal multiple perspectives within a population, and to gather alternative narratives from people experiencing a particular situation, makes the use of photography within the research process particularly appropriate to the current project given the somewhat reductionist way in which asylum seekers, international migrants, displaced people and people in conflict-affected zones are sometimes depicted in popular visual imagery (Banks, 2012). Dominant visual imagery can be problematic in much the same way that dominant narratives can be, and be taken as representations of ‘truth’ as seemingly grounded in empiricism as anything else (Hall, 1973). In fact, all images exist and are created within specific social circumstances and must be read as such.

It is, although clearly a gross generalisation, possible to distinguish between the discursive angle of documentary photography and the use to which visual imagery is put by some tabloid newspapers. Whilst documentary photographers tend to focus on the humanitarian aspects of migration and conflict, the images, and accompanying stories, that appear in the UK press relating to asylum often depict asylum seekers as deviant, as ‘bogus’ or ‘cheats’ (Philo et al., 2013). This polarised division between images of people in conflict zones as ‘victims’ of violence and asylum seekers as almost purveyors of violence is problematic. It denies the complexities of why and how people migrate and seek asylum. At one end of the spectrum are depictions of victims of violence who often appear to lack agency altogether. At the other end we have depictions of asylum seekers who are ‘cunning’, ‘devious’, ‘on the make’ and to whom, therefore, a large degree of agency is attributed. In addition, charitable organisations, in seeking to counter the dominant narrative of the ‘bogus’ asylum seeker, sometimes also portray asylum seekers as wholly without agency. As Crawley (2010) argues, migration in all its forms, from economic migration to asylum seeking, exists on a continuum, with few migrants falling neatly into one category or another. This suggests that many of the images and narratives currently in circulation are too polarised, they serve, at times intentionally, at times perhaps not, a purpose defined by the photographer/media/policy outlet, rather than being a representation of the migrant’s personal ‘reality’. Indeed, Harper (2012) argues that documentary photography cannot be said to represent ‘reality’ as the choice of image by the photographer is essentially subjective. In addition, both documentary images and tabloid images also often neglect the more nuanced, perhaps more mundane, day-to-day realities and lived experiences of migrant lives.

Exploring Day-to-Day Realities

Migration literature's focus on 'flows', 'circuits' and the production of social fields that cross nation state boundaries has prioritized migrations' travel and connectivity over detailed examination of dwelling... we lack close up portraits of how migrants actually live in landscapes of new belonging.

Knowles & Harper, 2009, p7

The aim of this thesis is to explore how one 'group' of migrants live once they have arrived in a particular destination country, their 'landscape of new belonging', and thus address, to some extent, the gap in understanding highlighted by Knowles and Harper. One method that has been suggested to be particularly relevant to examining these everyday realities is auto-photography. Auto-photography is a research practice whereby participants are issued with a (usually disposable) camera and asked to take pictures of their environment or some other aspect of their social/geographical world over a period of days or weeks. Within human geography auto-photography has been used in urban environments to try and understand marginalised groups' perceptions of place and space (Lombard, 2012; Johnsen et al., 2008; Dodman, 2003). This method is suggested not only to be an effective means of eliciting individual perceptions of a situation, event, or place, but of exploring these perceptions through a novel medium (Dodman, 2003), which is better disposed to:

...captur[e] the qualitative dimension of space: beyond words - or more aptly, in conjunction with them - images are able to convey powerfully and immediately a sense of place.

Lombard, 2012, p24

The spaces and places that feature in refused asylum seekers experiences of life in the UK will be unique to this group and to the individual members of the group. Capturing such images offers a way of shedding light on spaces and places where the lived realities of being a refused asylum seeker are played out, and that may be largely unknown to the majority of UK citizens. In addition, asking participants to photograph aspects of their lives, in the form of objects or environments, that speak to their experience of life as a refused asylum seeker, can be a way of 'making the familiar strange', of prompting reflection among participants on things normally taken for granted, thus aiding the research process (Mannay, 2010).

The Benefits of Working Collaboratively

Pierre Bourdieu rigorously documented his research photographically, though the images did not form a part of his research reporting and remained hidden in boxes for most of his life (Schultheis & Bourdieu, 2001). However, Bourdieu (Schultheis & Bourdieu, 2001) describes photography as:

[A] way of relating to people and of being welcome. Afterwards I would send them the photos.

[T]aking photos was a way of saying to them, 'I'm interested in you, I'm on your side, I'll listen to you, I'll testify to what you're going through'.

Schultheis & Bourdieu, 2001, p10

That working collaboratively in order to explore the participant's point of view benefits the quality of the research is a sentiment echoed by Friend (2010), who worked with immigration detainees in the production of documentary images. While Friend (2010) initially sought to represent detainees through portraiture, her participants felt that images of the almost clinical interior of the immigration removal centre where they were detained spoke more to what they were experiencing than anything else, and so these were the images that Friend then captured. Ball and Gilligan (2010) suggest that collaborative research such as Friend's (2010) can thus serve to correct the academic distancing that Gold (2004) argues is inherent to the research process.

The utility of photography as a means of engaging with research participants, and of acknowledging the centrality of participants to the research, are key reasons why I have chosen to use photography as part of my research method. Of central importance however, is that the use of photography should not just say, as Said notes, '*I'm interested in you*', but also '*I'm interested in how you see the world*', thus meeting the research aim of exploring experiences of being refused asylum from the participant's point of view. It is for this reason that I eventually chose auto-photography and photo-elicitation as the visual components of the research method. In line with the methodology outlined in Section 5.2, this method seemed best able to capture participants' individual 'truths' of their experiences of life in the UK after being refused asylum. Ideally, I would have spent more time with participants, over a period

of weeks or even months, in order to learn in more detail about their everyday lives. If I had had the time to do this, I would then have also undertaken collaborative documentary photography, using a similar approach to Friend (2010), to further visually depict the lived realities of participants' lives.

Auto-Photography

Whilst documentary photography, particularly when carried out collaboratively with participants, can aid rapport and facilitate research as Bourdieu (Schultheis & Bourdieu, 2001) and Friend (2010) attest, it still places the researcher, as the 'creator' of the image, in a relatively powerful position. Whilst this power dynamic can never be entirely resolved (Pain & Francis, 2003), the use of auto-photography is argued to help ameliorate this to a greater degree (Harper, 2012). In addition, the novelty of using auto-photography is suggested to help in the recruitment of participants to research project, as it offers something different from the more traditional interview (Lombard, 2012), particularly when working with marginalised or hard to reach groups (Emmel, Hughes, Greenhalgh & Sales, 2007), and those for whom spoken language may not be the easiest means of communication due to a language barrier (Dodman, 2003). Furthermore, as the auto-photography process takes place away from the researcher, and thus allows the participant scope to think, over a period of days or weeks, what they would like to capture in their photographs, there is more opportunity for reflection about their lived experiences and about what they most want to convey to the researcher. As such, this should add to the richness of the data, both photographic and in the subsequent photo-elicitation interview.

Auto-photography can also allow the researcher to gain visual data about places that would normally be inaccessible to them or which it would not have occurred to the researcher to photograph. Bruslé (2010), who researched the experiences of Nepalese migrant workers in Qatar, notes that auto-photography provided him with images of the day-to-day places that, although routinely accessed by his participants, were inaccessible to him.

Photo-Elicitation

Photo-elicitation is the practice of using photographic images captured during the auto-photography exercise as an entry point to a semi-structured or unstructured interview. Photographs from collaborative documentary work can also be used in the photo-elicitation

process (Harper, 2012). Like auto-photography, this is suggested to ameliorate some of the inherent power imbalances of the interviewer-interviewee dynamic by giving the participant some autonomy over the focus of the discussion (Rose, 2012). Lombard (2012) suggests that this makes auto-photography and photo-elicitation particularly suitable methods for use with marginalised groups, as they provide an opportunity for these groups to convey less well-known viewpoints and to express how they '*see their place in the world*' (Lombard, 2012, p23).

In addition, photo-elicitation is suggested to foster in-depth discussion, with the image acting as an entry point to topics important to the interviewee (Rose, 2012). In line with the participant driven auto-photography, interpretation of the images is also participant driven, with the interviewer's questions focusing on the motivation for taking a particular photograph and its meaning to the participant (Lombard, 2012). As such, the participant is positioned as the 'expert', with the interviewer there to learn from them (Meth & McClymont, 2009). Understanding this motivation is seen as a key way of gaining access to the participant's world view and thus to novel understandings of the social world (Johnsen et al., 2008). Ball and Gilligan (2010) also suggest that visual imagery has a strong capacity to evoke memory and thus can be highly beneficial to the interview process.

5.5 Method

This section of the chapter details the specifics of the fieldwork method, including how participants were recruited, the interview process, and the use of auto-photography and photo-elicitation. It also discusses some limitations encountered during fieldwork.

Fieldwork Location

Research was carried out in the city of Sheffield. Sheffield is a post-industrial city in the north of England with a population of over 500,000. Demographically, the city is around 84 per cent white, predominantly white British. Asian and Black ethnicities form the majority of the non-white population. Sheffield was the first 'City of Sanctuary' in the UK, offering a place of sanctuary for asylum seekers and refugees. As such, it has a diverse range of services for refugees, asylum seekers and people refused asylum. The city therefore provided a suitable location for this piece of research. People who had been refused asylum, but who were, nonetheless, trying to build a life for themselves in the UK, could be accessed through these services and their experiences explored.

Participants

The methodological approach described above seeks to capture detailed accounts of the lived experiences of people who have been refused asylum. As such, an in-depth research process with a relatively small number of participants (fifteen) was conducted. Whilst such research cannot speak to the experiences of all refused asylum seekers, it is hoped that the depth and richness of the accounts gathered provide a novel insight into the lives of some of those individuals currently living as refused asylum seekers in the UK.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were accessed via a number of charitable organisations in the Sheffield area that work with refugees, asylum seekers and destitute refused asylum seekers. These organisations were identified by conducting internet searches using terms such as ‘Asylum seeker support Sheffield’, ‘Refugee support Sheffield’ and ‘Asylum drop-in centre Sheffield’. In addition, previous experience as a volunteer at the organisation Asylum Seeker Support Initiative, Short Term (ASSIST) in Sheffield provided me with a pre-existing connection to this organisation which was useful when approaching them about the research. ASSIST, and charities like it, facilitate conversation clubs and drop-ins where asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers can come to chat informally with other asylum seekers and local volunteers, or seek advice and support about their asylum cases.

An important aspect of working with these organisations was that members of staff were able to act as ‘gatekeepers’. These gatekeepers were a key point of access to participants and were able to offer advice on the suitability of potential participants for the research to ensure that no highly vulnerable individuals were put at risk by taking part in the study (Eide & Allen, 2005; Yancey, Ortega & Kumanyika, 2006).

In addition, the nature of the services offered by these organisations, such as drop-ins and conversation clubs, provided me with an opportunity to meet and discuss the project informally with potential participants in an environment where they felt safe. There is, of course, the potential for the researcher to abuse the benefits of meeting potential participants in such a place, as it may be interpreted as a breach of the sanctity of a place where people can come and get away from the stresses and strains of seeking asylum without feeling that they might be asked to participate in a research project. However, embedded within my Ethics Proforma

(Appendix Two) is my commitment to ensuring that people are given the opportunity to take part, without feeling any kind of pressure to do so.

In order to gain access to these organisations I contacted them by email in the first instance, explaining a little about myself, the nature of the research project, and offering to meet representatives from the organisation to discuss the project further. Ahead of meetings with representatives I sent a summary document (Appendix Three) giving a more detailed overview of the research project as well as my Ethics Proforma which delineates the ethical considerations employed in the development of the research method.

When I then met with representatives from these organisations, I was able to relay more detailed information about the research and answer any questions they had. These meetings also enabled me to get a better sense of the nature of the organisations and what expectations they had of me as a researcher. In addition, I was able to negotiate access to services that they offered in order to meet potential participants. These chiefly comprised a drop-in session run by ASSIST and a conversation club run by City of Sanctuary.

Discussions with Potential Participants

Prior to attending drop-in sessions and conversation clubs I created a flyer for potential participants which provided brief details about the project and my contact details. I took flyers to these sessions and left a pile for people attending the sessions to pick up if they were interested. I also approached individuals attending the sessions, explained who I was and the nature of my research, and offered them a flyer.

When talking to people who might want to participate in the research, I discussed the aims and methods of my research and answered any questions they had. I had planned to meet again with interested individuals to discuss the project in more detail before they decided whether or not they wished to participate. However, most people with whom I spoke were generally either definitely interested or definitely did not want to participate in the research. I had planned to take an information sheet (Appendix Five) with me to a follow up 'initial meeting' with interested individuals in order to provide more details. However, following my first drop-in session when I had only taken flyers, I decided to take the information sheets to these sessions

as well, as people were often keen to get involved with the research and arrange the first interview at these sessions.

For those who were interested I made sure I spent a good amount of time with them ensuring that they understood what the project would involve, that they did not have to continue with the project should they change their mind, that they did not have to participate in all aspects of the project, for example the auto-photography component, and that they did not have to answer any questions they did not wish to or discuss anything they did not want to discuss. I also asked potential participants if they wished to have an interpreter present during their interviews. I explained that my research was not associated with the organisation at which the conversation club or drop-in session was taking place, and that receipt of any services provided by these organisations was not contingent on their participation in the research. Once I felt confident that all of this had been understood I discussed the £10 ‘gift’ that participants would be given at the first in-depth interview as a ‘thank you’ for their participation. I again explained that receipt of this gift did not mean that they had to continue with the research if they subsequently changed their mind, that it did not mean they had to answer any questions they were not comfortable with, and that they did not have to return the money should they later decide not to participate. I then arranged to meet the participant to conduct the first interview.

First Interview

Interviews were generally held in coffee shops or in the participant’s home. This was to reinforce the point that my research was not associated with the organisations through which participants had been recruited, as well as to conduct the interview in a fairly informal setting to try and ameliorate potential power disparities between myself and the participant.

At the beginning of the first in-depth interview, I reiterated the aims and methods of the research and answered any questions that participants had. I explained the specifics of this interview, including a brief topic guide and rough estimate of how long the interview would take (approximately one hour). I again ensured that participants understood that they did not have to answer any questions that they did not wish to answer and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time without jeopardising the £10 gift. I then went through the consent form with participants (Appendix Four), explaining each point, and asking participants to sign the form if they were happy to proceed with the interview.

Participants were asked for their consent for the interview to be recorded. For those participants who did give consent I asked whether they would allow me to use the audio recordings in future work, in order to maximise the usefulness of the data. All participants who had consented to their interviews being recorded consented to this. I was cognisant that the precarious nature of their immigration status may have meant that participants wished to remain completely anonymous and I explained that by consenting to my potential future use of these recordings their anonymity could not be entirely guaranteed as they may be recognisable by their voice. Despite this, all participants still consented to my using the audio recording at a future date, although this would not form part of the current project.

Interviews were recorded using a dictaphone or, if permission to record the interview was not granted, hand-written notes were taken. Only one participant did not wish their interview to be recorded. During this interview the participant made a number of comments that I felt would be powerful quotes in the research output. I asked her permission to transcribe these quotes and include them in the research output and she consented to this.

The interviews then proceeded along the lines of the interview topic guide (Appendix Six), with prompts for more detailed discussion as appropriate. As detailed in Section 5.2., these were semi-structured interviews to allow for deviations in topic and for the interview to ‘fit’ the participant. At the end of the interview participants were asked if there were any topics that had not been covered and that they felt were important to their experience of being a refused asylum seeker. These topics were then discussed.

At the end of the first interview all participants were gifted £10 as a thank you for participating in the research. They each signed to confirm that they had received this gift. Those participants who had stated a preference for completing the visual aspects of the research were then asked if they still wished to take part in this. I hoped that by conducting an in-depth interview prior to the auto-photography phase of the research, good rapport could be developed between myself and the participant, helping the participant to feel confident to ask any questions they may have about the next, more novel, aspect of the research.

I do feel that this approach was beneficial, particularly as many of the interviews had been quite wide-ranging, covering topics I had not previously considered and lasting far longer than

the one hour timeframe I had initially allocated (so as not to over-impose on participants' time). I felt that over the course of many of the interviews participants felt that they could discuss issues that concerned them, even if these were not topics that would eventually make it in to the findings chapters of this thesis. By being interested in participants' experiences not just of their lives now, but also prior to coming to the UK, and their hopes and dreams for the future, I wanted to ensure that they felt that my interest was in them as people, rather than only in the arguably much narrower remit of my research questions. I felt privileged to have been granted an insight into many areas of my participants' lives, including their family lives, spiritual lives, and times of great despair and difficulty that they had experienced. By taking a fairly holistic and loose approach to my interview script and to the boundaries of what was discussed during the interviews I was able to get a sense of my participants as people, rather than just a sense of their experience of being a refused asylum seeker. This not only aided the building of rapport, but gave me a much more rounded sense of my participants as individuals, and how the experience of being refused asylum affected them because of who they were as people, rather than a more limited or general understanding of being refused asylum.

Those who wished to participate in the visual aspects of the research were given a disposable camera, and the auto-photography and photo-elicitation aspects of the research were explained in greater depth with the aid of another information sheet. The remit of the exercise was for participants to document places and objects that represented key elements of their experience of being a refused asylum seeker. How to use the camera was explained and participants were asked if they had any questions. I had hoped that the relatively loose remit would provide enough guidance so that participants were not left confused as to the nature of the exercise, but allow enough room for participants to make the project personal to them, and generally this was the case. Where participants had questions, these tended to be around what exactly I would like them to take pictures of. Without offering too much direction, I was able to refer back to things we had discussed in the interview that had stood out as being particularly important to them, suggesting that these might be areas to focus on. The result of the relatively loose remit was a diverse range of images from participants. For example, one participant had taken, almost exclusively, photographs of the room in which he spent most of his time, revealing the spatially limited nature of his current life and how this impacted on him, while another participant had focused more on his young son, and the important role that being a father played in his life. These were both crucial and defining aspects of their experiences of life as a refused asylum

seeker which demonstrated the heterogeneity of experiences among people ostensibly experiencing the same circumstances. This confirmed the utility of auto-photography as a means of gaining diverse accounts of what life is like for people refused asylum in the UK.

I arranged to meet those participants who were completing the visual aspects of the research approximately one week after the first interview in order to collect the cameras and get the photographs developed. Some participants took several weeks to complete the auto-photography exercise and so the gap between the initial interview and the follow-up photo-elicitation interview was longer. When I met with the participant to collect the camera, I arranged a further appointment for the photo-elicitation interview.

Photo-Elicitation Interview

Prior to the photo-elicitation interview two sets of prints were developed, one for myself and one for the participant. Each set of prints was numbered so that they could be referred to by these numbers during the photo-elicitation interview, and thus easily identified when the interview transcript was analysed. At the start of the interview the participant was given one set of prints, while I retained the other. Participants were then asked if they still consented to participating in the interview process and whether or not they consented to their photographs forming part of the research output, as well as being used for related projects, such as an exhibition. Participants were then asked to select ten photographs for discussion. This was to ensure that interviews were not over-long, with the aim being that interviews should last approximately one hour. However, as in the first set of interviews, these often lasted longer than the planned one hour timeframe, and I made it clear to participants that should they wish to discuss more, or indeed all, of their photographs, then they could do so.

The format of this interview was relatively simple. Participants were asked to describe what the image they had chosen to discuss depicted, their reason for taking the photograph, and why the object or place was pertinent to their experience of being a refused asylum seeker. Further discussion unfolded fairly naturally with me asking follow up questions.

Before going on to discuss my process of data analysis, I first reflect on some of the challenges and limitations encountered during fieldwork.

Challenges and Limitations

A number of challenges and limitations arose during the research process that are worth discussing in order to provide a more nuanced insight into the research process.

The first point that merits inclusion here is related to participant recruitment. As part of a research methods module that I undertook during my first year of PhD study, I carried out a pilot study with a participant identified by a gatekeeper at one of the organisations I would later go on to work closely with during my fieldwork. The piloting process was very useful as it raised a number of issues which I felt needed to be addressed prior to undertaking the main phase of fieldwork. Firstly, the participant was pre-selected by the gatekeeper. The participant had been involved in public speaking and, as such, he was felt by the gatekeeper to be used to 'telling his story' and that participating in my research would, therefore, not put an additional psychological strain on an already vulnerable individual. This also suggested that he would be less likely to feel nervous taking part in the research. However, as my intention was not to cause undue distress to already vulnerable people, and this was inherent in my research methodology and ethical stance, following the pilot study I became concerned that by using the gatekeeper in this way (with them effectively pre-selecting the participant) that a) the participant could feel coerced due to their pre-existing relationship with the organisation; and b) that potential participants that may wish to get involved, but who are not as politically active or overtly confident, may not get the opportunity to participate. Gatekeepers, in this way can present a barrier to accessing research participants (Meadows, Lagendyk, Thurston & Eisener, 2003; Wanat, 2008).

One point that was raised in discussion with the gatekeeper was they felt that all destitute refused asylum seekers were highly vulnerable. While I do not disagree that this is a highly vulnerable and distressing situation in which to be, my ethical stance is that as long as the individual is capable of giving, and has given, informed consent, it should be for the participant to judge whether or not they wish to participate in the research.

During the main phase of the research, therefore, I changed the way in which I utilised gatekeepers in order to broaden the pool of potential participants. When talking to potential participants at drop-ins or conversation clubs, I ensured that I was explicit enough about the nature of the research that they were aware that some potentially sensitive topics could arise

during in the interviews. Once an individual had then expressed an interest in participating in the research, I liaised with gatekeepers to ensure that they did not feel that the potential participant was particularly vulnerable or would be put at risk by participating in the research. Any participant that was deemed to be too vulnerable to participate would then not have formed part of the research. This scenario did not arise as gatekeepers felt that all the individuals who volunteered to participate were suitable to participate in the study.

A further limitation encountered was in relation to the participant sample group. Whilst every attempt was made to ensure this was as diverse as possible, the constraint of who was willing to participate in the research meant that a true representation of the diversity of the group could not be achieved. Most of the drop-in and conversation clubs I attended had a higher proportion of men than women. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Firstly, women are more likely to have childcare responsibilities that prevent them from attending sessions as regularly as men. One of my participants told me that his wife did indeed stay home with their young son while he attended a weekly drop-in. However, the main reason for her non-attendance was that she was shy and lacked confidence in her ability to speak English to volunteers at the drop-in. Of my three female participants, one was interviewed with her husband and young child, one was interviewed at home as she was caring for her toddler and this was the best location, and the third was interviewed with a friend who provided moral support. This suggests that there may be a greater reticence on the part of women to discuss their experiences, that their experiences may be more traumatic (for example experiences of sexual exploitation and domestic servitude were described by one female participant), or that they may have more obligations, such as childcare, which prevent them from engaging regularly with drop-in services. As such, the findings of this study cannot be said to fully represent the true diversity of experiences of life as a refused asylum seeker, as one group in particular, women, were under-represented.

A further constraint on the diversity of the participant group was that participants were only accessed via organisations that work with destitute refused asylum seekers. As such, only those refused asylum seekers in contact with these organisations were accessed. This raises the possibility that the research neglects a more hidden section of the refused asylum seeker population, potentially one that is even more marginalised than those engaging with services. Again, this limits the extent to which the findings of this study can be said to represent the true

diversity of experiences among people refused asylum in the UK. Future research would benefit from attempting to reach out beyond organisations that work with people refused asylum, perhaps utilising the social contacts of those that do use these resources. However, given the possible necessity of remaining hidden from immigration authorities, accessing these individuals might nonetheless be extremely difficult.

Another limitation of the research is that the amount of content that features in the findings chapters differs between participants. For example, some participants, such as Cabaas and Tahliil, are significantly more represented throughout the findings chapters than others. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, not all participants took part in both stages of the research. Some participants chose to limit their involvement to the first interview only, thus limiting the amount of data available for analysis. However, there are a number of other reasons that particularly merit discussion here. For a number of participants, a lack of fluency in spoken English prohibited them from expressing themselves as fully as they would have liked. This was particularly true for Wahid and Alia. This impacted the extent to which they were able to discuss their experiences with me and a degree of depth and nuance was lost here. Maria, as the only participant who did not wish her interview to be recorded, arguably features the least in the findings chapters. Although many of the experiences discussed in the chapters are relevant to her too, the lack of recorded data made it more difficult for this to be represented in the text of the thesis. Of particular note however, is that some participants, regardless of their fluency in spoken English, were simply better at discussing or expounding on their experiences than others. They were more verbose, more insightful, and better able to articulate their experiences and the impact of these on their lives. There is also very little data from Rahad. Rahad had a very specific philosophy that guided the way he coped with the difficult times he was experiencing. His philosophy was essentially one of ‘radical acceptance’ whereby he did not allow the difficulties he faced to impact his mental wellbeing. He told me for example:

By chance I know about coping situations. I studied psychology so I didn’t false generalise what the situations, I just accept. To see the future is better we must accept what is my current situation. That is one coping strategy. Right now I just to accept what the actual situations.

Rahad, M, 40, Pakistan

Adopting this philosophy had undoubtedly benefitted Rahad's mental health, and he came across as much less distressed than the other participants. However, it also meant that he did not dwell particularly on his current circumstances and his discussion was limited by this.

One of the main aims of using auto-photography was to provide a novel way of engaging participants in the research process. While some participants were very interested in this aspect of the research, and indeed found it useful in terms of their own reflections on their situations, others did not wish to engage with this. Some participants noted that they were busy and only had time to engage in the interview section of the research, others were nervous about undertaking the photography element, fearing that they might do it 'wrong'. Prior to beginning fieldwork, I had not considered that asking people to take photographs might put pressure on them, or make them feel vulnerable to getting the exercise 'wrong'. I had read such positive things about participatory visual research (e.g. Harper, 2012; Emmel et al., 2007; Dodman, 2003) that this surprised me. On reflection, I should not have been surprised by this. As a fairly quiet person myself who often worries that I might get things 'wrong', especially in new situations, I might well have felt intimidated had I been asked to carry out such an exercise. Rather than facilitating engagement, this method actually put some participants in an awkward position. Whilst I would definitely use auto-photography again in future research, as it was an excellent entry point into discussions that may otherwise not have arisen, I would perhaps present it to participants as an optional extra, rather than a key constituent of the research method, thus reducing any pressure participants may feel to participate in this way.

As my only spoken language is English, when planning for fieldwork I had planned to use interpreters to facilitate the interview process with participants whose spoken English was not fluent. The use of interpreters within social research has traditionally been seen as a 'technical act' (Shkларov, 2007; Temple and Edwards, 2006), with the interpreter conceived as an intermediary enabling researcher and participant to understand one another. Indeed, this was certainly my initial assumption about the role of interpreters in social research. However, literal translation from one language to another is essentially impossible, as a verbatim translation may well not convey the speaker's meaning. Thus, it has been argued that interpreters are really translating concepts (Temple, 1997; Simon, 1996). The interpreter must assess what the participant *means*, not simply what they *say* (Simon, 1996). This is problematic

in itself, however, as there may be no direct translation of a particular concept and words can have multiple connotations and meanings in different languages (Temple and Edwards, 2006).

In addition, interpreters are not value-free and, as such, it has been suggested that working with interpreters should be a more inclusive process, with the interpreter understood as an ‘active producer of knowledge’ (Temple, 2002), or a co-researcher (Larkin, De Casterlé, and Schotsmans, 2007), whose social location and viewpoints need to be understood and noted as part of the research process. Temple and Edwards (2006) specifically argue that to engage meaningfully with research participants whose first language is not English, discussions with interpreters about their own perspectives on the themes discussed in research interviews need to occur. Interpreters will have their own ‘social truths’ (Young, 1997). In the same way that the researcher must reflexively consider their own positionality, so too must the positionality of the interpreter be considered. However, this does not routinely form part of the research process (Temple and Edwards, 2006).

In order that participants feel comfortable discussing their viewpoints in the presence of an interpreter, it has been suggested that interpreters and interviewees should be matched for characteristics such as sex, age, culture and religion (Fuller and Toon, 1988). Temple and Edwards (2006) highlight the fact that it is an assumption that matched characteristics will make interviewees more likely to be truthful with the interpreter and the interpreter more likely to provide a truthful interpretation of the interviewee’s account. They caution against this assumption, arguing that identity is multifaceted and other identities may intersect with matched characteristics creating differences between interpreter and participant. For example, class identity or professional status may interact with, or indeed override, matched characteristics such as gender (Temple and Edwards, 2006). What is more, knowledge of an interpreter’s social position or identity does not mean that one can assume to know what their perspective on any given subject will be (Temple and Edwards, 2006). Again, this supports the argument that researchers should consider the positionality of interpreters.

Although all participants were offered the use of an interpreter, all refused and did not wish to have another person, other than a trusted partner or friend, present during the interviews. It is possible that this was due concerns related to privacy. However, it is also possible that participants feared that their words would be misinterpreted and were highly aware that

interpretation is not simply a 'technical act'. A number of participants mentioned that they felt that their accounts of why they had sought asylum had been misinterpreted by Home Office interpreters during asylum interviews, and it may be that such experiences meant that they were not willing to engage with interpreters in the present research. I did not ask this question, but future research would certainly benefit from exploring such issues in greater depth

For the majority of participants, not using an interpreter was fairly unproblematic. However, for a few participants, including Wahid (M, 63, Syria) and Alia (F, 33, Sudan), not having an interpreter greatly impacted on our ability to communicate clearly with one another. In this way, I sometimes could not grasp nuances of expression, and at times even the broad meaning of what was being discussed, leading to less rich data. However, to not have engaged with these participants because I could not speak their language and they did not wish to have an interpreter present, would have been to miss capturing their experiences at all. As such, I feel that persevering with these interviews benefitted the study. Alia in particular spoke about how her lack of fluent spoken English made her feel she could not integrate into UK society to some extent, particularly impacting on her willingness to speak to her son's teacher about problems at school. The impact of a lack of language fluency was an important aspect of people's experiences of being refused asylum, and one which would not have been captured had Alia been excluded from participating due to her English language skills and unwillingness to utilise an interpreter.

It has been suggested that researchers working with marginalised groups, such as asylum seekers, should aim to ameliorate the power disparity between researcher and research participant (Temple and Moran, 2006). The use of interpreters with participants who are not fluent English speakers is suggested to be one way of doing this (Temple and Moran, 2006). Unfortunately, it is not always possible to achieve this aim, and all participants in the present study were unwilling to work with interpreters. In some ways, participants' unwillingness to engage with interpreters during the interview process can be seen to increase the power disparity between myself as the researcher, conducting the interview in English, and a non-fluent participant, as I have a linguistic advantage. However, there is also an argument that by refusing the use of an interpreter, participants were exercising agency, thus asserting their power. They did not want a third-party present at the interview, they did not want to discuss highly sensitive topics in the presence of someone either unknown to them, or, known to them

but whom they did not wish to be privy to particular information about them. In this way, it could be argued that participants were dictating the terms of the interview to an extent; I could gather what I could from our exchange, but they were unwilling to have an interpreter present *just* so I could gather more data or more easily understood data. As discussed above, there are many problems associated with the use of interpreters in social research (Edwards, 1993) and either due to privacy concerns or concerns of misinterpretation, participants did not wish to engage with interpreters.

In addition, participatory approaches to research, such as auto-photography and photo-elicitation, are held to be the ‘gold standard’ of research methodology with vulnerable groups, including refugees and asylum seekers, as they serve to redress, to some extent, the power imbalance between researcher and participant (Temple and Moran, 2006; Harper, 2012). Once again, however, it was not always possible to achieve this ‘gold standard’ in the present research, as not all participants wanted to take part in this aspect of the fieldwork. Where participants chose to engage with these aspects of the research there was undoubtedly an amelioration of the power disparity between myself and participants as they chose, and then talked me through, the photographs they had taken. However, by saying that they did not wish to complete this element of the research, participants were again exercising agency. It is my hope that this reflects the good rapport developed in the first interview and that because of this, participants felt that they could say ‘no’ to elements of the research in which they did not wish to participate. As such, to say that participatory approaches to research with vulnerable groups, such as refugees and asylum seekers, inherently act to reduce power imbalances is erroneous. It is only when participants feel able to assert their wishes that some kind of parity between the researched and the researcher can begin to be glimpsed, and it is this, perhaps, that should be held as the gold standard in conducting research with vulnerable groups.

In addition, power disparity between the researcher and the researched continues to exist whether or not steps are taken to ameliorate this. As discussed in Chapter Five, Section Three, despite conducting interviews in the relatively informal setting of a coffee shop, the financial disparity between myself and the participants was highlighted due to the necessity of purchasing a drink in this setting. As such, although this informal setting helped to create a greater sense of ease during interview, the differences between our financial situations was still clearly evident.

Another point mentioned by participants who chose not to engage with the auto-photography exercise and subsequent photo-elicitation interview, was that it would be time consuming. In this respect, it might perhaps have been better to have given participants the camera prior to the initial interview and then conducted a photo-elicitation/semi-structured interview in one sitting, thus reducing the time participants had to commit to the study. Although this would perhaps have resulted in more participants engaging with the visual component of the research, I do think that something would have been lost in terms of the rapport developed during the initial interview and participants' understanding of the nature of the project. However, a more flexible approach to when cameras were given out might have led to greater engagement and this is something to be considered in future research.

The final limitation encountered in the research arose from the precarity of participants' lives in the UK and the ever-present threat of detention and deportation. During in the course of fieldwork two participants, Wahid (M, 63, Syria) and Anzan (M, 46, India) were detained and deported. I was able to visit Anzan in the detention centre and interview him prior to his deportation, although this interview understandably took a slightly different course than the anticipated photo-elicitation interview. In this way the data collected was not as complete as anticipated. This experience nevertheless served to reinforce just how precarious participants' lives were as people who had been refused asylum in the UK.

Participant Profiles

Maria is twenty-five years old. Originally from Zimbabwe Maria had experienced threats of violence because of her sexual orientation. With financial help from a friend, Maria travelled to the UK by plane and sought asylum at Lunar House in Croydon. Her application has been refused on the grounds of lack of documentary evidence of persecution. Maria receives no support from government. She sleeps in a night shelter run by a local charity and receives £20 per week from the same charity.

Olu is a forty-year-old man from Eritrea. He escaped compulsory national service and fled across the border into Ethiopia, where he worked to earn the money to pay people smugglers to get him to the UK. The journey took three months, mainly cross country. He eventually entered the UK by boat from Calais. Olu's application for asylum has been refused as he could not provide identifying documents and had entered the UK illegally. He receives no support

from government and lives with friends he met at a local charity for asylum seekers. He obtains food from a day centre for people experiencing homelessness and from a food bank.

Anzan is a forty-six-year-old man from India who came to the UK by following threats to his life because of his religious and political beliefs. On arrival, Anzan was unaware of the asylum system and spent two years working in restaurants for very little money. With a friend's encouragement, he applied for asylum in 2011. His application was refused as Anzan was unable to provide documentary evidence of persecution. At the time of interview, he received no support from government and was 'sofa-surfing'. He received £20 per week from a local charity which he used to buy food. Anzan was in the process of preparing a fresh claim but was deported prior to submitting this and prior to the end of the research.

Cabaas is a twenty-four-year-old man from Somalia. He originally came to the UK to attend school in London at the age of fourteen. He sought asylum at age eighteen after threats were made against his mother, father and other family members because of his mother's involvement with an organisation that was critical of the Somali government. He has been refused asylum and exhausted his appeal rights. Although he is entitled to Section 4 support, he does not claim this. Cabaas lives with his brother, who has British citizenship, and his brother's wife.

Tahliil is a twenty-nine-year-old man from Somalia. Tahliil was employed by a European NGO in Somalia when he and colleagues were attacked by a local militia towards the end of the country's civil war. Tahliil was evacuated to the UK but his application for asylum was refused. He has now exhausted his appeal rights. Tahliil receives no support from government and is reliant on a food bank and £20 per week from a local charity. He lives in a house in multiple occupation provided by the same charity. He has a young son with whom he has regular contact.

Hassan is a twenty-two-year-old man from Iraq. He left Iraq aged seventeen following a suicide bomb attack which killed his mother, father and three sisters. He earned money during his journey to pay agents to get him to the UK. He travelled mainly by vehicle, arriving in the UK by lorry from Calais. Since applying for asylum on arrival in the UK Hassan has still not received a decision on his case. He receives Section 4 support comprising an Azure prepayment

card and accommodation in an HMO. He occasionally receives a small amount of money from friends which he uses to buy food.

Hamid is a thirty-three-year-old man from Syria. Hamid came to the UK with his wife five years ago on a student visa, however the college he applied to did not exist and his visa ran out after a year. Due to his political affiliations, he did not feel it was safe to return to Syria and sought asylum in the UK. His application was refused on the grounds of insufficient evidence of threat to life. He has a six-year-old daughter and receives Section 95 support comprising housing and financial assistance.

Rashida is a thirty-five-year-old woman from Pakistan. She travelled to the UK with her husband **Zaheer**, a twenty-six-year-old man also from Pakistan, following threats to their life for their political activities. They arrived by plane and sought asylum upon arrival in the UK. The couple travelled on false passports as they did not wish to be identified leaving the country. Their application for asylum was refused because they had used false documents to enter the country and because they could not prove their true identities. They have a young son and receive Section 95 support comprising housing and financial assistance.

Ameer is a thirty-six-year-old man from Iran. He fled the country following threats to his life because of his involvement with an anti-government protest movement. His application for asylum has been refused due to insufficient documentary evidence of persecution. Ameer currently has no contact with the Home Office. He has no support from government and receives £20 per week from a local charity. Ameer lives with his partner and young family.

Wahid is a sixty-four-year-old man from Syria. Wahid had previously worked as a teacher and had a wife and children in Syria. He came to the UK ten years ago to seek asylum following persecution for his religious views and feared for his life should he be deported to Syria. For this reason, he did not 'sign' with the Home Office for a number of years. He had recently submitted a fresh claim and received Section 4 support of accommodation in an HMO and an Azure prepayment card. Prior to the second research interview Wahid was deported.

Tariq is a twenty-one-year-old man from Pakistan. He fled Pakistan aged sixteen after close family members were detained for their religious beliefs. Tariq's journey to the UK took

several months. He earned money along the way to pay people smugglers. He eventually travelled to the UK from Calais by lorry and sought asylum on arrival. Tariq's application was refused because of a lack of identifying documentation. He originally lived with foster parents in London. After a number of misdemeanours, Tariq was imprisoned. On his release six months' later he was sent to Sheffield. He has submitted a fresh claim to the Home Office and currently receives Section 4 support comprising accommodation and an Azure prepayment card.

Rahad is a forty-year-old man from Pakistan. Having worked as a mathematics lecturer, he received threats to his life because of his religious beliefs and left Pakistan to seek asylum in the UK. Rahad arrived by plane and sought asylum on arrival. His application was refused due to lack of evidence of persecution. Rahad receives no support from government and survives on £20 a week from a local charity. He lives with three other people who have been refused asylum in a house provided by the same charity.

Alia is a thirty-three-year-old woman from Sudan. Alia fled Sudan due to the ongoing conflict. With the aid of people smugglers, she travelled through the middle east, experiencing frequent violence and sexual assault at their hands. She was then offered work as a nanny for a family in Abu Dhabi. However, this was not a job, but domestic servitude. Alia travelled with the family to the UK. She eventually managed to escape and sought asylum. Her application has been refused due to lack of identifying documentation and inconsistencies in her account of her life prior to seeking asylum. Alia lives with her partner and young son. She receives Section 95 support including housing and financial assistance.

Maneem is a thirty-seven-year-old man from Iraq. He left Iraq by plane using a false passport after becoming scared for his safety following his arrest for taking part in a political demonstration. Maneem applied for asylum upon arrival in the UK but was refused on the basis of using false documentation to enter the UK. Having previously spent time living in government allocated HMO accommodation, as well as a brief period of street homelessness, Maneem currently rented his own flat with money he earned from working illegally as a chef, his former profession. This was his primary means of supporting himself.

5.6 Data Analysis

Analytical Approach

Chapter Four detailed the analytical framework for this thesis, which draws largely on theories of social exclusion and marginalisation. The chapter detailed a number of theoretical standpoints that might usefully be employed when exploring the empirical findings. However, the chapter also acknowledged the merits of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory, which, in its earlier incarnations at least, suggests that empirical observations and interpretations should be made in isolation from theory. Jackson (2001) suggests that the analysis of qualitative data should be an iterative process, rooted in the detailed, repeated examination of the interview transcripts by researchers. By engaging intensively with the transcripts, salient words and phrases can form the basis of codes that allow the researcher to categorise themes within the research, and to begin to relate these themes to one another.

The research process described in the present chapter has sought to find ways of investigating the lived experiences of participants that focuses on specific points of interest to the researcher, i.e. access to food and accommodation, whilst also allowing scope for participants to diverge from the interview topic guide, to bring up subjects that are important to them and, via the visual aspects of the research, to capture elements of being a refused asylum seeker that were personal to them, that may have not occurred to the researcher to enquire about, or might not have been accessible to the researcher had visual methods not been employed.

With this in mind, data analysis was carried out in a manner largely consistent with Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded approach. That is, I began with, and constantly returned to, the data as the basis for interpreting empirical findings. However, given the already established contention that refused asylum seekers are a highly marginalised group and, thus, the ensuing nature of the interview topic guide, the themes that began to emerge did tend to relate to marginalisation. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, some themes had not been anticipated, and were identified organically by close, repeated, analysis of the interview transcripts and photographs. The way in which participants articulated their experiences as a form of imprisonment is one example of this. It was only by identifying this theme in the data and then looking to theory that may help explain this finding, that the analytical framework grew in relation to this. Having considered possible theoretical lenses through which this data could be understood the data was re-examined and more nuanced findings related to the theme emerged.

Interview Transcription

The first stage of data analysis involved the transcription of all interviews from the recordings. Participants were asked whether they would like to use their real names or be anonymised. All participants wished to be anonymised. The allocation of pseudonyms was detailed in a separate document, unconnected to interview transcripts, to meet with the data protection procedure laid out in the Ethics Proforma (Appendix Two).

Interviews were transcribed using NVivo 10 software. I transcribed all interviews myself to increase my familiarisation with the interview material and to begin preliminary analysis. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, and features of the interviews including pauses, laughter and crying were noted in order to represent the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the interaction as accurately as possible. Transcription of interviews can be understood as a form of representation, affecting the way that participants are understood (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005) and, as such, as much detail was included as possible. By transcribing interviews as soon as possible following each interview it was hoped that any omissions in my questions or points that merited further discussion could be identified and form part of the second, photo-elicitation, interview (where participants were continuing to this phase of the research). This process worked well with the first few interviewees, but was not possible with later interviewees due to the lengthy transcription process. However, the transcription process did enable me to become very familiar with my data and, especially as the number of interviews increased, enabled prominent themes to be noted.

Coding

Following transcription of the interview material I took time to read and re-read all the interviews in paper-based form. This enabled me to reflect on what has been said and make notes about possible emerging themes, points of consistency and points of difference. By becoming familiar with the data, by repeatedly engaging with the interview transcripts, and thus immersing myself in participants' accounts of their lives, themes emerged organically, in line with Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory approach. These themes formed the basis of a coding framework consisting of codes and sub-codes.

Having developed these codes I then revisited my analytical framework in order to assess where theory might be useful in understanding findings, where theory fell short, and novel

themes that sat outside of the original scope of the analytical framework. This led to the development of both the coding framework and the analytical framework, and a circular, iterative, hermeneutic approach to data analysis began to emerge.

Analysis of Visual Material

The analysis of participants' photographs began in the photo-elicitation interviews. Indeed, the key questions of this phase of the interviews emphasised participants' interpretations of their photographs and their reasons for taking them. Of interest was the way that some participants reflected that the photography exercise had made them consider their situation in greater depth than had they only participated in a more standard interview. In addition, it meant that places pertinent to their lives could be engaged with that may have been off limits to me as a researcher had auto-photography not been used. One participant, for example, took a photograph at the day-care centre where he spent time with his son. This elicited a whole discussion around his experiences of others at the day-care centre, as well as his relationship with his son, and the way in which his current situation impacted on this relationship, that perhaps would not have occurred without the use of visual methods.

Relatively little has been written about the analysis of visual data in social research. As such, I primarily analysed the images in conjunction with the interview material from the photo-elicitation interviews. However, there were times when my analysis superseded participants' own interpretations of the images. For example, as stated above, one participant had exclusively captured the room in which he lived in his photographs. Whilst he explained his choice of images individually as representing, for example, a poster he liked that reminded him of a dog he had as a child, or the machine that monitored his whereabouts (as he wore a tag), taken together, the images spoke of a highly restricted life, and in this sense I imbued the images with a meaning that the participant did not overtly state.

In the findings chapters of this thesis images are incorporated along with text from both the photo-elicitation interviews and the first semi-structured interview. They often offer a visual counterpart to interview material that has a more immediate impact than words alone might have. Tahlil (M, 24, Somalia), for example, created particularly striking diptychs illustrating the disparity between how he currently experienced life and how he wished his life to be. Maneem (M, 37, Iraq) took a very different approach, creating symbolic, artistic depictions of

how he felt at certain times in his life. In this way, analysis of the photographs differed between participants to some extent, as their approaches to the auto-photography exercise differed.

5.7 Ethical Considerations

Refused asylum seekers are considered to be one of the most marginalised groups in the UK today (McKenna, 2019; Chakrabati, 2005; Amnesty International, 2006; Refugee Action, 2006; Crawley et al., 2011). They may have experienced difficult circumstances prior to or during their journey to the UK, and may well be experiencing extreme difficulties, including homelessness, poor mental health, and extreme insecurity, within the UK. As such, refused asylum seekers are a potentially highly vulnerable group. It is, therefore, vital that a rigorous ethical approach to research with this participant group is taken to ensure that any potentially harmful implications for participants are considered and mitigated as far as is reasonably possible. The following sections delineate key aspects of my ethical approach. A more detailed account of these can be found in Appendix Two: Ethics Proforma.

Anonymity

A central tenet of the research project was to capture alternative asylum narratives, through interview and visual methods, to the often pernicious ones that dominate some segments of media and political discourse. As such, the aim of ‘giving voice’ to marginalised perspectives was a key aspect of the research approach. Anonymising participants via the use of pseudonyms, or by blurring identifying features such as faces in photographic data, is usual in social research practice (BSA, 2017). This is to ensure that participants are not put at risk of harm or embarrassment by participating in research projects. However, automatically giving participants anonymity seemed to contradict the aim of ‘giving voice’ somewhat. Indeed, debates within the literature (Grinyer, 2002; Connolly, 2003; De Crespigny, Emden, & Kowanko, 2004) have questioned this generally accepted practice, particularly in relation to marginalised groups. The political activist and artist Ai Weiwei (2011) captures this sentiment particularly well, stating that:

A name is the first and final marker of individual rights, one fixed part of the ever-changing world. A name is the most basic characteristic of our human rights: no matter how poor or how rich, all living people have a name, and it is endowed with good wishes, the expectant blessings of kindness and virtue.

Ai Weiwei, 2011

For stateless migrants and destitute refused asylum seekers their name is potentially one of very few unchanging aspects of their lives/identity. Even this, perhaps due to false documentation, may be contested by the courts. As such, I felt that as long as participants understood the potential consequences of forgoing anonymity, they should be entitled to be identified by their own name in the research output. However, given the precarity of their situations, concerns about identification by the UK Government or by people in their country of origin, all participants wished to be anonymised. As such, participants were given pseudonyms and faces and identifying features appearing in participant photographs were blurred to ensure anonymity.

Discussion of Sensitive Topics

Given the difficult, often destitute, circumstances that this participant group were experiencing, sensitive topics did arise during interviews. It was, therefore, made clear to participants before interviews, as well as during interviews where appropriate, that they did not have to answer any questions that they did not wish to answer, that they could stop answering a question part-way through, that they could terminate the interview at any point, and that they could withdraw their consent for all or part of the interview to be used in the research during or up to two weeks after the research had taken place. In addition, semi-structured interviews were chosen as this allowed scope for participants to explore aspects of their experiences that they wished to discuss, whilst omitting things they did not wish to discuss. Interviews took place on a one-to-one basis unless the participant wished to be accompanied by a friend or family member for support. This was to minimise any embarrassment, unease, or distress that participants may feel discussing sensitive issues in a group setting. The exception to this would have been the presence of an interpreter, in which case the interpreter would also have been asked to sign a consent form to agree that all information discussed in the interview was confidential and would not be shared outside of the interview context. However, as no participants wished to work with an interpreter this issue did not arise.

In addition, a participatory visual approach was used in order to give the participant greater autonomy over the focus and direction of discussion (Rose, 2012; Lombard, 2012; Meth & McClymont, 2009). For example, participants were able to choose both which images to capture, a process that took place in the absence of the researcher, in the participant's own time, thus hopefully reducing any pressure upon the participant, and then which images they wished to discuss. Participants were told that they could discard any photographs that they did not wish to form part of the photo-elicitation interview or research output and that faces could be blurred if they wished to include photos depicting themselves or others (if consent was granted) in the research output.

Safeguarding Considerations

When conducting research with vulnerable groups safeguarding concerns arise in relation to both research participants and the researcher. In order to protect both my participants and myself the following safeguards were put in place.

Participants

All participants were adults over the age of eighteen who could give informed consent. Potential participants' suitability in these respects was discussed with a gatekeeper prior to beginning the research process. The research aims and processes were explained fully before commencing the research and informed consent was sought and gained. If the researcher deemed that any individual could not give informed consent, they would not have been able to continue with the research project. This situation did not arise during the course of this research. All identifying data, both interview and photographic, was stored securely.

The use of auto-photography raised additional safeguarding concerns. Participants were asked to ensure they did not place themselves in dangerous situations in order to capture images. Participants were advised that they could discuss any photographs that they could not take for safety reasons as part of the photo-elicitation exercise, and that they should make a note of any such 'uncaptured' images.

Researcher

As research interviews were conducted predominantly on a one-on-one basis, I ensured that a colleague within CRESR was aware of the location of all interviews in accordance with the

Sheffield Hallam University Lone Working Policy. I informed this colleague when I arrived at the start of each interview and gave them a predicted end time. I then contacted the colleague again once the interview had concluded and I had left the interview location. If an interview seemed likely to over-run, I contacted my colleague to inform them of this, and gave a new predicted end time. The majority of interviews were conducted in public places such as coffee shops as these were deemed to be safer than conducting interviews in settings such as a participant's home. However, two interviews were conducted in participants' homes and I followed the lone working policy as above.

Compensating Participants

Participants were 'gifted' £10 for taking part in the research at the end of the first interview. It was made clear to participants that should they choose not to answer some questions, or wish to withdraw their consent at a later point, they would not have to return this. Whilst it has been suggested that compensating participants can be considered to be 'incentivising' them (Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Head, 2008), thus compromising fully informed consent, others suggest that by not compensating research participants the researcher-interviewee dynamic is in fact exploitative, as interviewees are not fairly compensated for their time and any inconvenience participating may entail (Morrow, 2009).

Participants who took part in the visual component of the research also received a set of prints of the photographs captured during the auto-photography exercise at the start of the photo-elicitation interview. This is not considered to be a form of compensation as the participants will have given of their time to take these photographs.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed my approach to researching the lived realities of people refused asylum in the UK. It has considered ontological and epistemological approaches pertinent to researching marginalised groups whose 'voices' may be less frequently heard among mainstream narratives. As such, the methods selected seek to listen to these less well-known perspectives. Qualitative, loosely structured interviews, along with auto-photography and photo-elicitation were chosen in order to facilitate participant engagement and capture participant experiences of life as a refused asylum seeker in the UK. Whilst fieldwork was not

without its challenges, it was a hugely rewarding experience where I learned a lot not only about my participants, but about myself as a researcher.

The thesis now moves on to discuss the findings of the fieldwork in the first of three findings chapters. Chapter Six looks at the extreme material deprivation, destitution and marginalisation experienced by participants, and explores ways in which social theory might be utilised to engage with the empirical data and shed light on why participants experienced such extreme material exclusion.

Chapter Six: Extreme Material Deprivation, Destitution and Marginalisation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first of the two research questions central to this thesis, namely,

What are refused asylum seekers' experiences of deprivation, destitution and marginalisation, and how might they be explained?

The question is explored in terms of the empirical findings of fieldwork, which are then considered in relation to social theory. The data suggest that the lived reality for the participants in this study was one overwhelmingly characterised by material marginalisation, exclusion, and deprivation. The chapter explores how the prohibition on paid employment, combined with little or no support from government, meant that participants had extreme difficulty meeting their basic needs for food, shelter and clothing. The chapter explores these material deprivations, along with the ways in which, and extent to which, participants were able to alleviate the extreme deprivation that they reported. Strategies included accessing charities, along with support from friends and family, which provided some relief from the abject destitution participants would otherwise face. The chapter begins, however, by highlighting the disparity between participants' expectations of life in the UK, and the reality of the lives they were now living as people who had been refused asylum. Whilst prior expectations, of course, did not change the nature of the material impoverishment they faced, they served as a point of contrast for almost all participants.

In order to explore how these experiences are engendered, perpetuated, and experienced, the empirical findings are considered in relation to the social theory outlined in Chapter Four, including Agamben's (1998) concept of the homo sacer, Wacquant's (2008) theories of urban abandonment and advanced marginality, Foucault's (1975) ideas about governmentality, and Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) established-outsider theory.

6.2 Expectations Prior to Coming to the UK

There was nothing wrong with the arrangement – she had, after all, slept on mats when she visited her grandmother in the village – but this was America at last, glorious America at last, and she had not expected to bed on the floor...

Adichie, *Americanah*, 2014 p105-6

The excerpt above describes Adichie's (2014) central character, Ifemelu's, first impressions of life in America after arriving from Nigeria. Like Ifemelu, the experiences of participants in this study were unexpected, and differed from their expectations of life in a 'developed' country. In some ways, these prior expectations served, if not to worsen, then at least to provide a point of contrast to their experiences of deprivation in the UK. Therefore, before delving into the specifics of participants' experiences, it is worth highlighting that participants did not expect to face deprivation and destitution in the UK, before trying to understand the reasons why they had such high expectations.

Not all participants had known prior to arrival that they would be coming to the UK. However, Maria (F, 25, Zimbabwe) is emblematic of the participants in this study who had known, and who, therefore, had formed an idea about what life would be like. Maria had fled Zimbabwe with financial help from a friend following persecution because of her sexual orientation. She had not wanted her interview to be recorded as she was concerned about someone recognising her voice. However, she was happy for me to write down key quotations, such as those that follow. Talking about her preconceptions of the UK, Maria stated:

Before you come here you think everything you want you can get. Is the opposite.

Maria, F, 25, Zimbabwe

Maria had perceived the UK to be a land of opportunity, a place where she would be able to live a full life. However, the reality with which she was now faced as a refused asylum seeker, was markedly different. When asked what life in the UK was actually like, Maria replied:

What can I say? I lost my word. What can I say?

Maria, F, 25, Zimbabwe

For Maria, there are no words to describe just how far below her expectations her current life, one in which she is sleeping alone on the floor of a night shelter, is unable to buy food, has acquired all her clothes from charitable donations, and cannot access work or education, falls.

Olu (M, 40, Eritrea), had fled national service in Eritrea. For Olu, the brutal nature of military conscription had led him first to escape, and then to seek asylum in the UK, where he believed he would be able to build a good life for himself. He had chosen to illustrate the difference between his initial expectations of the UK and the way he had come to feel about it now that he had been refused asylum as part of the auto-photography exercise. Interestingly, central to Olu's narrative was that he felt he was less 'free' than he had expected to be. The photograph depicts the Union Jack flag flying over Sheffield Town Hall:



Figure 2: Photograph by Olu

- I What does the flag mean to you?
- P That I'm in Britain... and that the government has refused to help me... the government has refused to help me so... and they're flying the flag of freedom, but the government have refused to help me.
- I So is freedom something that you think about when you think about the government, or...
- P Yeah... you cannot separate freedom from government.
- I Okay... um, do you want to explain that a little bit more...

- P The government doesn't give you your freedom, you have to fight for it... but they have the powers to stop you from gaining your freedom. For example, I am not free because I cannot work, so I don't have my own personal esteem being boosted... I have to put on very cheap clothes, bad clothes, cheap food. I don't have skills. I cannot join the university, college, make new friends... My freedom has been suppressed, denied by the British Government and the Home Office, and the parliament has passed these laws... I'm in a very desperate situation. It's a destitute situation. I am not free.
- I So, is the UK less free than you thought it would be?
- P Yes.
- I Okay.... er... and in terms of working, what does it mean to you to not be able to work?
- P It is because work means to me that I cannot satisfy my needs, I cannot contribute to the society, I cannot pay my taxes to government.

Several points stand out in Olu's answers above. Firstly, the reiteration of 'refused' within his first answer suggests just how significant he feels the government's role to be in suppressing his ability to live his life as he wishes. Secondly, he feels that the government is hypocritical, that it purports to be a government that values 'freedom', they are 'flying the flag of freedom', and yet Olu feels distinctly 'un-free'. He attributes this lack of freedom to a discrepancy in power between himself and the government, whereby the government, with the power invested in it, is able to prevent Olu, with his relative lack of power, from being 'free'. Finally, Olu is suggesting that the government's prohibition on paid employment is what most epitomises his lack of freedom, that prevents him, because of his ensuing lack of financial means, not only from buying material necessities, but also from gaining self-esteem through work, and from making the friends he believes he would make through work.

The centrality of work, and the inability to work, as well as the disparity between the expected and the lived reality, was also a dominant theme that emerged from interviews with other participants. Anzan (M, 46, India), who had fled India after persecution for his political and religious beliefs, stated for example:

It is not good. For the government, also for the person itself. If I allowed to work, I can involve in the economy, and also I can wear my daily life properly. If I earn money, if I do job – not very good money – but I can be able to earn my wages, minimum wages, and then I can survive myself properly, and also I can pay tax to the government. And lots and lots of people who claim asylum they are untouchable. Untouchable mean they are not involved in the economy, they are barred in the economy.

Anzan, M, 46, India

Again, the centrality of work to being able to build any kind of life for himself emerges as a dominant theme in Anzan's narrative. It is at the root of his exclusion within the UK. His inability to '*wear [his] daily life properly*' perfectly encapsulates both the psychosocial and material deprivations that being unable to work have led to for Anzan.

Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia), expressed similar sentiments, and also touched on perceptions of poverty in the UK and Africa. In 2008 Tahliil had been working for a European NGO in Somalia when one of his colleagues was shot and killed. The NGO evacuated the remaining, predominantly European, staff to their countries of origin. Tahliil was evacuated to the UK. Upon arrival Tahliil sought asylum at Lunar House in Croydon, before being allocated shared accommodation in Doncaster. When the housing provider in Doncaster lost its contract with the Home Office, he was relocated to Sheffield, where he eventually received news that his case had been refused. Tahliil appealed this decision but was unsuccessful. At the time of interview Tahliil had exhausted his appeal rights. Due to the ongoing situation in Somalia the Home Office cannot forcibly return him to his country of origin. Tahliil therefore lives in a perpetual state of suspended animation, unable to return to Somalia and unable to build a life for himself in the UK because of the restriction on the right to work. In addition to the discrepancy between expectation and reality, Tahliil drew a comparison between what he saw as dominant perceptions of poverty in Africa, and the poverty that he had experienced in the UK:

[W]e start finance... Money is the route to all good things isn't it? Without being allowed to work you don't have any source of income and you can't earn anything... those are the kind of things that go in my mind every day... I never ever believed... the things that peoples says about Africa, I actually experienced them here. Saying

Africans, in Africa people go without food. I experience it in the First World, in the UK. People say in Africa people can go for a month or a week with one pair of jeans or one clothes. I experience it here in the UK you know... So those are the kind of things that if you're not allowed to work, you're not earning anything, you can't do nothing.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

Again, Tahliil's sentiments are reminiscent of Adichie's *Ifemelu*. He highlights the contradictions between perceptions of places and the reality of those places, and in this way reveals the reductive nature of such perceptions. In addition, Tahliil's assertion that because of his inability to work he has experienced types of poverty more often associated with developing nations than the more advanced economy of the UK demonstrates just how deprived he feels his current situation to be. This finding is echoed by Kissoon's (2010) research into hunger among asylum seekers living in Canada and the UK. Kissoon notes that:

Homelessness, hunger, and fear are not confined to warring and unstable regions in the 'Third World' but are increasingly faced by asylum seekers arriving to deterrent asylum policies in the West.

Kissoon, 2010, p2

Kissoon's findings relate to asylum seekers, and the low levels of support that they receive from the UK and Canadian governments. For Tahliil, who, like many of the participants, had exhausted his appeal rights and had no recourse to government support, his situation, like that of the vast majority of people refused asylum, is arguably far worse. However, like the asylum seekers in Kissoon's study, Tahliil's, and indeed most of the participants in this study, experience of extreme poverty can be seen to be linked to UK asylum policy, and his status as a refused asylum seeker, rather than to the general economic profile of the country in which he now resides. What both Tahliil's statement and Kissoon's research highlight, is a tendency to perceive quality of life as country dependent, perhaps related to the overall economic wealth of the country. In fact, the situation is much more nuanced than this, and in the case of the participants in this study tended to be related to an individual's legal status within the UK. This suggests that what participants are experiencing is dependent upon their legal citizenship status, rather than on their country of residence.

This discrepancy between expectation and reality was common to all participants, and chimes with findings in other studies (e.g. Crawley, 2010). What sets the participants in this study apart is that they have been through the asylum process and, rather than their lives gradually improving, as they had anticipated, they have become yet more destitute, and this destitution seemingly more intractable, because of their refused status. An important question here, however, is why participants held such high expectations of the UK. By understanding this, we are able to more fully comprehend the global nature of the power disparities that feed in to those that participants experience in the UK.

Why Might Participants Have Had Such High Expectations?

In order to explore why participants might have held such high expectations of the UK prior to arrival, it is useful to look at their knowledge of the UK, and the sources of this knowledge, before they sought asylum. Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) and Hamid (M, 33, Syria) had held positive expectations of what their lives in the UK would be like. These principally related to the rule of fair humanitarian law, and were based on hearsay from others in their countries of origin:

[T]he people they say, when I been in Iraq, they say UK is the best country because they say they respect human and they have everything, the government is the same with everyone. They don't care if you're small, if you're big, if you're working in government... They say if you go in UK your life is gonna be very safe because they is the best country. But when I come in the UK I say to myself 'Where is the good country?' I live in park, I live in skip.

Hassan, M, 22, Iraq

Because everybody thinking from outside of the UK here is all are equal, same law for everybody, these kind of human rights, everything is good. But when you refused you have no solicitor, no help, then what your situation?

Hamid, M, 33, Syria

For Hassan and Hamid, therefore, there seemed to be a general opinion among the people that they knew in their countries of origin that the UK was a fair, humanitarian country where they would be both safe and able to build good lives for themselves. Olu (M, 40, Eritrea) cited a more specific origin for his positive perceptions, friends who had been to the UK on holiday:

- P I learned from the people who had been here... the people who were here but are in Eritrea.
- I Oh okay, so they'd been to England and then come back to Eritrea?... Had they been just on a trip to England or... [P nods]... Okay, and they'd enjoyed it?
- P Yeah they enjoyed it... they really did... they went all over, they went to London, Scotland, Ireland.

One possible reason that participants' preconceptions of the UK might have been fairly high, is related to the way that 'soft power' is wielded by the UK around the globe. Soft power is the way that countries, through economic, political or cultural strategies work to build positive relationships and impressions with other countries. For example, events including the London Olympics in 2012 have been suggested to influence the way that people in other countries perceive the UK, enabling 'brand Britain' to wield soft power in less powerful countries and create a specific, positive impression of the UK in those countries (Ipsos MORI, 2012). The UK is currently second in the global ranking of soft power (Mcclory, 2017), suggesting that it is highly adept at utilising this. Indeed, 'nation branding' has been a staple of the British Government's economic policy since 2012, when the 'GREAT Britain' initiative, receiving £113.5 million in funding between 2012 and 2015, was launched. The initiative is described as:

[T]he government's major branding initiative to promote the UK as a destination for tourists, trade and investment and students in order to secure economic growth.

National Audit Office, 2015, p5

Writing about the nation branding of Iceland, Loftsdottir (2015) argues that neoliberal nation branding perpetuates colonial ideas about Iceland as the 'exotic north'. Similarly, Kerrigan, Shivanandan and Hede (2012) argue that the way that India is depicted in its nation branding project, the 'Incredible India Campaign', is based on the imagined identity of those 'being branded'. Similarly, it could be argued that Britain's nation branding project reiterates colonial ideas of Britain as, for example, a great trading nation. Two other components of soft power, and ones widely utilised in conflict afflicted countries and thus particularly relevant to the participants in this study, are peace keeping missions and assistance to the poor (Nye, 2005; Elhousseini, 2016). Although not nation branding per se, such activities may have a similar ability to convey a reductive, positive impression of the UK in conflict afflicted countries.

Hassan (M, 22, Iraq), for example, had developed his opinion of the UK from friends who had spoken to British aid workers in Iraq:

I Why do you think people in Iraq think [the UK is] such a good country?

P Because I think there is some people from UK, they say they help the people.
 I think somebody ask him or something.

Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) expressed a similar sentiment. Having worked for a European NGO in Somalia, he too had formed a positive perception of the UK:

I feel like I made a wrong decision in life... um... I was in danger but I feel I came to the wrong country. And having, having UK being pictured out in the outside world, especially in Africa, like the pioneers of human rights, I'm, I'm more angrier than then... I used to support, er, England's [football] team. I don't now.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

The narratives that develop from initiatives such as nation branding, as well as instances of soft power such as peace keeping missions, can be understood as a manifestation of the Eliasian (1994 [1965]) concept of 'praise gossip'. It can, therefore, be argued, that in order to understand the way that the participants in this study perceived the UK prior to arrival, Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, and specifically the concept of praise gossip, would benefit from being expanded in geographical scale beyond the immediate context of participants' lives in the UK to also encompass their experiences prior to arrival. Indeed, Hogenstijn, van Middelkoop & Terlouw (2008) argue that this would allow the concept to remain relevant in the increasingly mobile, globalised societies of today, where narratives transcend geographical boundaries to inform perceptions in places far removed from the context to which they apply. The global reach of positive praise gossip narratives can thereby be understood to directly inform participants' experiences of life in the UK, as they lay the foundation for high expectations, and subsequent disappointment, in the actuality of life once they become first asylum seekers, and then refused asylum seekers. What is more, as Bauman (2003) suggests, stories and narratives serve to simplify a highly complex world and therefore, arguably, mean that participants' perceptions of the UK are over simplistic. In line with the

theory of established-outsider relations (Elias & Scotson, 1994 [1965]), praise gossip narratives, which these stories can be considered to be, result in the perception of the group, in this case the established group, as homogenous. These narratives, or stories, therefore remove the complexities of social hierarchies within that group, a reality which participants only seemed to become aware of once in the UK.

This section of the chapter has looked at the disjuncture between participants' expectations of life in the UK prior to their arrival and their experience of the actuality of life in the UK. It has suggested that the reason that participants may have had such positive preconceptions might be related to the way that the UK Government wields soft power around the world. The chapter now moves on to explore participants' experiences of life in the UK in terms of their material exclusion.

6.3 Material Exclusion

Overview

This section of the chapter explores participants' experiences of material exclusion, primarily in terms of food and clothing exclusion. These were two themes that stood out strongly in the data analysis of material exclusion experiences and thus serve to exemplify the broader material exclusion reported by all participants. This section seeks to explore these experiences as well as theoretical approaches to understanding why participants experienced such high levels of material deprivation. It is argued that these experiences might be understood using both Agamben's (1998) concept of the homo sacer, and Wacquant's (2008) concept of urban marginality.

As discussed in the previous section, prior to coming to the UK participants had not expected to experience the levels of deprivation and exclusion that they did. This exclusion was most notable in their inability to work, which was cited by participants as the main barrier preventing them from building a life for themselves in the UK. Because of this restriction, all participants were experiencing extreme financial hardship. The degree of financial hardship ranged from those who received a small amount of government support, to those who did not even receive any money from charity.

Financial Situations of Participants

Five participants received Section 4 support of £36.62 per week. This is the amount of financial support set for single people who have been refused asylum, who are destitute *and* who also meet one of five other qualifying criteria, including being unable to leave the country or pursuing a judicial review of their asylum application (see Chapter Two, Section 5). This support was credited to an Azure (now ASPEN) prepayment card which could be used to purchase goods in a limited range of shops. These participants were not provided with any cash by the state.

Four participants received Section 95 support of £128.48 per week. They received this slightly greater amount because they had a dependent child/children under the age of eighteen. This support was provided in cash.

Six participants had no government support. These participants were reliant solely on charity, friends and family.

The following section examines the experiences of those without any government support first, before moving on to look at the experiences of those who did receive some form of support from government.

Participants with No Government Support

For those participants who did not receive any government financial support there were a number of ways that they managed to survive. The most prominent of these strategies was accessing services run by refugee and asylum seeker charities in order to obtain basic necessities including food, a small amount of money, and clothing. One participant who had sought out support from a charity in order to help meet his basic material needs was Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia), who received no state support and £20 per week from a local charity:

[I] get twenty pound a week which is... better than none, it's um... it's not enough... it's only enough for me... and not enough. I can't buy anything fancy... I have to buy food first, have to pay for transport. Twenty pounds a week yeah... or three pounds a day. It's hard.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

In this way the money that Tahliil receives from the charity acts to ameliorate, in part, some of the difficulties caused by his inability to work and earn a living. While still insufficient, it does mean that he can buy a small amount of food and take the bus occasionally. Ameer (M, 36, Iran), who had fled Iran after threats were made to his life following his involvement with an anti-government protest movement, had had a similar experience. He states:

I got just some support from [charity]. Is temporary support just for one years, and sadly it's gonna be finished on tenth of June this year... I didn't have any support from anywhere when they been giving me the first time that support there. I got twenty pound a week; the last year it was just fifteen pound a week. But that fifteen pound or twenty pound they been giving me I try to been carry on my life by that. And you know, in this country, twenty pound is nothing.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

Without the support they received from charity it would difficult for Ameer and Tahliil to survive and meet their basic needs. Whilst research suggests that the role of charities in meeting asylum seekers' basic needs has become increasingly widespread as a consequence of the gradual retrenchment of state support for asylum seekers (Zetter & Pearl, 2000), much less is known about the role of charity in the lives of those who have been refused asylum. According to The British Red Cross (2017) charities are providing not only an increasing diversity of services to asylum seekers, but also a greater number of services per asylum seeker, suggesting that the level of need among this group is growing. One of the main needs that charities appeared to be meeting was food.

Food and Charity

There were a number of ways that participants utilised charitable organisations to meet their food needs. This included attending food banks, drop-in centres, and using financial support from charity to purchase food. This section details these experiences and presents some of the limitations of these resources.

One of the main ways that the charitable sector was aiding participants without support from government was through the provision of food, primarily from foodbanks. Tahliil (M, 37, Somalia) relied on a foodbank to meet the majority of his food needs. As part of the auto-

photography exercise he had taken a picture of the food he receives each week, indicating the central role that charity plays in enabling him to access this basic necessity:



Figure 3: Photograph by Tahliil

Tahliil explained what his photograph depicted:

P This is my kitchen, and this the food from the food bank. This is what a single person gets. You don't get much. So you've got rice, and rice pudding... you don't get much. Baked beans.

I How often do you get this much food?

P Once a week. Mostly Fridays, I normally go on Friday.

I And how long does it last you?

P By the next Friday it's almost gone, 'cos this the only food you have so it doesn't last much. But when you get sometimes welfare support from [charity] so you go to buy some things like onion and chicken sometimes, on a good day. But most of the time I spent my welfare to buy my son something, especially now it's summer so I need to get him something for summer. It depends a lot with the food bank

...

I What kind of food would you cook if you could buy whatever you wanted?

P ...I wouldn't mind having fruits in my cupboard, vegetables, spinach and stuff. Proper rice, not the long grain rice. This one takes half an hour to cook and it's

a different taste to the others. It's more but low quality. And so yeah, most of the stuff that you get, I'm not complaining, but they're the smart prices ones, they're the lower shelves, so you won't get anything better 'cos these are people donating, and so mostly they will go for the lower shelves ones so the quality, you don't get much with low priced food. So fruits, probably things like fish, veggies and stuff. I normally get some deodorant as well from the food bank. So you get food and either you take deodorant or toilet paper or toothpaste. You choose one, you can't get all of them. For a single person you get two rolls of tissue, I don't know how they calculate that (laughs).

Olu (M, 40, Eritrea) was also largely reliant on food banks. He too emphasised some of the problems associated with this:

[T]he foodbanks are leftovers from supermarkets. They are there so that you get food... not that they're the best food someone would like to eat. Someone needs to eat fresh food which they cook, and that is... hard with food bank... need fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, fresh meats, fresh fish, fresh fresh fresh fresh. Not tinned, not canned, not plastic, not preservatives.

Olu, M, 40, Eritrea

For Tahlil and Olu the food bank was a vital resource. However, the amount of food was problematic, becoming scant by the end of the week. In addition, and consistent with previous finding (Crawley et al., 2011; Taylor, 2009), the poor quality of food was noted by both Olu and Tahlil, who stated that the food they were given lacked fresh ingredients and tended to consist of low-cost, pre-packaged items of arguably lower nutritional value. According to Lambie-Mumford (2015) the retrenchment of the welfare state in recent years has led to a proliferation of charities providing food to people via foodbanks. What is more, a recent report by Loopstra and Doireann (2017), who surveyed 413 visitors to 18 of the Trussell Trust's 401 food banks across England, Scotland and Wales, found that among people visiting the food banks, asylum seekers were over-represented compared to the general population. This suggests that while state retrenchment has increased food poverty in the UK generally, asylum seekers have been disproportionately affected by the recoiling of state support for vulnerable groups. Again, there is little research on the proportion of refused asylum seekers that access

these services, and as such they are a largely hidden population. However, it seems likely that people refused asylum, who have far less access to government support, might well be impacted to an even greater degree.

Foodbanks, whilst a useful resource, were not able to meet the needs of all participants. Maria (F, 25, Zimbabwe), for example, had been to a food bank only once. This was because most of the food that she was given needed to be cooked. Because she was homeless and slept in a night shelter, she had no access to cooking facilities and thus the food she was given was of little use to her. The inability of food banks to meet the needs of those refused asylum in this way is also noted by McKenna (2019) and Blanchard and Joy (2017), suggesting that there is perhaps a need for such services to adapt to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. In order to try and meet her food needs, Maria therefore spent the small amount of money she received from charity, twenty pounds, on sandwiches. I asked her what kind of food she would like to eat, to which she replied '*breakfast, lunch and dinner*'. Whilst my question had been intended to ask about different types of food, Maria's interpretation of it as '*what meals in the day would you like to be able to eat?*' sheds light on just how impoverished her access to food is and how food banks, in some instances, cannot reach those most in need.

In addition to foodbanks, a number of participants accessed homelessness day centre services where they could obtain cooked food. Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) was one such participant. Tahliil had taken a picture of a local homelessness project that offered food, as well as other services including laundry and activities:



Figure 4: Photograph by Tahliil

- P It's a photo of the [charity]. This the main entrance. I tried to take pictures inside, but they told me no you can't do it here, so I just took the main entrance. ...[L]ots of memories. When I became homeless I was referred by [a charity] to this place, and this where you get breakfast and lunch and do your laundry. So from the night shelter where we used to sleep, it's open half eight in the morning, so what you do, um, when your [charity] vouchers run out, what you do you do some activities here from ten to twelve, and you get free lunch. So it used to be a second home. So from nine in the morning until around half past one I was in here doing different kind of things so that I can get some food to eat.
- I Do you go there anymore?
- P Er, sometimes, when I sleep at the night shelter I do go there in the morning, but sometimes I say if I don't really need I don't have to be there because you see lots of kinds of things, it reminds you a lot... I'm a very emotional person and there are always fights going on there because there are all different kinds of people through homeless, people through asylum seeking process, people with drug problems and alcohol and family breakdowns, so anything can kick off any time, so I try so much to avoid it.

This day centre was also central to Olu's (M, 40, Eritrea) experience of life as a refused asylum seeker. This was evident first and foremost in the number of photographs he had chosen to take of the project as part of the auto-photography exercise. The following photograph depicts Sheffield Cathedral:



Figure 5: Photograph by Olu

- I Why did you choose to take that photo?
- P Because I pass here when I'm going to [the day centre].
- I Right.
- P You know [it]?
- I I do yeah.
- P It's about, it's for homeless people, this type of stuff... where people get new things... new food.
- I ...[W]hat's it like [there]?
- P In what sense?
- I Er... is it a welcoming place, do you enjoy going there...
- P It's not a welcoming place... it is a place where if you got no choice you go to.
- I Okay.
- P But if you have a choice you avoid... because so many people there are drug related cases, and fight a lot, and most of the time police come, and therefore most of the time you just go there because that's where you get your letters, sometimes there are free computers, sometimes free clothes, free food sometimes... so this kind of things... vouchers... sometimes there is no alternative but to go there, so that's why I took this photo.

For both Olu and Tahliil, visiting the day centre was a challenging experience. It enabled them to access food, but it meant dealing with the difficulties, such as fights, that arose amongst service users who had a variety of vulnerabilities and needs. Tahliil had taken another picture to provide a contrast to the image of the day centre. This enabled Tahliil to compare and contrast the two places in a way that had photo-elicitation not been used, may not have arisen during the course of an interview, thus reinforcing the utility of this method to the interview process.



Figure 6: Photograph by Tahliil

This is opposite the [day centre]. This is an estate agent and yeah like, like seeing the future. In the future I'll walk in that place and I'll get myself a house. I'm going to get my own house from that place, because I love this place. When I was homeless, [the day centre] is directly opposite and you still can see people going there to enquire about houses and mortgages and stuff and you know, life is so unfair you know, 'cos most of the time I was thinking, I was seeing people going and people checking, but here I am, I can't even afford some food. So I'm seeing very smart people going in there work every morning and in the evening and you know they are making a living, they are working, doing something for their money. I would love to be one of those people.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

Tahliil's photograph and his rational for taking the photograph again highlight not only his extreme material exclusion, but the discrepancy between what he expected his life in the UK to be like, and the actuality. Not only can he not go into the estate agent and buy or rent a house, he cannot get a job to earn the money that would enable him to be able to do this. Instead, he is reliant on charity for all his basic material needs.

Another way that participants with no government support utilised charities to access food was by using the money that they got from charity to purchase food. Anzan (M, 46, India) was one such participant:

- I How do you get hold of food?
- P Food basically I buy food for myself, very little food.
- I And is that using the money that you get from the charity?
- P Yeah.
- I And are you able to buy the food that you want?
- P No.
- I Can you tell me a little bit about that?
- P If I intend to buy some good food I cannot cover my whole weeks. If I want a good food for the day [and] I buy it, then rest of the week you have to pass without food. That's why I have to [work out] how much money I have per day to spend.
- I And how much money is that?
- P Three pound.
- I And how do you spend that three pounds a day?
- P Just chips. Chips, little sandwich. That's all.
- I And this isn't the kind of food you would like to eat?
- P I am not used to that kind, but situation force me to living.
- I So what would you eat if you could eat what you wanted?
- P Mostly Asian food – rice, meat, fish, vegetables. But this two months I had no proper food.
- I So most days you eat...
- P Most days I eat very simple food.
- I What did you eat yesterday?
- P Yesterday... just one orange and three grapes.

Anzan's experience of accessing food was amongst the most difficult of the participants'. He had often been hungry and worried frequently about his access to food.

Although these experiences of food poverty and recourse to charity might also be understood as instances of Agamben's (1998) 'bare life', as discussed in the theoretical framework, Agamben's concepts are, arguably, somewhat fatalistic, and also perhaps too 'pure' to engage effectively with participants' experiences of the modern city (Gündoğdu, 2012; Shinkel & van den Berg, 2011), allowing insufficient room for empirical validation. In order to engage more

concretely with the modern city and the experiences of those who can be said to be living in a state of exception within it, Wacquant's (2008) concept of urban marginality in advanced societies, with its focus on state retrenchment and its consequences, might therefore provide a more tangible theoretical lens through which to understand these experiences. Indeed, as Lambie-Mumford (2015) and Zetter and Peal (2000), among others, note, it is the gradual retrenchment of state support for vulnerable groups including asylum seekers that has led to the proliferation of charities providing basic necessities to these groups. Although Wacquant himself does not address the role of charity in the lives of marginalised groups, Russell (2016), in her Wacquanian examination of the lived experiences of young unemployed men and women in the UK, notes time and again the way that charity is central to the lives of these young people. As such, the role of charity in the lives of participants might be understood as a key component, or at least a consequence of, the urban marginality described by Wacquant (2008), as a direct consequence of state retrenchment in advanced, neoliberal societies. By removing the state from the provision of basic necessities for the most vulnerable in society, charity must step in to meet these needs if they are to be met at all.

The modern city is increasingly characterised by both an increase in marginalised individuals, and by the charitable organisations that seek to fill the gap left by the retrenchment of state provision, and it is their encounters with these organisations that perhaps most explicitly defined participants' experiences of life after being refused asylum. This reliance on charity is neither inevitable nor predestined; rather it is the end result of the increasing neoliberalism of the modern state, itself predicated on notions of those who are deserving of help, and those who are not. These everyday encounters with charities in order to access basic necessities are the empirical manifestation of what it is to be homo sacer in twenty first century Britain.

Family, Friends and Food

In addition to accessing charities to acquire food, many participants without government support had turned to friends and family to meet this need. Ameer (M, 36, Iran) had done this, but, like accessing food banks, this had not been an easy experience for him:

P It's so difficult, different. 'Cos I been feeling ashamed to asking people 'I am hungry' to buy me the food. But sometimes people they know me, and sometimes when he go to eat I try to go, to go away, because I didn't like to be

a pressure on them. Sometime they been make me to stay – ‘don’t go, we are going to eat, you should stay with us’. But I feel ashamed if I am staying with him. Before, if I know is a time he is going to eat... ten minute before that I try to go away. I feel ashamed to be a pressure to him to buy me. People, they buy for me the food, people they try to help me.

I Is that when you were staying with friends?

P Yeah, when I been homeless. And sometime I didn’t have any food and I feeled ashamed to ask anyone. And sometime a couple of Kurdish restaurant, because sometime I been eating there, they been know me... sometime they give me the food... and.... it’s difficult.

Central to Ameer’s experience here is a feeling of shame, he is ashamed to ask his friends for food. He tries to leave his friends before they eat so that they do not feel obliged buy food for him. This sentiment is also noted by McKenna (2019) in her report on people refused asylum in Scotland. Indeed, this was a common theme, and Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) expressed similar sentiments:

I don’t have enough food, eating for myself. If I don’t get money from my friend it’s not enough money to eat. Is all the time I take my hand to my friend for money, all the time. I really shame. I say why you asking money all the time? Why you asking? So there’s no way, [if] I don’t ask them there’s no way [I could afford to eat].

Hassan, M, 22, Iraq

Ameer no longer had to rely on friends for food. He had now moved in with his partner with whom he had children, and ate with his family. However, his feeling of shame had not diminished:

And personally I feel ashamed if I ask my partner more than the food when now I am living with them. We are living together. I got food from the family. I got everything the sleep in the house. More than that I feel ashamed. I can’t do anything more to them, more than happiness and love and the carry on relation. I like, like other person to do everything to my kids, but still I am waiting for that chance, I don’t know.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

Once again, in line with Blanchard and Joy's (2017) study, Ameer seems to feel that he is a burden to his family in terms of his material needs. What these experiences suggest is that the experience of being homo sacer is one that becomes linked to a feeling of shame at having to rely on others to meet basic survival needs, a topic explored more fully in Chapter Eight.

Clothing

Another basic necessity for which participants were largely reliant on the charitable sector was clothing. Maria (F, 25, Zimbabwe), who received £20 per week from charity, had obtained all of her clothes from clothes banks at Refugee Action and the Red Cross. She was unable to buy any clothes of her own. Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) did not get his clothes from a clothes bank, instead, he bought the majority of his clothing from a high street charity shop and had taken the following picture to depict this aspect of his experience of life as a refused asylum seeker:



Figure 7: Photograph by Tahliil

Unlike the food he received for free at the food bank, Tahliil paid for the clothes he bought from the charity shop. However, Tahliil nonetheless experienced his reliance on charity as problematic. He explained:

[This is] my favourite charity shop. British Heart Foundation. It gives me what I want. Sometimes, most of the time, when I go in there, I get things very cheap. I normally buy jeans from the charity shop... It's because of who I am. Because I'm an asylum seeker I can't afford much so... I don't like, but I have to, I have to... I'm embarrassed

to go to a charity shop to you know, to buy clothes. I hate my situation. I know I'm not, I'm not happy to be like this. I'm not really happy to go to a charity shop to buy clothes... You are wearing clothes that have been worn by somebody else, and the person that wore them didn't want them. So you're actually very low to buy something that someone else don't want or don't need you know? So that's how I feel about the whole thing.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

Although Tahliil was reliant on the charity shop to buy items of clothing that would otherwise be prohibitively expensive, he found shopping there embarrassing. Again, like the participants who had to ask friends and family for food, shopping in a charity shop caused Tahliil to feel ashamed and embarrassed. Tahliil had taken another picture to exemplify the contrast between where he currently buys his clothes and where he would like to be able to shop:



Figure 8: Photograph by Tahliil

He explained why he had taken the two photographs. Of Figure 8 he stated:

P This to me, this is more, this is life, [the other picture] is death. There is no comparison. This is where I would wish to be buying my stuff... Blue Inc. And they're not very far [apart] actually... These are new clothes, good quality. You have a variety to choose from. And the difference is you get something from fifty pound but [in the charity shop] you get something for two-pound-fifty. So

there's no comparison. And I wouldn't mind having something new, something that nobody else have worn.

I What's it like when you walk past that shop?

P I go in. I go in but the problem is you have to lie to the assistants. [They] say 'how can I help you?' Say 'I'm just browsing'. They've got white jeans, I love white jeans, 'Do you have?' 'We don't, but I can order for you', I say 'No, I'll come later to check'. Definitely know you can't afford them 'cos they'll go for like a hundred.

I So, you say you'll sort of lie to the assistants, do you feel like that's lying when you say you're browsing? I suppose I mean why is it lying?

P I feel like I'm not telling them I didn't come to buy. Don't order the white jeans for me... There was a time I told them to order a white jacket, a white jeans jacket, but I didn't go back there for like six months, I was embarrassed. Just want to feel like I can afford it 'cos... but, I still go, I still go and just see what's there.

The subjective experience of being simultaneously included *in* and excluded *from* society that was common to all the participants is powerfully exemplified by Tahliil's (M, 29, Somalia) photographs. In his contrasting images of The British Heart Foundation charity shop and the high street clothes store, Tahliil demonstrates how his impoverished financial situation precluded him from purchasing items of clothing from somewhere other than a charity shop. While the charity shop and the high street store were proximal to one another, he was prevented from buying anything from the high street store because of his negligible financial means. These images might therefore be understood as a stark visual depiction of Agamben's (1998) concept of 'inclusive exclusion', of being both within the geographical boundaries of the sovereign state whilst simultaneously lacking the rights and opportunities that citizenship would bestow. Indeed, for Tahliil the charity shop represented 'death', while the high street clothes store 'life'. In this way, despite the ability of the charity shop to allow Tahliil to purchase clothes, and thus meet his basic material needs, he did not feel that this fully ameliorated his exclusion. In Agamben's terms therefore, the death/life distinction that Tahliil makes might be usefully translated to 'bare life', mere physical survival, and 'qualified life', the ability to take part in all the aspects of society that make life worthwhile. However, once again, it is worth reiterating that this 'bare life' is manifest not only because of participants'

lack of citizenship, but also because state services for vulnerable people in general have decreased, and these experiences can therefore also be understood as manifestations of Wacquant's urban marginality. Indeed, in many ways, *homo sacer*, in this instance, can be seen as resulting, in part, from state retrenchment.

The overarching theme from the above quotations, however, is that of embarrassment and shame. The material impoverishment that means that participants must ask friends, family or charity for help in accessing basic necessities is a source of great shame for participants. The excerpts here are used in the present chapter to illustrate the levels of material impoverishment experienced by participants. Issues of shame and embarrassment are explored in greater depth in Chapter Eight: Stigma.

Participants with Government Support

Although better off than those without any government financial support, participants that did receive this nonetheless often stated that it was not sufficient to meet their basic material needs. Wahid (M, 64, Syria) received Section 4 support of £36.62 per week on an Azure prepayment card. However, beyond buying food, he felt that this amount was insufficient to meet his needs:

- P Today I shower, no shampoo.
- I Why no shampoo?
- P Finish. I want another bottle... I today get shampoo. Is expensive. Example, Boots expensive. Told you just food is good. Like one spray expensive.
- I Oh, like deodorant?
- P Just I give food, is good. Is more thing – example shower, razors, is little money... Soap for example, is too much expensive, more thing. Example like... for example hill, hill, I coming too much sweating. Every time going, washing, not washing.

In this way, Wahid was only just managing to meet his most basic needs, and struggled to access necessities, including shampoo and deodorant, within his very limited budget. Similarly, Tariq (M, 21, Pakistan) who had travelled to the UK by himself as a sixteen year old following the arrest and detention of several close family members because of their Christian faith, noted that although he managed to buy enough food with his Section 4 support, he could not afford

other things that could be considered necessities, such as a haircut or taking a bus into town. He begins by talking about his Azure card:

- P ...Too many people have this one like this. Some people is come from detention centre but this card is thirty-five pound inside.
- I Is that enough money?
- P No, it's not enough. Like some people er, is not enough but some people make it enough. Like is not enough, thirty-five pound is not enough yeah, but what can do? I said to you, I'm boring.
- I And what's it like having no actual cash, how do you get by?
- P Um, can't take this one, like need to do some haircut and I don't have no cash. This one boring I say, like no cash, 'cos sometime do haircut yeah... and I don't have no money, and this why I'm boring.
- I Can you tell me a bit about how not having cash, you said it's difficult to have your hair cut and things like that, and you said you walked into town to meet me today, is that because you can't get the bus?
- P Yeah, this is difficult you know. I say to you before yeah, like everything is difficult now because I'm man yeah, I'm man now yeah. If I free, I do something yeah maybe. Give me visa am start working yeah, like quickly working yeah, my life is going nice, I'm man. Like now I have like thirty-five pound. I can't do haircut, I can't take bus yeah, I can't do nothing, this why I'm going boring.

Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) also received Section 4 support. Again, he felt that this amount was not sufficient to meet his basic material needs, and noted an inability to purchase necessities including food and clothing:

Um I don't know. The Home Office, right, they giving money, this benefit is not enough, it's not enough like thirty-five pound money a week, thirty-six pound sixty-two p is not enough, because is what you can do? The only thing is you can eat food, is not enough for food as well. So example, like me, I living six years in this country, they give me this two years they give me money. Before this two years they didn't give me

anything. Like now, if they give me money, that's nothing. I cannot buy t-shirt, I cannot buy jeans. I don't know how can I buy shoes? Is very difficult.

Hassan, M, 22, Iraq

The views espoused by Wahid, Tariq, and Hassan, which were representative of those of other participants in the same situation, that the amount they received per week from the state was insufficient to meet their basic needs, is generally supported by the literature (British Red Cross, 2017; House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2013; Pettitt, 2013). Again, these experiences might be understood as instances of Agamben's (1998; 2000) concept of 'bare life', whereby the right to enjoy the type of 'qualified life' that participants expected to lead in the UK, a life where they would be a part of society, working and integrating, rather than the 'bare life' of mere survival, is denied to anyone who is not a citizen of a given state. This idea was expressed well by Ameer (M, 36, Iran), who explained what being refused asylum meant to him:

But when they been putting in the wrong decision to you and that reject you, whole, they destroy whole your life in one sentence, or in one letters, and you don't have any basic life, is so difficult... Inside that person mentally and physically is very difficult, because he been suffering too much problem. He been thinking when he be in the safe place, they have a democracy, they been giving the basic life as a normal person to live as a same, same all the like residents for society. But when you asylum seekers you don't have anything, you don't have anything. I can't say any word to that. You see a small animals live better than your life. You're a human, but without any humanity. In some place when you try to help other they don't accept you. If want to study, to be educated, you not allowed. If you want to work and paying tax and help yourself, society, to make, build yourself to not getting a support from a government and that, you not allowed.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

Ameer's sentiment that he has seen animals better treated than he has been reveals just how dramatic the impact of not having citizenship status is on his quality of life. Another participant for whom citizenship was the central reason why he felt he could not lead a 'qualified life' was Hamid (M, 33, Syria):

- I Um, so how do you think things would change for you if you got status?
- P I will try to get job, paid work. My wife will do some courses as well. I want to learn driving, buy a car. This kind of things. Freedom. Actually, because I can't do these things because I have no money, I'm not this country person, not citizen.

Again, for Hamid the primary barrier to living the kind of life that that he wished to live was his citizenship status. Whilst the concept of citizenship is highly contested (Somners, 1993; Lazar & Nuijten, 2013; Gaventa, 2002; Ferguson, 2013; Gordon & Stack, 2007), and arguably increasingly malleable as the role of the nation state evolves and the concept of transnational citizenship emerges (Baubock, 2003; Selasi, 2005), the socio-legal parameters that define some in the UK as citizens and others as non-citizens provide a useful means of trying to understand the experiences of the refused asylum seekers in this study. According to Agamben (1998), the figure of the *homo sacer* exists in a 'state of exception' or 'inclusive exclusion', whereby they are excluded by the state from all the rights endowed by citizenship, but are still subject to the rule of law of the state, and thus can be punished by the state. Because of this exclusion, *homo sacer* lives a 'bare life', whereby the right to enjoy the type of 'qualified life' that a citizen might enjoy, is denied them. For participants, this might be understood as an inability to lead the kind of life they had expected to lead in the UK, a life where they would be a part of society, working and integrating, rather than the 'bare life' of mere survival. Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) felt this keenly, stating:

Is a really good country, I don't want to tell you is bad country. Is really nice country, everything is okay. The thing is with asylum people. That is not good.

Hassan (M, 22, Iraq)

Whilst it is possible that Hassan was trying not to offend me by speaking badly of my home country, and thus exaggerated the good will he feels towards the UK, what is nonetheless clear is that he sees the way that people seeking asylum are treated as separate from his general view of the UK as a country. Agamben (2000) views refugees as the most pertinent embodiment of 'bare life' in contemporary society. However, people who have been refused asylum exist almost beyond this categorisation, having sought refuge and been denied it. An alternative

conceptualisation that might be useful here, therefore, is that of the ‘precariat’. According to Standing (2014), the precariat can be defined as:

[A] potential new class of people’ composed of the former ‘working class’ and of denizens, including migrants and asylum seekers who, while resident in a particular country, do not enjoy the full rights of citizens.

Standing, 2014, p32

These two conceptualisations are not necessarily incompatible however, indeed the precariat has been described as a contemporary embodiment of homo sacer (Irazabal, 2018). Darling (2009) makes a similar point to Agamben with specific reference to individuals who have been refused asylum, suggesting that current Home Office policy, which denies refused asylum seekers the right to work or access other crucial services, effectively categorises them as homo sacer.

The actual experience of ‘bare life’, as articulated by participants, however, is perhaps not adequately described by either Agamben’s concept of homo sacer or that of the precariat. For many participants, the experience of being a refused asylum seeker, of being homo sacer, was one of imprisonment. This came through in Olu’s reiteration of the antithetical ‘freedom’ in his interview excerpt above, and in the restrictions expressed by both Olu and Tahlil due to their inability to work and the ensuing lack of money. One participant who stated this feeling of imprisonment explicitly was Wahid (M, 63, Syria):

I’m in the jail, I’m in the jail. I’m thinking in the jail. Because I’m not independent. Because I’m not going outside, working job. Working working. Other people going, talking, I see family... anytime, give visa – no problem. Ten year, ten year here.

Wahid, M, 63, Syria

For Wahid then, a lack of freedom was experienced as being in jail, in prison, an idea which will be returned to again throughout the findings chapters, as it becomes clear just how many of the experiences mentioned by participants can be understood through such a conceptual lens. The chapter now moves on to examine the second key theme that emerged from the data in relation to the material exclusion of participants, their housing situations.

6.4 Housing Situations

This section of the chapter looks at the diverse housing situations of participants. The experiences presented here serve to reinforce just how marginalised the situations of participants are. Living as a refused asylum seeker affects every area of their lives, making achieving their basic needs for food, as demonstrated above, and shelter, as will be demonstrated here, incredibly difficult, and at times impossible, with many participants experiencing periods of homelessness, both street homelessness and forms of hidden homelessness. The conditions experienced by participants are again suggested to be manifestations of Wacquant's concept of urban marginality and Agamben's homo sacer, both of which might, ultimately, be understood as a form of imprisonment.

The fifteen participants in this study lived in a variety of housing situations. Four participants lived in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) which were provided by the government and run by private housing providers. Four participants lived in government provided houses with their families, to which they were entitled because they had children. One participant lived with his brother, a British citizen, one lived with friends that he had met through a local asylum seeker charity, one lived in an HMO provided by the same local charity, and one in a night shelter run by the charity. One participant, who was not in contact with the Home Office, lived with his partner and their children in her local authority flat. One participant was 'sofa-surfing', moving between friends on a regular basis, and one participant had managed to rent a flat from a private landlord. A significant proportion of participants had experienced periods of homelessness, including rough sleeping and sleeping at a night shelter.

The chapter focuses first on government housing, then homelessness, and then on how participants sought to overcome homelessness.

Government Housing

The overarching theme to emerge from discussions with participants about government provided housing was that it was in very poor condition. Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) was currently living in government provided housing which he described as being in an unsanitary condition with mice a constant problem:

Yeah, is that house, is very bad house, is have full of the mouse. When you go to kitchen there is like so disgusting you can't cook. That is, there is nobody cook in the kitchen.

Hassan, M, 22, Iraq

Conditions such as these have not gone unacknowledged by government. The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2017) noted, like Hassan, that accommodation was often unsanitary, unsafe, and at times infested by rats, mice and bedbugs. This report relates to the conditions faced by asylum seekers and, as such, the condition of refused asylum seeker housing is largely undocumented. However, given the poor quality of housing provided to asylum seekers, it is highly likely that the housing conditions of refused asylum seekers is as bad and potentially worse than this.

Alia (F, 33, Sudan) had also experienced poor quality housing. Alia had come to the UK via Abu Dhabi. Having fled Sudan due to the ongoing conflict, she travelled, with the aid of traffickers, to the Middle East. During her journey Alia experienced violence and sexual exploitation. On her arrival in Abu Dhabi an 'agent' put her in touch with a family for whom she could work as a nanny. When the family subsequently moved to the UK, Alia came with them. She had only ever received board and food from the family, and never been paid for her work. She had also not been allowed to leave the family home other than to take the child she cared for to school. Once in the UK she escaped from the family after dropping the child off at school, and eventually sought asylum. Having done so, and subsequently been refused, Alia was now living in government provided accommodation. Whilst she did not describe the kind of infested conditions noted in Hassan's narrative, a lack of basic necessities, such as a washing machine or a bed for her son, had caused her significant difficulties:

It's broke here, this sofa... I want to change this one... It's not mine, cannot change. One day you know stop working fridge, they say 'you need to wait for one month'. I find a small fridge from outside, I bring... When I came here, no bed for my son. Bring from charity, the Dula project, when you're pregnant they come and help... they ask you what you want, something for children. When she told me like that I say I want a bed... When I live in other house as well, we don't have washing machine for three months. 'We don't have plumbing' they say... pipe going in, water out. For three

months I live like that. They put washing machine after three months... I wash by hand, I put outside. No sun, you cannot dry.

Alia, F, 33, Sudan

Once again, these issues have been raised in government documents. The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2017) noted that asylum seekers had faced significant difficulties accessing replacement items, including one instance where an asylum seeker reported a 'damp and rotting sofa' to their housing provider and was told that they should buy a throw from a charity shop to cover the area, rather than having the sofa replaced. Similar incidents included a woman having to sleep on the floor of her accommodation for four weeks before G4S provided her with a bed, and a woman whose cooker had not worked for three months. These conditions have been attributed to the outsourcing of all asylum seeker accommodation to the private sector since 2012 (Smith, 2016), including to private security companies G4S and Serco, neither of which had any prior experience of housing asylum seekers and both of which, in 2014, were found to have missed key performance targets relating to the standard of accommodation in which asylum seekers were housed (National Audit Office, 2014). Once again, these findings relate to asylum seekers, not refused asylum seekers and as such the situations of people who have been refused asylum are arguably more hidden and potentially worse.

Poor conditions might also be understood as emblematic of the advanced marginality described by Wacquant (2008), who discusses 'slum like' housing conditions as a key feature of advanced marginality. One of the key features of the 'slums' that Wacquant describes in his analysis of ethno-racially divided cities in America, is overcrowding, and this was an experience also shared by some participants in this study.

Shared Accommodation

Four of the participants in this study lived in government provided HMOs which were managed by private housing providers. All of these participants reported that living in an HMO had at times been problematic, as Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) explained:

I've been in Leeds, I've been... here, sharing with um seven, eight people. It's a mini world, people from all different corners of the world. And people, people fight and

people have their own problems and stuff and... so unpleasant, to live... not physical fighting, but you know, people are angry. Especially when they run out of money, and um, most of them won't speak English and, little English and, like I say, depends where you born, where you brought up, how you brought up er, people are brought up in different ways, the manners or what's taught... So you are put in the same environment, trying to synchronise. It will never work. That's creating more problems and, so those who are sit and keeping the house untidy and, aghhh...

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

For Tahliil therefore, the main cause of tensions was the indiscriminate housing together of refused asylum seekers from a wide variety of backgrounds, all of whom were experiencing difficulties associated with their situations as refused asylum seekers. Like Tahliil, Maneem (M, 37, Iraq) had also found that arguments had arisen among the people with whom he had shared a house, particularly between those of different ages. These tensions were exacerbated by extremely cramped living conditions whereby the number of residents greatly exceeded the number of bedrooms in a property:

We always had the argument, because different ages together, and somebody with the eighteen with somebody like forty. The guy with a forty he want just to get the rest, and the guy with the eighteen he want to do something. It just have got no policy, just putting together everything. And the condition was very bad and the house it was a kind of nightmare to be honest. They even turning very small places to the room. Like they putting six, seven people in the two bedroom flat, just crazy.

Maneem, M, 37, Iraq

The literature on experiences of living in HMOs is limited (Irving, 2015; Barratt & Green, 2017), and this is particularly the case for the experiences of refused asylum seekers living in such accommodation. An investigation by Garvie (2001), conducted nearly twenty years ago for the charity Shelter, looked at the experiences of asylum seekers living in HMOs. The study found that 60 per cent of 154 asylum seeker households visited were HMOs. Of these, 17 per cent were found to be 'unfit for human habitation', 28 per cent were found to be overcrowded, and 80 per cent were deemed to have an unacceptable risk of fire. The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2017) report, which details unsanitary conditions in asylum seeker

accommodation, would tend to suggest that little has changed since Garvie's report was published, although much more research would be needed to corroborate this. Although there are some benefits of living in an HMO, such as companionship (Market Research UK, 2013), personality differences, and messy or noisy housemates are suggested to cause tensions between residents (Market Research UK, 2013). Once again, almost all the research in this area relates to asylum seekers rather than refused asylum seekers, making the experiences of the participants in this study more hidden and potentially still more impoverished than those of asylum seekers.

Unable to Complain

The unhygienic, infested, and overcrowded conditions described by participants are in themselves deeply troubling. Of note, however, is that these conditions appeared to be maintained and perpetuated by participants' inability to effectively complain to their housing providers about the poor conditions, and thus remedy them. Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) had complained about the condition of his government provided housing. As the only person in his shared accommodation with reasonably good spoken English, he had taken responsibility for contacting the housing provider about the residents' housing issues. Hassan described the response from his housing provider as punitive, and the housing provider's representative as confrontational, constantly asking why Hassan repeatedly complained, and sending him numerous letters warning of potential consequences if he continued to complain:

P When I ring the G4S company service they say 'Why you ring all the time? You don't have to ring all the time. Why you ring alone and other people not ringing complain about this thing, disgusting kitchen or dirty house? These things. So why you all the time complaining?' I said 'Look, these people doesn't understand, they doesn't speaking English'. They send me many many time warning from the G4S office.

I What does the warning say?

P They say you don't have to ring again, you don't have to make complaint.

I Did they write that in a letter?

P Yeah, I have a letter now two time. And other time in the daytime, that time snowing or raining, coming very cold, the heater is not working. The house was very cold. Everyone was, they say is very freezing. I ring them, they say 'Okay,

I will fix the boiler for you. They did something with the boiler, was very bad – bom bom bom – you couldn't sleep in the night time.

I Oh, it's very loud?

P Yeah, it's very loud. And then two three time I ring them. I wait four months, they didn't come to fix it. And one other guys he come up at three o'clock in the night, he broke the boiler, yeah, because they say what's this? This is no... they no respect us. We are human, we are not animals. They should respect us. And they should fix, they should do something for [us]. They bring big letter for everyone. Say, 'this time if you do anything in this house or damage anything we will kick out you'. But after that nobody do anything in this house. This is really disgusting, is very bad house.

Once again, rather than acting to address the issues that Hassan has raised with them, his housing provider appears to be criticising him for complaining, suggesting that his concerns are not merited because other residents have not raised the same issues, and warning him of consequences should he continue to complain about the standard of his accommodation.

Participants' experiences of being unable to effectively complain about problems they encountered in their accommodation are again consistent with findings from the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee's (2017) report on asylum seeker accommodation. The report notes that, like the participants in this study, respondents stated that if they complained to their housing providers they were treated with derision or threats. Such treatment of asylum seekers who complain has been described as a 'culture of intimidation' in a review by the Independent Newspaper (Bulman, 2017). Given that their citizenship status is even more precarious than that of asylum seekers, the refused asylum seekers in this study can be understood as having even less legal 'power' to complain about their housing conditions than asylum seekers whose cases have not yet been determined.

One way of understanding these experiences is again to turn to Agamben's (1998) concepts of bare life and inclusive inclusion. This is a theoretical stance taken by Jenkins (2004) in her analysis of Australia's treatment of asylum seekers, both within detention facilities and after the granting of provisional accommodation and temporary protection visas. Like the participants in this study, Jenkins notes that once outside the detention facility asylum seekers

in Australia do not qualify for the full rights that the granting of citizenship would bestow, but are nonetheless subject to the rule of law of the Australian state. The experiences of the participants in this study suggests that although they are subject to punitive treatment from housing providers commissioned by the state to provide them with accommodation, they cannot effectively resist these measures due to their lack of rights, and consequent lack of power, within the UK. As such, participants' experiences of poor quality housing, and an inability to instigate change through the formal complaints procedure, can be understood as a manifestation of Agamben's inclusive exclusion.

Homelessness

Another common experience reported by participants was periods of homelessness. After an application for asylum is refused, applicants are given twenty-one days to leave their state provided accommodation. Many participants reported that because of this they had spent time homeless, living either on the streets, in a night shelter, or 'sofa surfing' at friends' houses. Maneem (M, 37, Iraq) explained that when he had to leave his accommodation following the refusal of his asylum claim, he became homeless. Although he had friends at this time, he was not able to stay with them because they were asylum seekers and:

[T]hey can't support themselves, kind of burden on them to support me as well.

Maneem, M, 37, Iraq

Unable to stay with friends, Maneem had spent some time street homeless, again reiterating Blanchard and Joy's (2017) finding that people refused asylum at times experience street homelessness because they feel like they are a burden to friends and family. Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) had also spent time street homeless, spending time in local parks and eventually finding shelter in an abandoned flat:

I Have you ever not had somewhere to live? Have you ever had to sleep outside or anything like that?

P Um, yeah, in 2001 I live in some park.

I Oh really? Is that in Sheffield?

P No, that is in London.

I How long were you living in that park for?

P Um, is more than four weeks, three weeks. There is some place with um... before this is down a shop like a place in something, I've stayed there, upstairs they have some dirty room, then we sleep there. In this country I spend a very bad life.

Anzan (M, 46, India) had also spent a brief time street homeless:

I Have you ever had to sleep on the street?

P Two night I think I have to spend in icy time, spring time, I spend my night in the West Street, down there there is a little park, little space near the school. In windy night, snowing night.

Ameer (M, 36, Iran) too had spent time street homeless. This had been a significant aspect of his life as a refused asylum seeker and he had wanted to take some pictures of places where he had sometimes spent the night as part of the auto-photography exercise. However, due to a fear of the authorities, such as the police, he had felt unable to take these pictures:

I In that case I'd just like to talk a little bit more about some of the photos that you felt you couldn't take, and the reasons why you felt you couldn't take them... let's start with the train station photo.

P Um, I been, for long time I been suffering from the homeless, because ninth of April 2011 I been, er, homeless. I didn't have a place sometime. I been living with the friends night to night, sometimes no place, sleeping in the station, or garden, or someplace like that.

I Are there any other places that you'd like to have taken a picture of?

P Er, for example some parks, some telephone kiosk. Sometime in the winter I been there. When I see the police car... my life in the past it was so so difficult, so painful. But what shall we do? This is life.

Ameer had been actively avoiding the police since losing his asylum seeker identity card two years ago. Having been stopped and asked to produce his ID on a number of occasions prior to losing it, he now feared what would happen if he was stopped and unable to produce any ID. Although he had asked his solicitor to help him replace his ID and contact the Home Office on

his behalf, he had still not received any documentation from the Home Office. Ameer's experience is not only characterised by deprivation and exclusion, but by fear. Ameer's exclusion is therefore two-fold, he is homeless, but he is also hiding from those in positions of authority. This theme is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Whilst Ameer had felt unable to take photographs of places where he had spent time when he was homeless, Maneem had chosen to take a creative, symbolic approach to depicting his experiences, choosing to create images which told a story about these, rather than being an objective representation of them. In the following photograph he is depicting his time spent street homeless:



Figure 9: Photograph by Maneem

This picture is I'm going hiding in the bush... The story is about, um, I just remember when I get refused I kicked out the house and spend one night bit rough place. And I had nothing to be honest, only my cover, and that was just only one t-shirt, and was very cold as well. And this always is stuck in my mind 'cos I'm never gonna go be like this ever... And you experience how is difficult... When I get this refusal letter, say you must go out from the flat, the shared flat, and that time I only had one t-shirt and nothing else and I sleep rough there, places like this. I had nothing and was very difficult

time. [I slept like that] twice, but I just promise myself that I never go through this [again] because the fear of my health, especially in this photo:



Figure 10: Photograph by Maneem

...because once I slept in one carton you know? Packaging things, yeah, was under me. The second carton was over me and I was very fear to lose my kidney, such a cold night... lots of fear. I felt the pain in my back, here, and I thought okay I'm going to lose the kidney, and if I lose it it mean can't survive here in this country to be honest... This [photo] is showing kind of, it's a dead person, just kind of got no... at same time have got fear somebody hurt you, exactly this one show, 'cos lots of drunk peoples shouting things. Even I was a bit cold, I thought I'm gonna have a walk. I sat on chair, table or something from park, and the guy said 'Why sitting here?' I said 'It's not your business'... It was British guy, white guy... and then I said okay, it's better to leave this place, and I walked away and walked this different direction and I notice the guy came back. Say why chase me? Was he drunk? What's wrong with you? It was very terrifying now.

Maneem, M, 37, Iraq

Maneem experienced difficulties not only associated with the physical conditions of being street homeless, of getting cold and developing a pain that he believed to be in his kidney, but also fear associated with the consequences of being alone, vulnerable, out in the open and experiencing harassment, an experience common among rough sleepers (Sanders & Albanese, 2016).

Although housing security is suggested to be one of the most important factors in refugee and asylum seeker resettlement (Zetter & Pearl, 2000), homelessness, particularly among refused asylum seekers, is highly prevalent (McKenna, 2019; Doyle, 2009; Doyle, 2014; Kissoon, 2010; Blanchard & Joy, 2017). Kissoon (2010) argues that the high levels of homelessness among refugee and asylum seeking populations is attributable to increasingly restrictive social policy. Likewise, Lewis (2007) explicitly links UK Government policy to homelessness among those refused asylum, stating:

In Britain today there are people who have no recourse to public funds or services, but do not have the right to work either. With no source of income they are forced into destitution... What makes this a scandal is that they find themselves in this position as a direct result of government policy.

Lewis, 2007, p 3

Whilst policy has been critiqued in this way and thus the impact of government policy on destitution is acknowledged, far less of the literature has focused on attempting to understand, through social theory, how these situations, particularly in relation to people who have been refused asylum, arise. Again, one way of understanding these findings is as a facet of Wacquant's (2008) concept of urban marginality in post-industrial societies. Wacquant (2004) argues that states have increasingly retracted their support for the most vulnerable sections of society:

...eliminating public aid programmes, on the grounds that their recipients must be snatched from their culpable torpor by the sting of necessity.

Wacquant, 2004, p51

A similar argument is found in the way that the UK Government, despite flaws identified in the Home Office's decision making process (e.g. Freedom From Torture, 2019; Amnesty International, 2013; Refugee Action, 2017), seeks to justify the level of support granted to those refused asylum. The Home Office (2007a) suggests that low rates of financial support will incentivise people whose asylum applications have been refused to return to their countries of origin, stating:

[Those refused asylum] should be denied the benefits and privileges of life in the UK and experience an increasingly uncomfortable environment so that they elect to leave.

Home Office, 2007a, p17

Wacquant (2004) notes that as state funded housing has decreased in America, levels of homelessness has increased. Similarly, Blanchard and Joy (2017), in their report for the British Red Cross, argue that current government policy has led to high levels of homelessness among this group. In this way, homelessness among the participants in this study can be understood as a result of the state retrenchment central to Wacquant's concept of urban marginality.

This section of the chapter has sought to examine participants' experiences of street homelessness. The chapter now moves on to look at other forms of homeless accommodation.

Other Homeless Accommodation: Use of Night Shelters

In the same way that those participants without government support were most reliant on charities, friends and family for access to food and clothing, these participants were often reliant on charities, friends and family for access to accommodation.

One way that charity was providing accommodation for these participants was through night shelter accommodation. In order to avoid street homelessness a number of participants had spent time at a local night shelter run by a charity for refused asylum seekers. Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) had spent three months living here and had taken a photograph of it as part of the auto-photography exercise:



Figure 11: Photograph by Tahliil

Tahliil explained:

This is the welcome centre; you can see the entrance. The welcome centre is a place where, it's where the night shelter is situated. It's where you feel more welcome. That's where you spend your night, from ten to eight in the morning. Um, there's all sorts of bedding there and you get some snack in the evening, like tea, biscuits and stuff, and that's where you go and rest after a long day. Personally, I found it hard to sleep most of the time because you come at ten and maybe by eleven – you make your own bedding – but through the hardship that you're going through you lose sleep each and every. Usually I will sleep around one o'clock, but the lights are normally off by quarter to eleven or half past ten. And by the time it's half past seven in the morning that's when you're feeling sleepy so...

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

For Tahliil then, the night shelter offered shelter but little comfort. He found it difficult to sleep and often woke feeling as tired as when he went to bed. Maria (F, 25, Zimbabwe) was living at the night shelter at the time of interview. She described it as a very stressful and scary environment because she was the only woman there, and so was sleeping in a large room by herself. In order to ameliorate her fear she talked on the phone to friends until around 2.00 a.m., saying 'Please talk to me'. Like Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia), Maria stated that the night shelter is somewhere that you go when you have 'no choice, no options'. As Blanchard and Joy (2017) note, the night shelter was very much a place of last resort for Tahliil and Maria, as it is for most homeless people. These experiences might thus again be interpreted as facets of Wacquantian urban marginality, whereby certain sections of society become socially secluded, isolated from the general population spatially because of their marginalised social position (Wacquant, 2008). In this instance the seclusion is manifest as participants living in a night shelter, a segregation arising in many ways from a lack of access to government support due to the recoiling of state support for the most vulnerable.

Other Homeless Accommodation: Living with Friends and Family

Because of the difficulties mentioned above, when possible, participants tried to avoid having to sleep at the night shelter. One of the main ways that they managed to do this was by living with friends. These might be pre-existing friendships, or friendships formed from

commonalities of culture or interests. An interesting crossover between the support some participants received from charity, such as the night shelter, and the role of friends in alleviating some of the problems of destitution, is highlighted by Olu's (M, 40, Eritrea) experience:

- I Who are the people that you live with?
P Er, they're some friends.
I Okay, how did you meet them?
P I met them in a conversation club.
I Okay... and are they in a similar situation to you?
P No, these are British.

The services and opportunities provided by charitable organisations had enabled Olu to meet people who were sympathetic to his difficulties, who then became his friends, and who were able to give him a place to stay. Whilst this can also be considered a form of hidden homelessness, for the participants in this study this kind of accommodation was far preferable to sleeping in a night shelter.

Whilst Olu had made the friends with whom he was staying after coming to Sheffield, Ameer (M, 36, Iran) explained how he had come to Sheffield following the refusal of his application for asylum and subsequent termination of his government accommodation, as he had friends in the city:

In 2010, six April, I had a refuse from the NASS accommodation. And they been putting all the benefit and my accommodation, and for that reason in April I said I didn't have any friend I can live with. For that reason I come to Sheffield, because I had a couple of friend in Sheffield.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

Ameer had, therefore, relocated in order to be able to find accommodation and avoid street homelessness. Alia's (F, 33, Sudan) experience of accessing accommodation via friends was different. After her claim for asylum had been refused, Alia turned to a woman she had noticed in her local area that she believed to be from her country of origin, Sudan:

I see around my house. In February when they coming refused, they closed my case again. When I go tell her she told me come and stay with me. She's from my country, from Sudan. I stay with her.

Alia, F, 33, Sudan

Her willingness to approach this woman appeared to be related to her perception that they were similar because they shared a country of origin and, therefore, that she was more likely to help her than someone from a different background. Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) had taken a similar approach to finding accommodation after he lost his government accommodation:

P That time I was do nothing. I with my friends. Is two guys I meet them there too and then that time I really didn't have anything, no money, no food.

I How did you meet them?

P Because they walk in the street, they speaking Arabic language. When I hear them I say 'Oh, this is Arabic' and when I ask him I say 'Where you from?', he say 'I'm from Iraq'. I told him 'Can I help me?' They say 'What can I help you?'. I say 'Can I have some money for food and I don't have no space to live, I don't have no money to eat'. Then they say 'Oh yeah, why not'. They take me, there is like a chicken shop, they take me to the chicken shop, I remember that, they take one mango juice for me and two piece chicken with chips. Yeah and then after they take me to home and they say 'You don't have the space to live?' I say 'No'. They say 'Okay, if you don't have a space to live you have to live in this house, I give you some space to live in this house, but make sure you don't do anything wrong in this house like to put fire.' I say 'Woah, it is danger, I never do this'. They say 'Oh, don't bring other people, don't open the door'.

I So who were these people who let you stay in the house? Did they live there as well?

P Yeah, they live there also. Two people live there. And then after I go there they give me some space as well. I live there for six months.

I And were they asylum seekers or were they British?

P I think they are British citizens. But they, exactly, god bless him, they support me properly.

Once again, Hassan sought out people that he felt were culturally similar to him and that he therefore thought were more likely to help him. This idea is explored further in Chapter Seven, where participants' social relationships are explored. Whilst Hassan's accommodation seemed relatively secure, this was not the case for Anzan (M, 46, India), who had spent time 'sofa surfing' between friends:

- P [Y]ou know, asylum seeker they are not allowed to work... Asylum seeker, they used to live in accommodation of NASS, NASS accommodation. But who are refused, they have no accommodation, no support. This time I have no support, no accommodation. But my case is still in there, running. So I have to find out friends to live, and one day this house, one day another house, one day another house.
- I How many times have you moved around since you've been in Sheffield? Have you lived in lots of places or...
- P Lots of places. Sofa hopper. What it means, just this one, not suitable there, no suitable, keep moving, keep moving, keep moving.
- I Why are some of them not suitable?
- P Because if you have no accommodation you have no choice. If you living with some people they have not a lot of space, then you have to sleep in a floor, or no this one for walking, you have to move there, you have to move there, you have to move.

Anzan's experience again highlights the precarity faced by people refused asylum, and the sense that nothing is ever secure or to be wholly relied upon.

In addition to finding accommodation with friends, some participants had family in the UK with whom they could stay. Cabaas is a twenty-four year old man originally from Somalia who came to the UK aged fourteen to study at a public school in London. During his A-Level year he applied for asylum in the UK after threats were made against his mother, father and other family members living in Somalia following his mother's involvement with a politically active anti-government group in the country. He has been refused asylum and exhausted his appeal rights. At the time of interview Cabaas was living with his brother, who has British citizenship. He had taken a picture of the room in which he slept as part of the auto-photography exercise:



Figure 12: Photograph by Cabaas

- I Okay, so this is a picture of where you sleep... tell me a bit about this picture...
- P There's not much, just a bed. And a TV. And that's not my house.
- I It's not your house?
- P No.
- I Does it not feel like your...
- P It doesn't.
- I This is where you live, but it doesn't feel like...
- P No, it doesn't. I mean, that's my brother's house. So, you can see, that's a sofa bed, which they managed to get because of me. But still, it never feels your own because it's the living room right, and whenever there's people, they're always there. So you never get your free space, which is probably why I end up, you know, coming over [to Tahliil's house]... I'm always here and just chilling, 'cos when I'm here I just feel like I'm free.
- I So that's a big difference to what it feels like to be in this place?
- P Yeah, it actually does.
- I Why do you think that [your brother's house] feels less free?
- P I don't know, it just doesn't, and I think, you know sometimes people don't say it but you can feel exactly what they're feeling, you know, that they've sort of like had enough of the situation. I mean my brother went through it and, but still

you can tell that he want to move on with his life, same thing. It feels like you're just dragging people down.

I That's a hard thing to carry on your shoulders.

P It's a very hard thing to do, so it just doesn't feel like a home. It's a house yes, but not a home. So you're always constantly trying to move from place to place. Even sometimes when I just feel okay, getting too much, I end up going to night shelter, just sleep there, 'cos I feel free.

Whilst Cabaas' narrative can be understood simply as a form of the hidden homelessness, and thus the social seclusion that forms part of Wacquant's (2008) conceptualisation of urban marginality, what emerges strongly from his account of living with his brother is his lack of freedom. He feels constrained by his lack of choice, and that he is a burden to his brother. In line with Blanchard and Joy's (2017) finding, Cabaas sometimes moves to the night shelter so that he feels like less of a burden. What this in turn suggests is that urban marginality and social seclusion is experienced as a form of imprisonment by Cabaas. Wacquant (2004) argues that members of the precariat, of which Cabaas and the other participants in this study can be considered a part, are subject to state control in part because of the restrictions placed on them due to their lack of rights, meaning that they are effectively imprisoned by circumstance, a theme explored in greater depth in the Chapter Seven.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the lives of participants are characterised by extreme material exclusion and deprivation. The chapter began, however, by exploring the finding that participants had held high expectations of the UK prior to their arrival, which ultimately went unmet and served as a point of contrast when they articulated the actuality of their experiences. Participants felt that the UK was less free and humane than they had anticipated, that there was a discrepancy between their level of freedom and the freedom experienced by UK citizens, and that the inability to work was the most salient manifestation of this lack of freedom. The discrepancy between perception and reality was suggested to be linked to a tendency to perceive quality of life as linked to a country's overall economic profile, whereas participants' legal status was actually the chief determining factor of their rights within the UK. The origins of these high expectations were also explored and it was found that participants had generally heard good reports of the UK from others, including British aid workers. It was suggested that

such perceptions may be the result of ‘soft power’, whereby powerful nations perpetuate narratives that present their country favourably. This in turn, it is argued, might be understood as a form of Elias and Scotson’s (1994 [1965]) concept of praise gossip.

The chapter then went on to explore participants’ experiences of material exclusion, beginning with access to food and clothing among participants with no recourse to state support. Again, participants felt that their inability to work legally was the main cause of their material impoverishment. In order to overcome this, albeit only marginally, participants accessed a range of charitable organisations which enabled them to access food, clothing and shelter. While these organisations provided vital resources, they were not unproblematic. Maria (F, 25, Zimbabwe) for example, had only been to a food bank once because the food she received had to be cooked. As she lives at a night shelter, she has no cooking facilities. Even for those who could make use of this food they felt it was nutrient poor and not sufficient in quantity to sustain them through the week. For some participants, however, accessing enough food to have three meals a day was impossible, with some eking out a weekly £20 charitable grant to try and sustain themselves. It is argued that these experiences might be understood as a modern incarnation of Agamben’s (1998; 2000) ‘bare life’ and the ‘inclusive exclusion’ of the ‘homo sacer’, brought about by neoliberal state policies that diminish support for the most vulnerable in society leading them to turn to charity if they are to survive at all.

It was also found that even among those participants with some state support, their basic needs were not easily met. While most managed to feed themselves, the Azure card did not allow them to meet other needs such as getting a haircut, catching a bus or being able to buy sufficient clothing. It was again suggested that these experiences might be conceptualised as the manifestation of Agamben’s (1998; 2000) ‘bare life’, whereby their lack of citizenship, and ensuing lack of rights, denied participants access to any of the resources and rights that might help them to build a fulfilling ‘qualified’ life.

The chapter then went on to explore participants’ housing situations. For participants that lived in government provided housing – primarily HMOs – the housing tended to be in very poor, often unsanitary, condition, and when they attempted to complain about this they were met with hostility and threats. In addition, the housing together of people unknown to one another was also problematic, at times leading to arguments. Such conditions were argued to be

consistent with Wacquant's (2008) concept of urban marginality as well as Agamben's work on bare life and inclusive inclusion, whereby although participants have very minimal rights they are, nonetheless, still potentially subject to punishment by the state.

Most participants had also experienced periods of both street and hidden homelessness, principally related to a lack of state support following the refusal of their claim for asylum. Participants reported sleeping in night shelters, and with friends and family. These options were problematic for participants, for example, both Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) and Maria (F, 25, Zimbabwe) had trouble sleeping at the night shelter. Maria in particular struggled because, as the only woman at the shelter, she had to sleep by herself in a large empty room and was frightened. For Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia), who was living with his brother, reliance on family made him feel that he was a burden. Again, the fact that participants had to live in these circumstances was suggested to be a consequence of the gradual retrenchment of state support for the most vulnerable, as articulated by Wacquant's (2008; 2004) concept of urban marginality.

Of note in relation to all the experiences detailed in this chapter is that similar experiences have been identified within the asylum seeking population. However, there is little research to date on these experiences among people who have been refused asylum, particularly with reference to social theory. As demonstrated above, people refused asylum face dire material exclusion that is both largely undocumented, and unacknowledged by government, and which, because of the ongoing nature of their situations, has no obvious endpoint in sight. In addition, the more hidden nature of life as a refused asylum seeker means that their situations are potentially far worse than those of asylum seekers, whose housing situations and financial resources are largely known to and monitored by government.

Chapter Seven: Social and Psychological Impact of Material Exclusion and Being Refused Asylum

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored participants' experiences of material exclusion in terms of their access to key necessities such as food and shelter. It demonstrated the extreme marginalisation faced by participants and looked at ways that social theory, including Agamben's concept of the homo sacer, and Wacquant's concept of urban marginality, might help to explain these experiences. This chapter addresses the second of the research questions, which asks:

What are the social and psychological impacts of material exclusion and being refused asylum, and how might they be explained?

The chapter suggests that the material and legal exclusions faced by participants have far reaching consequences in terms of their social and psychological lives and wellbeing. The chapter begins by exploring the impact of material exclusion and being refused asylum on participants' social relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, and experiences of parenting. The discussion then moves on to how restrictions on participants' mobility impacted upon them socially and psychologically. This is explored with recourse to a number of social theories, including Foucault's 'governmentality' and Wacquant's 'carceral archipelago'. The idea that participants' lives might be understood as a form of imprisonment is then explored further as the chapter looks at their fears of deportation and wariness of those in positions of authority, such as the police. Finally, the chapter offers conclusions about how these experiences have impacted on participants' mental health and wellbeing

7.2 Social Relationships

One of the ways that the material exclusion associated with being a refused asylum seeker was found to impact on participants' lives was in terms of their social relationships. This included romantic relationships, relationships with friends, and participants' experiences of parenthood. This section of the chapter begins by looking at participants' romantic relationships, before going on to discuss friendship and parenthood.

Romantic Relationships

A number of participants reported that their inability to work, and the ensuing lack of financial means, had made romantic relationships difficult. Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) had travelled to the UK alone aged seventeen following the loss of his mother, father and three sisters in a suicide bomb attack. Having managed to earn money en route to pay agents to get him to the UK, Hassan explained how the legal restriction on him working had led to the breakdown of his relationship with his girlfriend:

There is a, I find one girl... she come pick girlfriend with me and she give me a space to house, she's give me everything, she's help me. And then I was live with her many months... And then after, she was fighting with me, she say 'You have to work'. I say 'I'm not allowed to work'. She say 'You have to do this.' I can't do it... because I don't have no decision, no work paper. And she say to me 'If you can't do this, get out my house'.

Hassan, M, 22, Iraq

Whilst at first Hassan's girlfriend appeared to be willing to help and support him, over time the relationship deteriorated, eventually leading to his being asked to leave the home that the couple shared.

In addition to a lack of finance, the situation of being refused asylum, and the stresses and strains of not knowing what would happen next, had caused difficulties in Rashida's (F, 35, Pakistan) and Zaheer's (M, 26, Pakistan) relationship, with the couple arguing far more than before they had been refused asylum. Rashida and Zaheer had come to the UK fleeing religious persecution in Pakistan. They had believed that the UK was a fair and tolerant country where their faith would be accepted and they would be able to build a good life for themselves. Although they described their relationship as having previously been a happy one, the refusal of their claim for asylum had put significant strain on the relationship:

Zaheer: [A]ll the time like angry, like shouting.

Rashida: Yeah shouting, yeah, he's all the time like er argument with me like, er, if I asking something, or...

Zaheer: Life is destroyed.

- I: So it's made things difficult in your relationship?
- Zaheer: Yeah... because we come here to survive our family... that time is a good time, we live together proper, no argument, nothing. But now, our visa refused, just after that.

Having thought that they had found a place of safety, where they could rebuild their lives, the refusal of their application for asylum and the threat of deportation meant that Zaheer and Rashida were constantly stressed, leading to arguments.

Because of the situational, and more specifically the financial, consequences of being refused asylum, some participants felt unable to seek out a relationship. Anzan (M, 46, India) was one such participant, who felt that his situation effectively prohibited him from pursuing relationships:

- I Why is [it that you haven't met many women]?
- P Because of sometimes hesitation, sometimes lack of money. Sometimes if I talk with her and if we go somewhere to eat I have to pay. Many things. It just forbids me now. But I have intent to get some friends with girlfriends. But I have no ability... If I meet some girls, one day, two day 'Oh let's go to drink alcohol' or 'Let's go to a good restaurant, eat together', 'Let's go to some special places, we share our feelings or enjoy ourselves'. But I cannot, I cannot. Why? Because of money. Short of money. Other things, everything alright.... 'Let's go get a cup of coffee'. But when I cannot pay... this is shameful.
- I Why do you think it's shameful?
- P Because I used to, during India situation, always men pay. For her daughter or for her wife or for her girlfriend. Always men pay. But when, as your friend, I go you pay every time, you paying every time, you paying every time, you paying – then this mentally I'm affected. Oh, I cannot do anything.
- I How does that make you feel?
- P I feel very very bad. Very very ashamed.

For Anzan then, being unable to pay for coffee or a meal when he goes out with someone makes him feel that he is unable to fulfil his role as a partner, which in turn makes him feel ashamed,

and that he should not seek out such a relationship in the first place. This echoes the findings in the previous chapter, where participants often cited a deep sense of shame at having to ask friends for food or other essentials. The link between poverty and shame is well established, and has been noted to have a significant impact on the social and psychological wellbeing of those experiencing it (Walker & Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 2014; Sen, 1983; Lister, 2004; Jo, 2013). The subject of shame and stigma as it relates to participants' experiences of life as a refused asylum seeker is explored in greater depth in Chapter Eight.

Friendships

In addition to difficulties within, or a reluctance to form, romantic relationships, some participants discussed how their material situations and the circumstances of having been refused asylum impacted their friendships or potential friendships. Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) discussed how he felt that the difference between his own financial situation and that of the people he wished to befriend, predominantly people who had not been refused asylum, prohibited him from pursuing these friendships. This was largely because his impoverishment meant that he would be unable to participate in the same activities as these potential friends. Tahliil stated that if he was able to work and earn money:

P I'll be able to have probably better and more friends 'cos you can be able to go out and have fun. Not really spend a lot, but you feel better about yourself when, you know, if I need to take a taxi home I will, if I need to take a bus home, if I need to buy my friends a drink, I can, you know? So things will change.

I Do you have many British friends?

P I wouldn't call them friends, I'd call them people I've volunteered with, or I've volunteered with at the sports centre, but never... sometimes you don't allow many people to come in, to come into your circle.

I Okay.

P I don't, yeah, I don't 'cos... you are two different entities here. It's too, it's... it's hard for you to cope with their life, you know?... I'll be home every day and they'll be working probably every day, and they'll be different... you don't want anybody pulling you down. Everybody wants somebody they are on the same platform, you know?... That's what I think... that's what I feel... I wouldn't bother

looking for them. It's fear of being rejected, so, I don't want to face it... I already know that I might be rejected. I don't want to chance it to be accepted.

I Why do you think you might be rejected?

P 'Cos we won't be doing the same things. Friends do things together, friends go out for a drink together, friends go for a meal together, friends goes for holiday outside this city together. I wouldn't afford that. So I'll be the one who'll be... er... crippling the relationship, because I'm not chipping anything in, um, so sometimes you distance yourself away like I say, you're just guarding your heart from fear of rejection.

In this way, his impoverished situation seems to be serving to segregate Tahliil from the wider UK population. This is a facet of his material impoverishment, but also of how he believes his impoverishment will be perceived by and impact upon others. A sense among people refused asylum that they had nothing to bring to a friendship in material terms is also noted by Blanchard and Joy (2017). Chase and Walker (2012), in their research on the poverty-shame nexus, note how individuals experiencing shame related to poverty can define a social hierarchy or stratification which can then be used to differentiate between 'us' the shamed, and 'them' the 'other' (Lister, 2004), with the person feeling shame removing themselves from interactions with individuals higher up the social hierarchy. This, argue Chase and Walker (2012), not only threatens the individual's social relationships, but can potentially disrupt social stability more generally. The impact of feelings of shame and stigma on social relationships is discussed further in Chapter Eight. For now, the chapter continues to look at the impact of poverty on social relationships more directly.

One of the photographs that Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) took as part of the auto-photography exercise served to demonstrate how financial exclusion impacted on his ability to form the kinds of relationships he would like to form because he could not participate in certain activities associated with developing or maintaining a friendship. The photograph depicts a Pizza Express restaurant in Sheffield city centre:



Figure 13: Photograph by Tahliil

While Tahliil spent a large amount of time in this area, he was unable to dine in the restaurant because he did not have the money to do so. He explained:

This is near the Crucible, Pizza Express. Every time I used to come and sit somewhere there and I would see just people walking in and going in and happy and coming out very happy, and you know. And I would imagine what kind of place it is. Once in a while I would like to you know, go and have a meal in there. But hey, it's not a food bank, you've gotta pay for it. So every time I pass I'm only wishing, but if I get enough I'll go in and try a pizza. Just fantasy, wishing, yeah, wishing you had.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

So, while Tahliil was physically proximal to both the restaurant and those who were able to eat there, his financial situation precluded him from participating in this aspect of life in the UK. In a similar vein, the British Red Cross (2017) note that the inability to work and therefore earn a living means that asylum seekers cannot:

...afford the day-to-day activities which allow most of us to keep up friendships and feel socially involved – whether that is a coffee or the bus fare for a trip into town.

British Red Cross, 2017

In essence, what Tahliil is describing as a refused asylum seeker, and the British Red Cross are noting among asylum seekers, is an inability to integrate socially with the wider population due to an inability to work and earn a living. What should be noted, however, is that what the Red Cross note is arguably temporary, and once asylum is granted people are better able to build social relationships due to increased rights, including, crucially, the right to work. For Tahliil, and other people who have been refused asylum, their situation is not time-limited, and the end is very rarely in sight. This, arguably, makes this situation far more serious in terms of understanding the exclusion faced by people refused asylum.

A lack of social integration is also noted by Vathi and King (2013) and Strang and Ager (2010), who argue that this is hampered by barriers to obtaining asylum in the host country, and thus being able to access those institutions – such as work and study – that may best facilitate it. Once again, however, these studies do not focus on people who have been refused asylum, whose situations are both more intractable and more hidden. Their lack of ability to work, and very limited, if any, access to financial support from government, acted to segregate some of the participants in this study from members of the resident population with whom they wished to form friendships, and also prevented them from forming, or led to the breakdown of, key romantic relationships, and indeed families. In this way the financial exclusion of participants can be seen to have ramifications far beyond material impoverishment.

Parenting Consequences

In addition to the impact that a lack of financial means had on participants' social relationships, participants who had children felt this also impacted on their ability to be the kind of parent that they wished to be. Earlier in this section it was suggested that financial difficulties, and the wider problems associated with being refused asylum, had mitigated against romantic relationships for some participants. For Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia), his relationship had broken down not simply because of a lack of finance, but because his inability to work and ensuing lack of finance meant that he could not provide for his family in the way that he, or his partner, wished:

[W]e broke up when he was four months old, so the relationship didn't work out. The bottom line always be because of my situation... [In my culture] the duty of the father is to provide for the family. No matter how you do it, you have to provide for the family,

and that was not the case. If you get someone who is understanding they will understand the things you're going through. It's not because you want not to work, it's because you are not allowed to... But in my case it was different, so quarrelling every day, so bad you know. It's because she's getting her benefits and er... it's one person benefits... and now we dividing it, so she's getting half of it... so things escalated and... things were going horribly wrong and, you know, I had to leave, I had to leave her apartment and find my way... If I had [the right] to work I would take care of them.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

The consequences of not working were extreme for Tahliil, and yet he still did not engage with illegal working, supporting Amnesty International's (2006) contention that the majority of people refused asylum do not undertake illegal employment that may jeopardise their chances of eventually being granted asylum. Being unable to take care of his family meant that Tahliil felt that he was unable to be responsible, and in this way his inability, due to current government policy, to work, acted to infantilise him, making him feel, and in many ways be, unable to meet the roles and responsibilities of adulthood and parenthood. Again, his exclusion here can be understood as related to his citizenship status, and Agamben's concept of the homo sacer. When asked how having refugee status or citizenship would affect his ability to have the kind of relationships and be the kind of parent he would like to be, Tahliil stated:

You'd be able to form stronger, long-lasting relationships, 'cos you feel you are more responsible. Yeah, without having any money you're not responsible... you can't prove to anyone you are responsible without having a job or having any money.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

Tahliil clearly felt that there was a direct link between his inability to work, the tensions that arose with his partner, and the eventual breakdown of his relationship. This is a finding echoed by Stock, Corlyon, Castellanos Serrano and Gieve (2014), who cite poverty as a key cause of stress in relationships which increases the likelihood of family breakdown. Indeed, a 2013 Parliamentary Inquiry into Asylum Support for Children and Young People recommended that asylum seekers with children should be allowed to work if their asylum application had not been determined after six months, so that their children do not experience the disadvantages associated with raising children in poverty. Once again, the study does not

consider people who have been refused asylum, who can live in these deeply impoverished conditions for years with no end in sight.

In addition to the breakdown of his relationship, Tahliil also felt that his financial situation continued to impact on his ability to be the sort of parent he wished to be once he was no longer living with his former partner:

I can't be able to go to the shop and buy my baby a nice gift, not because I don't want to, I can't afford. When I go to see him on Mondays and Wednesdays in the nursery, there are other babies there and you would love your baby to have nice clothes and stuff like the other kids.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

In this way, Tahliil's own material impoverishment was arguably leading to the material impoverishment of his son.

Like Tahliil, Ameer (M, 36, Iran) also noted the impact that worklessness had on his ability to provide for his family in the way he would like to:

It's very difficult to me. Sometime I been very depressing because I like, when I had a family in this country... I try to be a very good, good parent. But it's very difficult. I try to be, my kids be like same normal other kids... but I couldn't do anything for him because I am not working, I am not allowed to work. I, in lot of different way I try to make him happy... When my kids they seen people, people they got a car, they going out, they can go to anywhere, and I can't do that. And sometimes I blame myself, but other way is government, they don't let me to do it.

When my kids they seen in television, er... kids they are swimming, they been ask me 'Dad, we like to go to swimming'. They don't know what the swimming [is] but they saw. But they been ask me and I'm I'm I'm always I say 'If I got one chance, definitely I take you to there'. I am not lying to them to say 'Alright, tomorrow I am take you swimming', but in the other ways I don't want to be hopeless, I don't want to be making hopeless to think if I didn't got the chance to the swim, or to the cinema, or to the

holiday or the nice play, nice thing to play with, or nice thing when they are dreaming.
I try to carry on like that, but it's so hard, so hard.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

Ogbu, Brady and Kinlen (2014) note similar findings among asylum seeking parents living in 'direct provision' hostels in Ireland. The study reports that although participants described their parenting skills as good, they felt that the money they received from the state often left them unable to afford for their children to take part in activities such as school trips, or to buy them new school uniforms or materials when needed. In addition, parents stated that they could not afford to do activities with their children such as daytrips to interesting places or trips to the cinema, all of which they felt disadvantaged their children's social development and led to social exclusion. Similar experiences are noted in the literature on homeless families living in shelter accommodation (e.g. Anthony, Vincent & Shin, 2018). These findings echo Ameer's experiences of parenting. However, Ameer, unlike the participants in the above studies, had no income whatsoever, and what little money the family had, from his partner, was spent on necessities such as food.

Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) was in an even more difficult position. After the breakdown of his relationship he had lost contact with his ex-girlfriend. He had recently been told by a mutual friend that his ex-girlfriend had had a baby, and that the baby was his. Hassan felt that his lack of money meant that he could not seek out his daughter:

P I still don't know where is my daughter, I don't know where is that girl.

I So you don't have any contact at all?

P I don't have any contact but I really miss her, so I don't have no money to go to Leicester. If I go to Leicester how can I come back? And then if I go to Leicester how can I find out that people? You have to have money to spend money, to be there to get bus, to get coach, to get taxi. I don't have this thing. I'm still worry about this...

No, I've never met my daughter. But my friend say 'You have a daughter'. I say 'No', but he say 'Yes, believe me, you have to come'. And I say 'How can I come?'. If you don't have money for you food, for breakfast, for lunch, for

dinner, how I'm gonna travel to Leicester? From London is twenty-five pound, it's expense. Twenty-six pound is my whole month money. And that's why I can't do it. It's really really difficult for me. All the time I'm thinking, all the time. I don't know what to do. I'm really confused about my life. And the Home Office do like this to me. They never give me decision, they never give me work permission.

Once again it is worth noting that despite the consequences of not working Hassan had not undertaken illegal employment. Hassan's inability to work legally meant that he was unable to try and establish any kind of relationship with his daughter. Not only had his inability to earn a living led to arguments that Hassan believed had caused his relationship to fail, but having subsequently found out that he was probably a father, he was unable, due to a lack of financial means, to look for his ex-girlfriend and daughter, meaning that he was unable to parent her at all. His abject poverty is made plain when he says 'Twenty-six pound is my whole month money'. Simply surviving on this meagre income is challenging in the extreme; making a trip to Leicester to try and find his daughter is impossible.

There were other ways that being refused asylum had affected participants' ability to parent as they wanted to. For Alia (F, 33, Sudan), her inability to access English language classes had left her unable to communicate with her six year old son effectively. Alia and her partner met in the UK and spoke different languages. Because of this, the main language of communication at home was English, and Alia did not speak to her son in Arabic, her first language. However, Alia was not a fluent English language speaker and found that she could not communicate with her son as effectively as she wished.

P In Tuesday and Wednesday I take my son in school, but it's too hard because he's not speak my language. He cannot speak my language because the father in different language... (she starts crying)

I I'm sorry, do you want to stop?

P No, it's alright. But, I want understand my Son... He want something, I cannot understand him, I don't understand. But if I found something like English class I can speak with my son.

... [I]f I bring a book for him... say mama give it to me I want to read for you...
dududududud... it's finished. It's too hard if your child is not understanding
you. It's too hard.

...

I Do you think you would have had more opportunities to maybe speak English
or talk easier to your son if you had been given asylum rather than being
refused?

P Yeah, if they not giving me refuse I can go school, that is why is different. But
now, in 2010 when I came here first time I go in Sheffield College, I go register,
but it's not allowed, they stopped government for asylum seeker school. In
Leeds I am learning like church, I take my son with me, I learning little bit, but
when I come in here they say they stop, the government, for English class for
asylum seeker. They say the government stop, for asylum seeker, English
classes.

One of Alia's biggest worries was that her son was having some problems at school. However,
she felt unable to talk to her son's class teacher about these problems:

P I want to ask teacher but how can ask teacher? Because I'm not perfect [at
English]... I cannot ask his teacher. Just take him, collect him, that's it.

Alia seemed to feel that she was failing her son, both by being unable to understand nuances
of conversation with him, and by being unable, perhaps because of poor language skills, but
also possibly because of a lack of confidence to use the arguably adequate spoken English that
she had, to talk to her son's teacher about the problems he was having at school. In this way,
the restrictionist policy of government, whereby refused asylum seekers can no longer easily
access English classes, had significant ramifications for Alia, her relationship with her son, and
potentially her son's education and wellbeing at school. Not only had her English language
skills suffered, but because she could not attend classes to improve and practice this, her
confidence in using the language skills she did have was poor. This serves to highlight the way
in which government policy (Home Office, 2007a), which specifically seeks to prevent
integration in order to dissuade refused asylum seekers from remaining in the UK, can have
potentially far-reaching social and indeed psychological impacts for refused asylum seekers

and their families. Again, this can usefully be understood as ultimately arising from an unequal power relationship (Elias & Scotson, 1994 [1965]) between the established UK population who, through their longevity of residence and consequently greater internal group cohesion, can make and impose laws that exclude the more recently arrived, less cohesive, and thus less powerful, refused asylum seekers. In turn, this can be seen to result in people refused asylum being cast, as Darling (2009) suggests, as *homo sacer*. It is the consequences of these restrictions - the breakdown in relationships and inability to build them, and the feelings of shame - that represent the embodiment of what it is to be and to experience life as *homo sacer*.

Another way that the restrictions faced by participants can be understood is as a form of control, a means by which the state can regulate (to a greater or lesser extent) how participants live, diminishing their agency. With the exception of the right to work, one of the most notable ways that this control is manifest is in how participants' movements are regulated. This form of regulation was also found to have a significant impact on participants' social relationships. This theme is now explored with particular reference to Foucault's work on governmentality and to the concept of imprisonment

7.3 Mobility and Control

The restrictions faced by participants were not simply material. Participant experiences of government dispersal policy and the specific locations where they were assigned accommodation also had significant implications for their social relationships and psychological wellbeing. Experiences of government dispersal policy and housing location are explored here in terms of power and control, with it ultimately argued that such restrictionist policy might be understood as a form of imprisonment.

Frequent Moving and Dispersal Policy

A common feature of participants' housing experiences was that many had moved, or perhaps more accurately *been moved*, frequently because of Home Office dispersal policy. Participants reported that they felt they had no choice in whether they moved, feared that there would be negative consequences if they refused to move, and that frequent moving contributed to experiences of social isolation.

Tariq (M, 21, Pakistan), who had spent time in prison, had been relocated to Sheffield after his release. This move was against his wishes and took him away from his friends and the foster mother with whom he had lived for four years, his only 'family' in the UK:

I was assigned. I said I'm not going outside London, I'm not going. [I] speak to my solicitor. I said to my solicitor yeah, I say 'I'm not going outside London'. She say 'If you don't go yeah, maybe you arrest back, you go back to prison. The court say that you go there.'... Yeah, I had too many friend [in London] because I been long in there, all my college friend, everything... Like I feel alone, yeah. Er yeah, I don't know I say to you, I don't have no one.

Tariq, M, 21, Pakistan

Tariq felt that he had been given very little choice about where he lived. He was told that he either went where the Home Office wanted to send him, or risked being returned to prison. Because of this move Tariq had become socially isolated, removed from family and friends who could offer him support.

Like Tariq, Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) also felt that he had been offered very little choice about whether to move from London, where he had a good social support network, to the Home Office accommodation he was offered in Sheffield. Whilst he did not fear being returned to prison like Tariq, he believed that if he did not accept this accommodation his application for asylum would be turned down:

Um, I didn't think about Sheffield. I said I'm not going. [But] I was scared. The Home Office give me house. If I don't go they gonna refuse me tomorrow and... that's why I go to Sheffield.

Hassan, M, 22, Iraq

Consistent in both Hassan's and Tariq's accounts of why they accepted the Home Office accommodation they were offered is a fear of what will happen to them should they refuse to move. These experiences can be understood in the context of power differentials between the government, which has the power to move them at will, and to impose consequences should people refuse, and participants' relative lack of power, and echoes participants' earlier

sentiments that they could not complain about their housing conditions for fear of reprisals. Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia) articulated the difference in power between himself and the government particularly well, stating:

Oh ho ho, yeah, that's another problem.... you just being moved, you know, not out of your own wanting, but because someone thinks they've got power over you. It's a bit annoying in that respect... to not have the choice, yeah... 'cos you need to have the choice of what you do, we're human beings. But when you got someone who thinks they can twist your arm to a certain level, just do whatever they want with you, just because you're seeking for help, it becomes a problem.

Cabaas, M, 24, Somalia

Rahad (M, 40, Pakistan) also talked about control. Rahad had been a lecturer in Pakistan prior to fleeing the country following threats to his life due to his religious beliefs. He noted how his status had changed once he arrived in the UK, and how this affected the level of control he had over his geographical location, and also in the broader circumstances of his life:

But I just know this country is my title is asylum seeker, still where I go, I don't have the leave permit, I don't have the work permit, so I cannot go with my own situations because of my status, so that's why I say it's not my hands. Home Office pick me, er, Wakefield, and pick me maybe I don't know tomorrow, so this thing is not control my hands.

...

[N]ow I am asylum seeker, back home I was an expert in my own job, so this is a status will be change. Is a living in back home, in my country, but now in England, this is the situation is change. So I'm changing my thinking, but still I'm myself... when I'm back home I do work, I do study, I do what we like. But here is some restrictions since asylum seeker.

Rahad, M, 40, Pakistan

Consistent in the above accounts is the sense that many aspects of participants' lives were out of their control, and that this was due to participants' status' as refused asylum seekers. As detailed in Chapter Six, this change in status might usefully be understood as a consequence of

participants' citizenship status, and the consequent lack of rights they experience due to their lack of citizenship.

In order to try and resist to some extent the type of control detailed in participants' accounts above, Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia) had decided not to apply for Section 4 support even though he was entitled to it. Whilst previous studies have suggested a number of reasons for this, including a lack of awareness of entitlement, fear of deportation, and the requirement that they are '*taking all reasonable steps to leave the UK*' once it is '*safe and possible to do so*' (Adie et al., 2007; Refugee Survival Trust & British Red Cross, 2009; Amnesty International, 2006; Refugee Action, 2006), the idea that people may not apply for this assistance in order to assert more control over their lives is under-researched. Cabaas' reason for not applying for Section 4 is perhaps indicative of just how disempowering and psychologically affecting such control can be. This decision meant that Cabaas did have some, albeit minimal, control over where he lived. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, Cabaas currently lived with his brother, which in itself was problematic as he felt dependent. Nevertheless, this was still preferable to feeling that he was being controlled by the state, and to the limitations, such as freedom of movement and an inability to see friends and family, that he felt accepting Section 4 support would entail:

I At the moment, do you have Section 4?

P No, I don't want to apply for it 'cos I just don't feel comfortable applying for Section 4, because I might get moved somewhere far.

...

P I would have to (move) 'cos Section 4 includes housing and um money or vouchers and stuff, support... so I'd have to move... I mean, it doesn't change anything because I wouldn't have money, but I have that card, but it still get me by. So even transport would still be a problem.

I Yeah.

P 'Cos when I'm in Doncaster before, um, sometimes I'd have to ask for money to be sent in an envelope, a fiver, just so I spend like three days in Sheffield.

I Who do you ask for money from?

P My brother.

I Yeah.

P Yeah, and sometimes I can ask my dad.

Cabaas was in a slightly different position to many of the participants in this study. Having a brother with British citizenship meant that he could exercise a degree of choice over where he lived. This was not the case for the majority of participants, and the social implications of this are discussed in the next section.

Housing Location

Maneem (M, 37, Iran) had been undertaking a course of study at a local college. However, after being moved to an area on the other side of the city, he found that he could not afford to take public transport to attend his course:

I used to go to the college, Hillsborough, it's close my house, but [now] I can't do anything, I stopped going to college... I used to go to the college, but then I moved around... I cannot move to go to the college, I stopped going to college!

Maneem, M, 37, Iran

In addition to the impact that accommodation remote from key amenities and an inability to access public transport had on his education, Maneem had also experienced problems accessing healthcare services:

It used to be, it just were terrible... walking to GP for appointment, like an hour, just crazy... 'cos you got no money to travel to the GP. And I find it is very hard.

Maneem, M, 37, Iraq

Being housed in an area that felt isolated was also mentioned by Hamid (M, 33, Syria). Hamid now lives in Sheffield, a city he considers to have good amenities, providing opportunities to build strong social relationships. He contrasted this to his previous accommodation in Rotherham:

I lived before Rotherham. Actually is very nice but I don't feel comfortable. Very small town. Like very small and not much communication with other people. Here I came and I can and like the relation with so many people, different organisation. But the

Rotherham no, not any good... had no any friends in Rotherham, so just went, I been worrying when I been Rotherham because only town will go and buy something and then come back again home. Not going outside, any meeting, no conversation club.

Hamid, M, 33, Syria

Hamid is describing accommodation in a former industrial town which is currently experiencing significant levels of poverty and social deprivation. These areas offer a considerable amount of low cost housing stock, and it has been suggested that asylum seekers, along with other marginalised groups such as former prisoners, are routinely housed in such areas for this reason, particularly since the outsourcing of asylum housing contracts in 2012 to private firms including G4S and Serco (Lyons & Duncan, 2017), and the increasing prioritisation of ‘austerity’ over ‘human dignity’ in British politics (Darling, 2016). Garvey (2001), in her study for Shelter, found that the majority of asylum seeker accommodation visited was at a significant distance from key local amenities including cultural and religious amenities. Ager, Malcolm, Sadollah and May (2002) and McKenna (2019) note that, in line with Hamid’s comments, asylum seekers and people refused asylum are frequently housed in areas where there was limited opportunity for social integration. These findings are deeply concerning and might be understood as a facet of established-outsider relations (Elias & Scotson, 1994 [1965]), whereby outsider groups are housed in poorer quality housing with far fewer amenities than an established group.

For a number of participants, the difficulties caused by the location of government provided housing were compounded by their inability to access public transport, largely due to receiving Section 4 ‘cashless’ support. Alia (F, 33, Sudan) recounted how when she had lived in Sheffield city centre she had regularly attended a women’s group which she found to be a good source of social support. However, since being moved further away from the city centre she had become unable to attend the group because she could not afford to use public transport to travel into the city centre. In addition, there were no similar amenities for her to attend in her local area:

I didn’t see like around here like women group. Before is I live in town, that’s why it’s easy to go walk, but here it’s far.

Alia, F, 33, Sudan

The experiences outlined demonstrate how a combination of housing in areas with few amenities and an inability to access public transport due to limited financial means had restricted Maneem's and Alia's access key services including women's groups, educational opportunities and healthcare. This can again be understood as an instance of participants' relative lack of control, consistent with the theory of established-outsider relations (Elias & Scotson, 1994 [1965]), whereby the power that resides with an established group, due to cohesion stemming from longevity of residence, enables a more established group to spatially relegate an outsider group, limiting their access to key resources. In the current context the established group can be understood as the resident UK population and the newcomers/outsideers as people refused asylum.

This is a theoretical stance adopted by May (2004) in his study of immigrants' socio-legal positions in a deprived German neighbourhood. May (2004) argues that the cohesion of the established group, combined with the stigmatisation of the outsiders, a subject discussed in Chapter Eight, enables the established group to lawfully exclude the more recently arrived immigrants from key amenities.

Given the way that participants spoke about being moved against their will by a powerful government body, another useful way of understanding these experiences is to look to Foucault's (1975) concepts of biopolitics and governmentality. According to Foucault, power in modern societies manifests primarily as disciplinary power '*that has taken control of both the body and life*' (Foucault, 1975, p252-3). Darling (2011) and Conlon (2010) suggest that one way that the dispersal of asylum seekers, in the UK and Ireland respectively, can be understood is indeed as a facet of such governmentality. As has been shown throughout this thesis, control over how participants lived pervaded almost every aspect of their lives, from how they could access food, where they could shop if they could shop at all, to their right to work and where they could live. Their relative lack of power meant that resisting control was incredibly difficult. Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia) managed to resist control over his housing, to a certain extent, because he was able to turn to family with citizenship status who also lived in the UK. However, for participants such as Hassan (M, 22, Iraq), who had tried to complain about the state of his government provided housing, these complains appeared futile and were met with threats from housing providers acting on behalf of the government.

Control of participants' 'body and life' was also evidenced by an inability to move away from their current location as and when they wished. This was largely due to the prohibition on paid employment which meant that participants could not afford to rent or buy accommodation of their own and were thus reliant on the state, family or charity for housing. The most extreme instance of this among participants was Tariq's experience. Tariq's (M, 21, Pakistan) movement was even more restricted than most participants as, in addition to being relocated to Sheffield against his wishes, he had been issued with an electronic tag which monitored his whereabouts following his release from prison six months previously. To illustrate how central his tag was to his experience of being a refused asylum seeker, Tariq had taken a photograph of his tag and the electronic box which monitored his whereabouts, as part of the auto-photography exercise:



Figure 14: Photograph by Tariq

Tariq explained how his tag impacted on the way he felt, as well as on his ability to meet friends in Sheffield and visit friends and family in London. The terms of his parole meant that Tariq had to remain in his accommodation between 8.00pm and 8.00am:

You know why I take this? This is my tag, this is my leg. I don't know, I hate this one and I hate this one also (referring to the tag and the black box) because this one yeah... it's a long time, six months... and it's no good... feeling no good, no good yeah... Every day eight o'clock I go in the house. Some people going out, my friend going out, eight o'clock. Because sometime my friend call me we go somewhere, but I got this tag...

You only press the green button and it gets you through to G4S. At eight o'clock I come like eight ten, and after this these people call me and say 'Where are you?' I say 'I'm there'. I don't know.

I can't go London 'cos [if] I go London yeah, and after this yeah, maybe it's take long yeah. I come back maybe ten, twenty minute late yeah, maybe these people arrest me back, I go prison back, because these paper say to me yeah, paper, you do, you come late to house, police come and arrest you back, you go back inside yeah.

Tariq, M, 21, Pakistan

Tariq's experience was not just one of control and monitoring. Because he had to be at home between 8.00pm and 8.00am he also had a lot of spare time to fill. The relative emptiness of these hours was making Tariq feel that life had lost much of its meaning and, having experienced great difficulties before and during his journey to the UK, he seemed to be losing hope that a better future, the future he had anticipated in the UK, was possible:

P It's no good... eight o'clock I go there, it's no good.

I What do you do for the rest of the evening?

P I go there yeah, smoking, then after this yeah, cooking something, watch TV, go sleep, morning time wake up, again same thing, same thing, everything the same.

I How does that make you feel?

P It make me feel upset, yeah. I don't know what happened to my life, I don't know. I was young yeah, I come to too many country. I come here yeah, life is going change, yeah, different maybe one day, one day, I don't know what happen.

I What would you like your life to be like one day?

P Er, well the life like you have, you going married yeah, and after this you go one car yeah, and you go small business yeah, is okay, is life. This is life. And this is no good life yeah now. You have children, you have you working, you go car, you got business – this is life.

Although Tariq's preconceptions of my life are largely erroneous, he nonetheless seems to be experiencing his life very much as the bare life of which Agamben (1998; 2000) speaks; he is alive, but not living, and it is the constant monitoring and restriction of his movements that has, in many ways, made it such. What was notable from the pictures that Tariq took as part of the auto-photography exercise was that they were all, without exception, pictures of the inside of his room or of the view from the window in his room. This, even more than his words perhaps, speaks powerfully to the extent of the restriction, materially, socially and geographically, that Tariq experienced.

Because of this extreme restriction, one way of understanding Tariq's experience might be as a facet of Foucault's (1975) concept of the carceral archipelago, a form of governmentality whereby those not in a physical prison building are, upon release, still monitored and controlled by the state, and thus 'imprisoned' in this sense. Building on Foucault's concept, Wacquant (2004) argues that the carceral archipelago:

[R]egulates and incapacitates the precariat... [U]nder the new liberal-paternalist regime, the parolee is less an ex-convict returned to freedom than a quasi-inmate waiting to be sent back behind bars.

Wacquant, 2004, p145

Whilst the concept of the carceral archipelago is most clearly applicable to Tariq (M, 21, Pakistan) as he had spent time in a UK prison and had been issued with a tag on his release, the concept might usefully be understood as applying to all the participants in this study as their lives were so heavily monitored and restricted by the state.

Maneem's (M, 37, Iraq) experience of being/feeling restricted by the actions of the state provides a useful example of this broader application of the concept. For Maneem, the Home Office's dispersal policy meant that he had been moved to a location against his will. Because he was not allowed to work and had to report on a monthly basis to the Home Office reporting centre in Sheffield, he could not change the location of his accommodation. As such, he was 'imprisoned' within his current location. This had a number of consequences for Maneem, including the breakdown of an important relationship:

The reason I split up with my girlfriend 'cos, 'cos when you an asylum seeker you haven't got any kind of, you can't move around like a freely... We start relationship, and after a while she... because I waiting, not happening... and I don't know what happening to my decision, it taking longer time maybe or something. And she moved to London, and I can't move to London with her. We can do kind of relationship from distance or something, but after a while you find it's not possible to be honest, and you broke up 'cos I got no choice.

Maneem, M, 37, Iraq

Maneem's situation echoes those of the participant's in Section 7.2, who felt that their relationships had broken down because of their status as refused asylum seekers. Whilst Maneem is effectively geographically 'imprisoned' due to the necessity that he reports to the Home Office in Sheffield every two weeks, participants such as Tahlil (M, 29, Somalia), who felt that his inability to contribute financially had led to the demise of his own relationship, might also be understood as being imprisoned by circumstance.

7.4 The Carceral Archipelago and Fear of Deportation

In addition to the way that housing policy and the prohibition on paid employment 'imprisoned' participants, there were subtler ways that seemed to act to make participants feel un-free. It was demonstrated earlier how participants felt they could not complain about issues such as the condition of their government accommodation or about being moved because of dispersal policy, because of a fear of punishment. However, the most prominent fear shared by all participants was a fear of deportation, and this, above all else, seemed to act to make participants *feel* imprisoned. It is worth noting that during the course of fieldwork two participants, Anzan (M, 46, India) and Wahid (M, 64, Syria), were detained and deported, and as such the threat of deportation was not an empty one. This section of the chapter explores how fear, primarily about being deported, led many participants to feel imprisoned. As such, it is argued that this represents an extension of the reach of the carceral archipelago. The chapter also suggests that this treatment is again a result of participants' citizenship status. Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia) explained how his fear of deportation affected him on a daily basis:

Some of [your friends] get deported whilst you're watching, you know, and you just think, you know, that fear again, comes in and like you know your time is limited, you know, it's like you're in a prison every day, you don't feel alright at all.

[I feel] hounded by the UKBA... I mean, you never feel comfortable, you know. It's like being in prison, like I said. Sometimes you just think maybe, I mean you hear a van go past the house, think 'Are they here for me?' you know? So I hate that.

Cabaas, M, 24, Somalia

Cabaas' fear that he could be captured at any moment was a common one. Rashida (F, 35, Pakistan) and Olu (M, 40, Eritrea) expressed similar sentiments:

We all the time, if someone knock door, first like my heart beat is too much.

Rashida, F, 35, Pakistan

They can come and arrest you any time, take you into the next flight and deport you to a country which you ran away from. So they're horrible.

Olu, M, 40, Eritrea

The fear of deportation among participants was so great that some of them had chosen to stop signing with immigration authorities so as to disappear from the Home Office's radar. Wahid (M, 63, Syria) was one such participant, who had stopped signing after his initial application for asylum was refused:

I What happened after they said no asylum?

P Yeah, is a sometime I not [sign for] asylum because people catches, police, going Syria, sending Syria. But I afraid so not going signature. Police no understand. Catch them, deport. No understand problem. No understand some people have problem.

However, having been in the UK for ten years Wahid had recently submitted a fresh claim for asylum. Although he had initially been asked to report to the UKVI once a month, this

frequency had recently been increased, which caused him to be concerned that he might be deported:

- P I ten year stay now. Now fresh claim, I do fresh claim. No answer. Maybe I give visa, maybe not give visa. I waiting. The first time I come here - Sheffield – told me one month after coming signature. Now is told one week.
- I So it used to be one month, now one week?
- P But this is tell me coming two week, two week after. This week not, but next Friday coming. I afraid because they Syria people catch. Government also told us my country people deporting there... Immigration tell peoples in Syria for you no problem. You go back. I, for me too much problem. Is not problem why I ten year I part my family? There my wife waiting. Children. I ten year here, no see. Because have problem. Is not problem, why you are still here? Because [if] I going there, for me coming problem.

Wahid was so afraid of being detained and deported that whenever he went to ‘sign’ he wore two layers of clothing, and took more clothes with him in a bag so that if he was detained, he would have more than one set of clothes:

I have solicitor. I am waiting. I think catch, I, every time going signature I have clothes, double, double clothes. My bag, more clothes.

Wahid, M, 63, Syria

Wahid’s fears were confirmed when, prior to our second interview, he was deported. No one at the organisation where I had met Wahid could find out where he had been sent.

Fear of the Police and Others in Positions of Authority

Because of this fear of deportation, many participants had developed a wariness or fear of the police, who, although not members of immigration services themselves, were seen as agents of a wider state disciplinary system that had the power to detain them should they wish to. Participants spoke about how they felt that their status as refused asylum seekers impacted on how they were treated by the police. Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) was typical of this wariness and the belief among participants that there was a ‘two-tier’ system, whereby citizens and those with

refugee status were protected by the police, but refused asylum seekers were at the mercy of the police and their powers. Hassan had been attacked in the street on more than one occasion, but had chosen not to call the police or report his attacker because he felt that the police would not have helped him:

Been in many many times in the street, people they beat me, but I didn't tell them anything, I was keep from police. If I'd told them something they gonna ring to police or police gonna come they gonna arrest me, they put me in jail and after jail they will deport me back.

Hassan, M, 22, Iraq

Hassan was very clear that he anticipated this treatment because of his citizenship status:

- P Is all happens come for decision. You don't have a decision you mean like nothing. It's all about this happen decision. When you get decision, or if you are British, you don't have no problem. If you are not, you have many problems.
- I So everything depends on being British?
- P Yeah, if you are refugee or British police gonna respect you. If you are not, they not gon' respect you.

As noted in the previous chapter, Ameer (M, 36, Iran) had also been actively avoiding the police for similar reasons. He had only been doing this since losing his asylum seeker identity card two years previously, and worried that his lack of contact from the Home Office, coupled with his lack of formal ID, would make him vulnerable to deportation:

[N]ow is more than two years I'm not receiving any letter from the Home Office, and I lost my ID card, and my previous solicitor he been confirming my address through the Home Office but it been two years, nearly three years I not receiving any letter from them. Always I am worry about if I, because always I had a, I been asking legal person for example 'What shall I do about that because I don't have a ID', and sometimes by pressure they sending Iranian person back to there. From 2008 until now, time to time by pressure they been sending people to Iran. For that reason always I been worrying about that, because if I go back to there I don't have a life, straight away I get killed.

For that reason I been little worry, and in the past when I had the ID for example, because I am not person making a trouble and that, but sometime I saw people on the street and police they been asking that, in the past [when] I had the ID it was normal to me they been stop me, they been ask about my ID, I been showing, but now because I don't have the ID it's a little bit difficult. They been asking a question they shortly be putting me in the detention. It's gonna be problem for my children and for myself, my safety of my life getting risked.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

The police were not the only representatives of authority that Ameer was concerned about. During a period of homelessness he had spent time in the city's train station. He had been concerned about being found by both the police and station guards. Ameer also described the visceral feeling of shock he experiences when he sees a member of the police force, or hears a siren:

It was very difficult sometimes, and I been living in the rough from the night until morning. I been getting cold, and I couldn't do anything. Sometime I been going to the station. When I saw the guard or the police I been hiding. Still I got one big issue – when I see a police – never ever in this country and in my back home country, never ever I did have any problem with anyone. I been very very normal person. But from that country, when I came to there, and when I had lost accommodation and lost in the signing (at the Home Office) and that, when I see a police I be a shock, I been very very hard shock. When I heard the police car going I be very nervous, I been very shocked. Sometime I been in the station when I didn't have any place to sleep. In that place from that platform to that platform, to other platform. Ten minute there, twenty minute there. When I see the guard, I seen the police I been hiding. Sometime I been asking myself why? I'm not did anything wrong, I no... just because I am asylum seeker.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

Again, Ameer is highlighting how it is his status, or indeed lack of status, that makes him fearful of the police. It is not related to him having done anything that he considers to be 'wrong', but the simple fact of his refused status, without ID, that makes him feel that he must hide from the police and other authority figures, and that problems would arise if he were to encounter them. This fear was not always the case for Ameer, however. He described how his

view of the police had changed since arriving in the UK from an initially positive perception of the police as helpful and welcoming, to one where he now physically shakes when he hears a police car:

I got two different opinions. The first build when I came to this country. When I saw that gentleman, never ever I don't forget that face and that gentle person. All the people coming... crossed by his shoulder... to get him down from the lorry. Very helpful, very respectful, very friendly. I think this every time I see the police in the country. I been very very respectful to them and very happy to be in the place they have a systematic like that. Very respectful people.

But now, after this, those years I been not signing, hiding like that, I got such a different feeling from the police. Police when they deal with asylum seekers, we have a lot of different situations. They do a pressure, they use power, they thinking these people they are criminals, they are thinking that people are, they should go out from the country by pressure. We seen 2010, if I am not been wrong, they send fifty people by pressure to Iran. After five days, all fifty people got killed. Some people in the aeroplane, they didn't want to get off from the aeroplane. They been by weapon, they been kicking, and some electric shock, they been kicking to get him off from the aeroplane.

...But when I, for the last five years, when I seen the thing that this happen with the asylum seekers when you go to Vulcan House to sign, in the city, or immigration of Manchester, or any other city, straight away the person is going to signing but straight away they take him and keep him and take him to detention and maybe some time – six months, five months, four months they stalling that person in the detention. Sometimes they send him by pressure to back home for lost in future, doesn't know he be safe or not, definitely he gonna be killed. And sometimes in the five, six months' time in the detention they let him go out. That is make you feel so different. I'm always worry if I... I'd like to go to signing, I'd like to be never ever to be hiding from the government, but in the same way I have a feeling if I go to there and I got arrest and they be send me by pressure, I go killed... Now when I hear the police car I been suffering, I been

shaking, I been thinking that that car is coming to me, to deport me, to put me in the prison. I don't know. So difficult.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

As Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) stated above, Ameer felt that there was a very stark distinction between the rights of refugees and citizens, and those of refused asylum:

...If person on the street they been want to fight me, [I want] to have a right to phone the 999. That, this is a basic thing. Now I am like hiding from the government. I didn't have any problem with the government, with the police, but I have a scary feeling about, er, maybe on that street if one, one resident people they be shout me, they been fight me or stab me, anything imagine. If the police come in, because I am asylum seeker they think - if he did the mistake - they think I did it, because I don't have a right to stay. This is not humanity.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

Ameer's sentiment that although he can be arrested by the police, he cannot access the police for his own protection, is reminiscent of the way that Hassan (M, 22, Iraq), in Chapter Six, felt that he could not complain to his landlord about the condition of his government provided housing, but could be punished by his landlord. As such, the experiences detailed above can be considered in terms of citizenship and Agamben's concept of inclusive exclusion (1998), whereby an individual is excluded from the rights of citizenship, but can nonetheless still be punished by the state. However, these experiences, particularly those where participants expressed feelings of fear when hearing a knock at the door or a police car, might also be viewed as a form of near constant surveillance by an observer that is essentially unseen by the individual but is, nonetheless, omnipresent.

Foucault (1975), using Bentham's concept of the panopticon, argues that surveillance by an unseen observer is a crucial means by which those in power are able to discipline and thus control certain sections of the population within the carceral archipelago. Whyte (2011) applies this concept to surveillance within the physical boundaries of a Danish immigration detention camp. Within the camp immigrants are kept under surveillance, but this is intermittent. Like the participants in this study, the residents of the camp know they are not watched all the time,

but can never be certain that they were not being watched. This inability to know whether or not they were being watched causes the detainees to exist in a constant state of heightened anxiety.

The level of heightened anxiety experienced by participants in relation to a fear of deportation and interactions with police and immigration officials was only one way that participants' experiences of being refused asylum impacted on their mental health and wellbeing. As the mental distress engendered by their fear of deportation has been suggested to form part of a carceral archipelago of state regulation and control, the chapter now goes on to look at other aspects of participants' mental health and wellbeing related to their experiences of being refused asylum and, crucially, to how they experienced a lack of control over their situations.

7.5 Mental Health and Wellbeing

Another key finding to emerge from the data was that participants felt that their mental wellbeing had been significantly impacted by their status as refused asylum seekers. As demonstrated above, fear of deportation caused many of the participants to feel incredibly fearful of the police and immigration authorities. Coupled with this, and adding to feelings of anxiety among participants, was a sense of uncertainty and a lack of control over what the future held. This section explores participant experiences of mental health, showing how circumstances past and present contributed to periods of anxiety, depression, anger, and at times thoughts of suicide among participants. Again, these experiences are suggested to arise due to participants' relatively low power status which gives them very limited control over many aspects of their lives, and it is argued that these experiences can be viewed as yet another way in which participants are 'imprisoned'.

Uncertainty about the future was one of the main reasons cited by participants for feelings of anxiety. Maria (F, 25, Zimbabwe) for example, stated:

Every day my life is worried because I don't know what happen tomorrow.

Maria, F, 25, Zimbabwe

Whilst this was related in part to a fear of detention and deportation, it was also due to a much wider sense of not knowing, of being unable to plan for the future, and of feeling in limbo. Hamid (M, 33, Syria) articulated this particularly well, stating:

The situation look like you blind. You can walk, but you can't see anything. You can't see anything. So maybe you going down in the dark, like a hole, because you can't see the hole.

Hamid, M, 33, Syria

In this way Hamid felt that there were hidden dangers, pitfalls that, because so much of his life felt outside of his control and was dependent on what decision the government came to about his case, he could not foresee or control. Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) described this limbo-like existence, full of potential, but hidden dangers, as akin to being a 'dead man walking':

It's probably anything else related to death... it's like you're, you're a dead man walking... 'cos there's nothing you can do for yourself... same thing like a walking, dead man walking... you know?... So you have to wait for somebody to do things for you. There is little you can do for yourself and that is eating and sleeping, you know?

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

Tahliil's sentiments reiterate the point made in Chapter Six about the way in which restrictions placed on participants act to infantilise them, taking away many of the freedoms and responsibilities that usually accompany adulthood. His existence is ghost-like, he is the bare life about which Agamben (1998; 2000) speaks, alive, but not *living*.

Importantly, participants' mental wellbeing was not just impacted by their current circumstances. A number of participants also spoke about how their past experiences, both in their countries of origin and en route to the UK, continued to affect them. Maneem (M, 37, Iraq) spoke about how he was troubled by nightmares about his past, as well as by his current situation and uncertainty about the future:

I still have got nightmares, paranoid, the things that happen, still I got no place (status), still I got no things happen to me. I'm still kind of in limbo, I don't know what happening to me, they deport me or...

Maneem, M, 37, Iraq

This limbo-like existence and lack of control was difficult for all participants. The participant that expressed this sentiment most succinctly, however, was Maria (F, 25, Zimbabwe) who, when asked what she would like to do if she was given leave to remain, stated simply '*To be my own*'. That is, to have the right to determine her own fate. Of her current situation she stated:

Now I am hopeless. I give up on life I swear. Why I am here? Why I'm alive?

Maria, F, 25, Zimbabwe

Maria was not the only participant who had felt or was currently feeling hopeless. Maneem (M, 37, Iran) had taken the following picture to illustrate a period in his life when he had experienced depression and thoughts of suicide. This was primarily related to his feelings of uncertainty about the future:



Figure 15: Photograph by Maneem

P Yeah, with depression, kind of thought is coming to you, like a suicide things. And thanks god I have a people. My GP helped me, not recover fully, but I seen is like a black dog, sometimes growing, sometimes getting small.

...

I So, what are the sort of biggest challenges that you face... maybe on a day-to-day basis, maybe on a long-term basis...

P Errr, kind of anxiety about your decision, what happen to your decision, like mainly anxiety. And uncertainty about my life... is very kind of hurting me.

For Wahid (M, 63, Syria), worries about his family back in Syria were impacting on his mental health:

I thinking, thinking my family. It's coming my mind problem. Sometime I'm feeling here (indicating his head), here strong.

Wahid, M, 63, Syria

Similarly, Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) spoke about how uncertainty, a lack of a decision from the Home Office, and an inability to move forward in his life because of the restrictions placed on him by government, had affected his mental health, resulting in anger and problems sleeping:

P All the time I'm thinking, all the time. I don't know what to do. I'm really confused about my life. And the Home Office do like this to me. They never give me decision, they never give me work permission. If they give me work permission I can work for myself. I can make my life good, like future, I can save money. If they give me work permission I'm gonna work for myself. I can help with the people, and then I can make my life good, I can do different different things. Now nothing. I cannot do anything. I'm not allowed to study, I'm not allowed for work, I not allowed for different things. Just live in my house. Go out in the house, come back. It's wasting time. Nothing to do.

I How do you deal with that? With not having anything to do?

P Well it's a... I find my mind problem because of this. Because all the time I think about I have my mind problem now... sometime I get really badness in my mind... Sometime in the night, or when I wake up two o'clock and then I can't sleep again.

I What makes you wake up at two o'clock?

- P Before it's for no reason when I wake up, I thinking about my decision, I think about my life, I think for how long more gonna be stay like this? I see people, they working, they do different jobs, they going to college, they going to university. And then for me like, I'm twenty-two years old, I don't have nothing... I don't have nothing to do. Like if I go before to the university should be I'm a good person...
- P ...when I go to sleep is like a twelve o'clock, one o'clock, two o'clock going to sleep and then all the time I thinking to five or six o'clock in the morning. I can't sleep, all the time I thinking something, I get like a mad. Like is so depressing. Sometimes is really close to kill myself because is very bad time, yeah. I can't remember, is really bad time sometimes, some night.
- I Do you feel like that now?
- P Um, I'm normally okay now, but in the night time I'm feeling so so bad in the night time.
- I Have you spoken to a doctor about those feelings?
- P Yeah, they give me different different tablets, about six five different tablets for sleeping, but still when I take the tablets it doesn't work, and then when I go up like this to fell down sometimes. I don't know what shall I do.

The seemingly interminable nature of his current situation, together with past experiences and a lack of occupation or sense of purpose, combined to make Hassan feel hopeless, at times wondering whether his life was worth living. Worrying about these largely unsolvable problems, the solutions to which were beyond Hassan's control, led to poor sleep and feelings of depression and, on occasion, thoughts of ending his life. An inability to sleep due to worry was common among participants. For example, Tariq (M, 21, Pakistan) stated:

Last night I was not sleep. I don't know. I was like no sleep, and sleep like this, I don't know... I was five o'clock, eight asleep, wake up... I think I was not sleeping 'cos I'm thinking.

Tariq, M, 21, Pakistan

Rashida (F, 30, Pakistan) and Zaheer (M, 31, Pakistan) expressed similar sentiments:

- I What's a normal day like for you?
- Zaheer Very difficult. Because every night I can't sleep. Four o'clock just wake up after two, three hour because my eyes all the time is just like blow inside, I don't know, can't sleep. Sometime like I have the tablet.
- Rashida Yeah, we are taking tablets, like a stress tablets... because in the nighttimes when we wake up and we thinking 'Oh, this really very bad for us'. How can we, er, we can't a normal life, we want to, er. We are not happiness. We are thinking all the time, I don't know what is the matter, 'cos I also listen ohh, the Home Office doing these type of things other people and that people.
- I What type of things have you heard?
- Rashida Er, like deport, they can do deport any time.
- Zaheer This our like last hope (fresh claim). We thinking er, if they refuse and er we can't get visa so we kill ourself. Is our last last word. Because if we go back yes, so I don't know what they do with our baby, and they kill us... but like is one fear always – just for deportation. It's all the time.
- Rashida Because I always am hear so many stories, like some from Uganda, some from other countries and they forcibly detain from here.
- Zaheer They come in early morning and knock the doors, they come inside.

The desperation and despair in the interview excerpt above speak to just how devastating the impact of policy which leaves individuals in such a state of fear and uncertainty can be. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Home Office's decision making process has been widely criticised (Freedom From Torture, 2019; Amnesty International, 2013; Clayton et al., 2017), with the organisation, and case workers specifically, often lacking sufficient country specific information to make accurate and nuanced decisions. All of the participants in this study were dealing not only with their current, hugely impoverished, circumstances, but with the fear that their lives would be in danger should they be returned to their country of origin.

Rashida's and Zaheer's fear, relating primarily to someone knocking on the door of their house and forcibly detaining them, meant that they tried to spend as much time as possible away from their house. Hassan (M, 22, Iraq), like Rashida and Zaheer, was also physically tired from being

unable to sleep. However, because of the emotional tiredness that he felt due to his inability to build the life for himself that he wanted to, and because of all the things that he had lived through and experienced prior to coming to the UK, Hassan often did not want to leave his house:

I feeling like a so tired, very very tired my life, because I see different different story in my life, and there is like different different happens coming, like when I come to the UK, so I still waiting for my decision – it's five and a half years ago, nearly six years. I didn't get anything; I'm really worried about this. But to how long I have to wait, to what to do next? Yeah, that makes me so tired. Keep my mind tired, my whole body tired. Sometime not coming out from my house.

Hassan, M, 22, Iraq

Wahid (M, 64, Syria) had also become reluctant to leave his accommodation for similar reasons:

- P Because I coming here is thinking thinking thinking, not understanding English, no understand people... I yesterday I no outside. Just the room I stay. No leave, no outside room.
- I Okay, why did you stay inside?
- P Hard for me, thinking thinking thinking.
- I What are you thinking about?
- P This thing is I'm here, my family Syria. And we are refugee. My family they are no job, my son no job, no working, no job. Sometimes problem, too much problem.

Hassan and Wahid were reluctant to leave their accommodation, and this too might be understood as another way in which circumstance had imprisoned participants. However, other participant experiences can also be understood in this way. Hamid (M, 33, Syria), for example, spoke about how he feels un-free and how this had contributed to depression in the past:

- I Why do you think you felt depressed?
- P Because sometimes when I think my past, and when I think for future... between zero and zero. Sometimes depression come because you can't go work. Need to

be attend for signing, um, and like a limitation. Plus my wife want to study at the college, but we can't go. Because we can't pay money.

...

I Um, so how do you think things would change for you if you got status?

P I will try to get job, paid work. My wife will do some courses as well. I want to learn driving, buy a car. This kind of things. Freedom.

The narratives above demonstrate how, cumulatively, all the aspects of life as a refused asylum seeker coalesce to cause participants to experience poor mental health. Hassan (M, 22, Iraq), for example, cannot do anything to change his current circumstances and thus feels helpless and cannot sleep. He feels that the tablets that the doctor gives him do not work. Indeed, they do nothing to address the underlying causes of his problems. Ultimately, Hassan believes that permission to work would enable him to begin to alleviate his problems and start to be able to build a life for himself.

For Rashida (F, 30, Pakistan) and Zaheer (M, 31, Pakistan) their fear of deportation, and the consequences of being returned to their country of origin is such that they have contemplated suicide, a finding echoed in previous research which suggests that over time the mental health of people refused asylum can deteriorate and lead to thoughts of suicide (McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017). Once again, these experiences can be understood as another way in which participants lives are controlled, limiting their opportunities to carve out their own lives and futures, and imprisoning them by virtue of their circumstances.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored participants' experiences of some of the social and psychological consequences of life as a refused asylum seeker, with particular reference to the impact of material deprivation and legal exclusion. One of the main ways that their current circumstances were found to impact participants was in terms of their social relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, and experiences of parenting. Participants repeatedly reported that a lack of financial resources impacted on their social relationships, leading to relationship breakdown when they were unable to contribute to household expenses, or when arguments arose due to financial difficulties or worries about the future. For some participants, such as Anzan (M, 46, India), his lack of finance made him reluctant to seek out a romantic relationship

as he felt unable to meet the social obligations, such as buying a date a cup of coffee, that formed a central part of meeting and getting to know someone. This inability to meet social expectations made Anzan feel deeply ashamed. It was therefore suggested, as in Chapter Six, that poverty is inextricably linked to feelings of shame, and that the impact of poverty and the experience of poverty thus extends far beyond the material deficits that are typically used to characterise it.

In the same way that Anzan had felt he could not initiate a romantic relationship, differing financial situations also created a barrier to friendship formation with people outside of the asylum seeker 'group' for some participants. Poverty therefore appeared to segregate participants from the wider UK population. However, it was not simply poverty, but the difference in routine and lifestyle that further denoted to participants the difference between them and the wider population. As Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) stated:

[Y]ou are two different entities here. It's too, it's... it's hard for you to cope with their life, you know?... I'll be home every day and they'll be working probably every day, and they'll be different.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

Accompanying this material distinction and difference in routine however, was also the fear that he might be rejected because of his difference, again highlighting the social and psychological ramifications of policy that serves to materially segregate people refused asylum from the wider UK population, potentially leading to social instability (Chase & Walker, 2012).

Financial impoverishment also impacted on participants' ability to parent their children as they wished to. Relationship breakdown had led to two participants having limited or no contact with their children, while those who did have contact felt they were unable to provide their children with the material and experiential resources that they needed. Participants tended to relate the problems they experienced in these relationships primarily to their inability to earn a living, an exclusion linked to their citizenship status. The rights and privileges of citizenship, and the lack of these for non-citizens, are suggested, with recourse to Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, to be attributable to the power disparity between the established UK population and the outsider refused asylum seekers, which enable

the more powerful group to limit the rights of the newcomers. This results, it is argued, in people refused asylum being cast as *homo sacer*, as people with very few rights who are, nonetheless, subject to punishment by the state.

By diminishing the rights of people refused asylum the state is able to exert control over this group, an effect that was manifest particularly in the way that participants described how their movements were monitored and moderated by government. Participants reported that they had been moved frequently and against their will due to Home Office dispersal policy which saw them relocated far from family and friends. Participants feared that there would be negative consequences should they not agree to move, and believed that being moved had led to social isolation as well as an inability to access key amenities, such as education and healthcare, which were often at some distance from their accommodation. For many participants, these difficulties were compounded by an inability to access public transport. Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations offers a useful theoretical lens through which to consider these experiences, with the power inherent to the more established group enabling them to deliberately exclude newcomers from key amenities. However, in order to place the role of the state at the centre of participant experiences of movement control, Foucault's (1975) work on biopolitics and governmentality, with its emphasis on the way that governments exert control over populations, is useful. Tariq (M, 21, Pakistan), who had to wear a tag following his release from prison, was perhaps the most salient example of this control, which resulted in such a lack of freedom that his life was experienced very much as the bare life of Agamben's (1998) *homo sacer*. The combination of extreme restriction and bare life, it is argued, constitutes a form of imprisonment, whereby Tariq existed with a carceral archipelago where he was monitored and controlled by a panoptic state almost constantly. While Tariq was undoubtedly the most severely physically constrained participant, it is suggested that all participants existed within this carceral archipelago due to the heavily restricted nature of their lives.

Participants also spoke about their fear of being detained and deported which, it is argued, represented a form of imprisonment, constituting an extension of the carceral archipelago. Fear of deportation led participants not only to fear immigration officials, but also others in positions of power, such as members of the police, with many believing that their status as a refused asylum seeker meant that they would be treated less favourably than UK citizens, and also risk

deportation, if they came into contact with police. Participants' fear of deportation, and of those in positions of authority more generally, was suggested to impact significantly on participants' mental health.

The chapter then went on to discuss other ways in which being refused asylum had impacted participants' mental health and wellbeing, including memories of the past, and uncertainty and lack of control over the future. Together, these difficulties had led participants to feel hopeless, with some experiencing episodes of depression and thoughts of suicide. These experiences were also suggested to represent a form of imprisonment, brought about by participants' lack of control over their current and future circumstances.

Chapter Eight: Stigma

8.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have presented findings relating to the material exclusion and deprivation experienced by refused asylum seekers, and the social and psychological impact of this, and of living as a refused asylum seeker more broadly. This chapter builds on Chapter Seven and explores one of the key themes to emerge from data analysis, stigma. This theme represents a central aspect of the social and psychological impact of being refused asylum and the deprivation associated with this. As such, it is worthy of distinct analytical focus. It is argued that the exclusions faced by people refused asylum, and in particular the way that some of these exclusions appeared to impact on participants' interactions with others in day-to-day life, led them to believe that they were perceived by some sections of society as 'less than' the settled UK population, and that they were being stigmatised because of their status as refused asylum seekers. In this way, the present chapter explores a different dimension of the experiences of refused asylum seekers, enabling a more holistic understanding not only of these experiences themselves, but of the complex interconnections between material exclusion, social exclusion, and stigma in the lives of the participants in this study. The findings principally relate to the ways that participants realised that they belonged to a stigmatised group through their interactions with British citizens and through the media, how this knowledge led some participants to retreat socially, and how, interestingly, many of the participants expressed stigmatising narratives about members of other social groups that might be considered marginalised. A number of theories are utilised to interrogate these findings further, including Goffman's (1963) seminal theorising on stigma, as well as Elias' and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations.

8.2 The Learning Process

Learning from Other People

In line with Crawley (2010), one of the key empirical findings of this study was that participants had not been aware that by seeking asylum in the UK they would join a stigmatized group. However, after arriving and spending time here they had learned that there was something about them as 'asylum seekers' that defined them as different, and indeed as 'less than' the rest of the general British population. Participants' 'moral careers' (Goffman, 1963), their sense

that they were part of a stigmatized group, was informed in part by their interactions with others in fairly commonplace situations. One participant who was particularly vociferous on this point was Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia).

Although Tahliil was not eligible for government support at the time of interview, he had previously been in receipt of Section 4 support from the Home Office, which had provided him with accommodation in a house in multiple occupation (HMO) and an Azure Card, a prepayment card that is loaded with credit of £39.39 at the start of each week and can be used to purchase goods such as food and clothing in a limited, prescribed, number of shops. There is no cash provision available to those on Section 4 support and as such everything must be paid for with this card. Tahliil had taken a picture of his Azure card, along with his Application Registration Card (ARC) (Home Office issued identity card), as part of the auto-photography exercise:



Figure 16: Photograph by Tahliil

Given that the remit of the auto-photography exercise was to capture images that spoke about significant aspects of their experiences of life after being refused asylum, Tahliil's decision to take this photograph demonstrates how central these items are to his experience. For Tahliil the card was a symbol of his marginalised, outsider status, it marked him out as different and drew his difference to the attention of others. Tahliil found using the card embarrassing, particularly because it would not always be pre-loaded with funds when it was supposed to have been:

- P: This is an Azure card, it's an asylum seeker banking card, it's um, these are how the vouchers used to be deposited every Monday morning. And the funny thing about these Azure cards is sometimes it's not gone on on Monday morning, because they will say the system is down. So every time I had it when I go there they will give you something to eat but it's a very embarrassing card.
- I: Why's it embarrassing?
- P: I feel like, when you go and it doesn't work and you've done all your shopping, you feel embarrassed right? You go to somewhere like Asda, some cashiers they know about it so they will definitely, er, the moment you give them the Azure card they've already made up their mind who you are, they know you, and you could see the change of moods sometimes.
- I: What do you mean they've made up their mind who you are?
- P: Yeah, they already know who you are, they know, obviously they say it's tax payers' money, so they know obviously this man doesn't work. Young man who can't even go to work, you know? So that's how I used to see it, as an embarrassment to me. The whole asylum thing to me is an embarrassment. But these ones summed it up, it made it clear how embarrassing it is. And the reason why I took both of [the cards] is because with the Azure card, when the cashier... um, when you buy, the cashier, I think the system tells them to check the signature, and with Azure card you don't need to sign anywhere, so they will ask you for any ID. So for me, the only ID I had was this one, the ARC card, and the ARC card doesn't have a signature. So... only the experienced ones they know you don't need to sign. Yeah, so it's like these are my identity you know, they are my IDs. I still keep them but, these ones you don't lose it, you keep it until you get your leave or they ask for it. Even when they ask me for ID, I probably produce one of them, which is embarrassing because it's got a big sign with 'prohibited from taking employment'... but how'd you survive you know?

The card, for Tahliil, is not simply a means of purchasing food and other necessities, it stigmatizes him and denotes his social position. He recalled one incident in particular:

I went to Asda and I had the Azure card... it was on a Monday morning around ten and I did my shopping. Unfortunately, it had not been loaded and it declined and the cashier didn't know about it and she told me 'No wait, go outside, there is a bank cash machine outside, go and get the money, I'll wait for you.' And I tell her 'No no no, I can't get the money right now.' And the woman behind me... said 'Noooo, this is asylum seeker card.' And [I] just look at her and was like 'No way, not again.' So I just left the stuff and went home a bit angry.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

Tahliil's 'not again' suggests that this is by no means the first time that such an incident has occurred. In this instance a fault in the system meant that Tahliil's card had not been loaded with funds by the time he did his shopping on Monday morning. This resulted in his status as a refused asylum seeker being revealed to both the cashier and another shopper, marking him out as 'different', as someone unable to pay for his own food, causing Tahliil embarrassment and then anger.

Tahliil was not alone in feeling singled out in this way. Alia (F, 33, Sudan) described feeling similarly humiliated when shopping at Sainsbury's and trying to buy a blanket and toothbrush for her son:

One day I go buy small blanket for my son... I buy brush teeth, he open it... When I came in to pay they say just food, you cannot buy the blanket. I say 'I can', 'No' he say, 'you can't'. I said, I told him, 'I live a long way away, I came [all the way] here [because] I want to buy... [He] say I need to pay to brush teeth. When I give him Azure card they say 'No, you pay cash... Because he's opening it need to buy'. I ask him 'How much this one?' They told me 'One pound'. I give him one pound. [He says] 'How you have cash?' I bring cash sometimes, my neighbour, they want to help me, go Sainsbury together, they shopping like fifteen pound, ten pound, like that, they give me [cash] for transport... 'You have cash!!'... I say 'I want to ask the manager', 'Okay' they say. When I push the pushchair they see [a carton of juice for my son] in my pram. 'Come on, come on, come on' they say... 'did you pay this one juice?' 'No' I say, 'I bring it from home.' 'Do you have receipt?' 'No, I don't have receipt, I brought from

home.’ And they say ‘Ahhhh’, they say ‘Sorry, sorry, sorry’. And [now] I never go there, I hate it. I am angry! I push my son’s [pram] – ‘come on, let’s go’.

Alia, F, 33, Sudan

Not only is Alia humiliated when she is told she cannot buy the blanket or toothbrush for her son with her Azure Card, but when she then produces cash – the relatively small sum of £1 – the cashier demands that she explain how she came to have the money, arguably implying some form of criminality. This theme continues when Alia asks to see the manager, who then accuses her of stealing a small carton of orange juice that she has, in fact, brought with her from home for her son. Realising that the juice carton has indeed been brought from home, the manager apologises, but it is too late, she is humiliated and angry and will no longer shop at the store. Alia’s experience echoes that of Tahliil, and also reflects previous research which suggests that shopping using an Azure card leads people refused asylum to experience feelings of shame (McKenna, 2019; Reynolds, 2010). The card makes both Alia and Tahliil feel that that they are being marked out as second class citizens, as undeserving of the rights – to work, to be assumed to be free from criminality - that those without Azure cards might reasonably expect.

As argued in Section 7.2 of the previous chapter, poverty and its ramifications are closely linked to feelings of shame and of being stigmatised (e.g. Chase & Walker, 2012; Jo, 2012; OPHI, 2010; Wacquant, 2008), and this was certainly the case for Tahliil and Alia. Goffman (1963), in his writings on stigma, argues that individuals in possession of a stigma may not immediately be aware of their ‘stigmatized’ status, and that such individuals gradually learn that they are seen as different from the ‘normal’ population. This learning process is termed their ‘moral career’. Goffman also posits that those who:

...are initially socialized in an alien community then must learn a second way of being that is felt by those around them to be the real and valid one.

Goffman, 1963, p49

Schroeder (2012) notes a similar finding in his discussion of the moral careers of young refugees in Germany, who learned that their identity was no longer seen or defined by who they were or what they did prior to becoming a refugee, but by the label of ‘refugee’. In their interactions with people in their day to day lives, participants in this study learned that they

belonged to a stigmatised group. Due to its ability to highlight an individual's immigration status, the Azure card, and indeed the ARC card, might be usefully understood as examples of what Goffman (1963) terms a 'stigma symbol'. These are suggested to denote to the 'normal' person that the possessor of the stigma symbol belongs to a stigmatized group. This idea is supported by Carnet et al.'s (2014) report for the British Red Cross, in which they argue that the Azure card both stigmatizes and infantilizes users. For Alia, the use of her Azure card appears to have led to assumptions about her 'moral status', as Goffman (1963) terms it, and in particular to an assumption of criminality. This is perhaps consistent with the broader criminalization of asylum seekers that has been noted in the media (Malloch & Stanley, 2005). In fact, Alia, like many refused asylum seekers in receipt of Section 4 support (Reynolds, 2010), had found a way of obtaining a small amount of cash by paying for a neighbour's food shopping with her Azure Card. Her neighbour then gives her the cost of the shopping in cash.

Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia) also reported an incident where he felt he had been accused of criminality. He felt that this was directly related to his status as a refused asylum seeker. Cabaas had gone to 'sign' at the Home Office Reporting Centre. Refused asylum seekers must register, or 'sign', with the UKBA (now the UKVI) at regular intervals in order that the Home Office knows their whereabouts and to confirm that they are meeting the conditions set out for them. It is arguable that this is a different context to those outlined above, as the UKBA are charged with enforcing the policies by which people refused asylum must abide. However, Cabaas nevertheless felt that he was judged unfairly, and as it is this sense of injustice that informs his experience of living in the UK after the refusal of his application for asylum, the incident merits inclusion here.

Because he cannot be deported to his country of origin, Cabaas, therefore, has to sign at the Home Office on a regular basis. On one such occasion he was asked to confirm his phone number to the UKBA official at the front desk. In order to do this Cabaas told the official that he would need to switch on his phone (all phones must be switched off within the reporting centre) as he did not know his phone number by heart. Cabaas took out his phone, an iPhone paid for by his bother with whom he lives and who has British citizenship. He stated that the production of this expensive item elicited the following interaction:

[H]e put it down and he was like 'You're not allowed to work.' I was like 'Yes, I do know that.' He was like 'Obviously I saw your phone. It's a nice phone.' Um, and I was like 'And?' And he was like 'It's obviously gonna be a contract whatever.' I was like 'Yes, I use it, it's not mine. I don't work.' I was like, 'That's an accusation. He should have asked me if I'm working or not, I'd have told you 'No' but you keep on pushing me'... So I got really agitated and angry... and I was like 'You're not allowed to work', so I took out my ARC card and I told him that 'I can read what it says here and I don't know why you're accusing me 'cos you can check next time I come in, I'll show you the phone bill, it's not paid out of my account, or in my name'... and I told him, 'You're pissing me off'... and he was like 'Sir, can you just sit over there', and I was like, 'Here we go'. So what he did is he switched my, he spoke to his manager and decided that he had to switch my reporting days to once every two weeks.

Cabaas, M, 24, Somalia

In a similar way to Alia (F, 33, Sudan), who felt that she had been accused of criminality by a supermarket cashier, Cabaas felt that the UKBA official was insinuating that he had paid for the phone by working illegally. In these instances, there appeared to be little room for nuances of experience, for someone with a family who can support him, or for someone whose neighbours help her to access a small amount of cash. What is more, the participants' accounts seem to indicate that those who were accusing them felt that they were not entitled to have cash or a phone, that they were somehow deservedly excluded from having these items. This suggests that the supermarket employee and the UKBA employee may potentially hold stigmatized views of the participants that characterise them as deviant and criminal. This is consistent, perhaps, with the generally negative public opinion of asylum seekers (Blinder, 2015) and the way that, via repeated conflation of asylum seeking with criminality in media and political narratives, an 'us' and 'them' perception of asylum seekers as both distinctly other and distinctly criminal has come to exist (Maughn, 2010; Somerville, 2007). These accounts are also reminiscent of the 'culture of disbelief' suggested to be endemic to the Home Office and to lie at the heart of the high levels of erroneous refusals of asylum applications (e.g. Freedom From Torture, 2019). These excerpts also echo Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) contention that established groups tend to both homogenise and demonise outsider groups, and are thus less able to discern differing experiences among outsider group members.

In addition, Cabaas' experience of the reporting centre was of a punitive environment, a finding echoed by Hasselberg's (2014) study of foreign national offenders released on bail who must also attend a reporting centre. Cabaas is not an offender, but he nevertheless feels that he is treated like one. This is thus reminiscent of the theme explored in the previous chapter whereby participants can be understood as existing within a carceral archipelago (Foucault, 1975) where, despite not being physically imprisoned, their lives are, nonetheless, monitored and in many ways controlled by the state. Although Cabaas experienced this treatment when signing at the UKBA, Alia and Tahliil had similar experiences when using their Azure cards. This demonstrates how technologies, such as Azure cards, arguably increase the reach of the carceral archipelago, enabling state control to penetrate almost every area of participants' lives, insinuating itself into even the most seemingly mundane of activities, such as a trip to the supermarket. That Cabaas, like Alia, feels that he is treated as though he is a criminal, and feels stigmatised, demonstrates the wider, socio-psychological implications of existing within the carceral archipelago, and the way that material exclusion and stigma combine to form the central experience of what it is to be a refused asylum seeker.

Being Discreditable

In the above examples, participants' refused asylum seeker status was either known to the other person in the interaction, or soon became known to them via the use of an Azure card. However, for the vast majority of the time participants are not easily distinguishable from the majority of the fairly cosmopolitan UK population. This is because the stigma of being an 'asylum seeker' relates to a person's legal status and not to any obvious physical marking. In Goffman's (1963) terms they are 'discreditable' rather than 'discredited'. As such, participants were usually only identified as being an asylum seeker by the revealing of a stigma symbol, such as an Azure card, or by open admission of their asylum seeker status. Participants reported that because their stigma was not immediately obvious, they had experienced incidents where they at first believed they had formed a good relationship with another person, only to have this assumption rebuffed when the other person learned of their asylum seeker status.

Tahliil's (M, 29, Somalia) experience of one such incident can help to illuminate the kind of encounters that many participants reported. Having separated from the mother of his son, Tahliil visited a contact centre twice a week to spend time with him. During his time attending the centre he had become friendly with another man who was there to spend time with his own

son. They often chatted and Tahliil believed that they were friends. However, Tahliil felt that this changed when he revealed to the man that he was an asylum seeker (the term that Tahliil, like many participants, uses to describe his status):

Last week... I went to see my son... and um, I had a friend who always come in there, he's English. And we always talked... and then he asked me... 'You've been seeing your baby for a long time'. I say 'Yeah, um, I been seeing him for two day [a week]'... and he told me 'That's not enough, four hours to see your baby's not enough'. He actually told me 'I've got a solicitor who can help you to see your baby more, like four days, or even get custody of the baby'. And I told him 'No, I don't want that', because now I knew where the conversation was leading. He told me 'No no no, I'll help you out, let's meet tomorrow'. I said 'No, actually I can't 'cos I'm an asylum seeker'. And his face changed and he said 'Oh, okay, oh, you are, oh right, okay'. So he told his son 'Now let's go, let's go, think time is up'. And that was... last week and then I went [this week] and he was there and didn't want to talk much.

Tahliil, M, 29, Somalia

What is clear from this example is that a friendship seemed to have developed between these two men based on perceived commonalities in their circumstances. Indeed, so similar did Tahliil's friend appear to think them, that he offered to help Tahliil gain better access to his son. However, upon revealing that he would not be able to take up the offer of help because of his asylum seeker status, Tahliil felt that his friend had distanced himself, and the following week did not exhibit the affability he had on previous occasions. Whilst it is impossible to say why this man distanced himself from Tahliil, or indeed whether Tahliil himself withdrew, fearing that the revelation of his status as an asylum seeker may have altered the man's opinion, what is clear is that Tahliil perceived the revelation of his legal status to have impacted the relationship.

Like Tahliil, Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia) felt that his asylum seeker status impacted on his ability to form the kinds of relationships he would like. This was as much in terms of his romantic relationships as his friendships. Cabaas reported that he had experienced rejection on a number of occasions once a partner learned of his asylum seeker status:

- P: I don't get to be with the people that I would normally be with.
- I: Okay.
- P: And they don't accept me because of my situation.
- I: Why do you think that they don't accept you?
- P: Because they show it.

Cabaas went on to say:

I got examples of my ex-girlfriends, and whenever you mention the fact that you are an asylum seeker right, they push you away.

Cabaas, M, 24, Somalia

In this way, it was not just the financial implications of being a refused asylum seeker, as discussed in the previous chapter, that appeared to be impacting on participants' relationships, but the reputational aspects of this. One way of understanding these experiences, therefore, is to consider them as instances of what Goffman (1963) terms:

[U]nwinning acceptance... by individuals who are prejudiced against persons of the kind he can be *revealed* to be.

Goffman, 1963, p 58, my emphasis

That is, because the stigma is not immediately obvious, the individual is initially accepted by people who, had the stigma been obvious from the outset, may not have chosen to associate with them. Most participants tended to 'manage' (Goffman, 1963) their stigma by not revealing their status as a refused asylum seeker immediately, if at all. Because of this, Goffman (1963) argues that for discreditable individuals where the stigma is not immediately apparent, one of the greatest problems in terms of social interaction is not with strangers, as in these interactions discreditable individuals appear no different from the general population, but with intimate relationships such as friendships and relationships. Wacquant (2008) too notes that members of stigmatised groups in the modern post-industrial city tend to manage their stigma in this way as, like the participants in this study, their stigma is not immediately identifiable by a 'phenotypical or cultural marker'. However, when the stigma is revealed, either by the individual admitting their membership of a stigmatised group, or through a stigma symbol such

as an ARC card, the social consequences can be significant. Indeed, this finding is echoed among people belonging to a variety of groups that might be considered *discreditable* in Goffman's terms, including people with mental health conditions (Finzen, 2012), medical conditions such as HIV/AIDS and cancer (McNeil, 2000), and experiences such as childhood sexual abuse (Somer & Szwarcberg, 2001).

In his work on the nature of embarrassment Goffman (1956) suggests that the retreat of the 'normal' person can be explained as a consequence of their embarrassment at finding themselves in the company of someone of 'lower rank' when they had thought themselves to be with someone who was their social equal. Whilst acknowledging the merits of Goffman's assertion that social rank may play a part in such distancing by 'normals', Kuzmics (1991) suggests that Goffman neglects the wider social drivers that determine perceptions of rank and, consequently, feelings of embarrassment. In the examples stated above, these interactions are taking place within a social milieu where, for example, asylum seekers are frequently demonised in dominant media narratives (Lynn & lea, 2003; Philo et al., 2013; Frelick, 2016). By understanding this, participants' experiences can be understood as a part of the time and context in which they take place, avoiding the a-historical understanding that Kuzmics argues Goffman's theory of stigma fosters. In addition, by understanding these interactions as dependent upon the current social context, the focus shifts from what Perez (2014) argues is Goffman's misguided focus on the stigmatized individual, towards the role of the stigmatisers. Culpability for stigma thus becomes less individualised, less rooted in the stigmatized individual, and more embedded in the social and political context in which the stigmatizing occurs. Indeed, as Gleeson (1999) argues, this allows personal encounters, such as those detailed above, to be understood as the endpoint, rather than the origin, of stigma, as interactions informed by the socio-political context in which they arise. By conceptualising these encounters in this way, the retreat of those people, such as the man Tahliil believed to be his friend, in the examples above can be seen as the result of what Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]) term a 'taboo on social contact', whereby members of a more powerful group are reluctant to befriend or interact with members of a less powerful group, for fear of jeopardising their own social standing within that group. Whilst the difference between the refused asylum seeker and a member of the general British population is not immediately obvious, once the refused asylum seeker's identity is known, power dynamics and social norms may start to inform these social interactions.

Learning from the Media

Research has consistently demonstrated that media and political depictions of asylum seekers frequently serve to demonise them (e.g. Lynn & Lea, 2003; Philo et al., 2013; Frelick, 2016). In line with this, another factor that contributed to participants' awareness that they were being stigmatised was the media. Reading newspaper headlines and watching certain programmes on television was thus one of the ways that participants came to understand that some sections of UK society saw them as 'other'.

This was true, for example, of Ameer (M, 36, Iran), whose reason for seeking asylum was completely at odds with what he had seen alleged in the media:

Sometimes people when, I saw in the newspaper, when I seen in the television now, people they talk about asylum seeker, they thought that these people they come to this country just to stolen money, to making jobs, to thieving, to dealing drug, to doing that. I think totally is wrong. I came to this country to be safe.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

Ameer had therefore learned that there were a number of salient media narratives which demonised asylum seekers and portrayed them in a way that was completely at odds with his reason for seeking asylum. That participants were learning about these perceptions via the media is supported by the consistency with which they expressed sentiments similar to Ameer's. Hamid (M, 33, Syria) and Anzan (M, 46, India) for example stated:

No, I never think this and I never think any negative. But when I saw in the newspaper that kind of thing, I feel shame, because maybe we came this country for saving... It's hurtful because I was outsent from [my] country.

Hamid, M, 33, Syria

But sometimes in newspaper also, the Sun and the Mirror, they wrote down negatives about the asylum seeker. And it's not true.

Anzan, M, 46, India

As such, Hamid and Anzan had, like Ameer, learned that the way that they saw their situation differed markedly from the dominant narratives about asylum seekers that they read in newspapers. The reasons for this discrepancy are many. However, Philo (2013) quotes a Daily Star journalist, who wished to remain anonymous, as stating:

There is nothing better than the Muslim asylum seeker, that's sort of jackpot I suppose: all social ills can be traced to immigrants and asylum seekers flooding into this country.

Quoted in Philo, 2013

Echoing the journalist's sentiment that Muslim asylum seekers are the ultimate journalistic scapegoats, and participants' assertions that their reasons for seeking asylum were completely at odds with what they saw in some newspapers, is Taylor-Gooby's (2013) contention that demonising narratives espoused by dominant media and political outlets do not necessarily have to have any basis in reality. Indeed, in line with Taylor-Gooby's (2013) assertion, a UNHCR (2013) analysis of UK media headlines relating to refugees and asylum seekers found very little correspondence between the headlines analysed and reality.

In addition to the way that media narratives contributed to participants' perception that asylum seekers, and thus they, were a stigmatised group, they also felt that these narratives specifically influenced how they were perceived by others. Tahlil (M, 29, Somalia), who felt that he had been stigmatised by others (see Section 8.2), expressed his thoughts on how media and political narratives might influence the opinions of British people in the following interview excerpts:

I think they are good people you know... That's it, they're generally they are good people, but ah the problem is they are misled, they are misled by successive governments or televisions or media, whoever pays for the media.

Especially if I meet a new person who was watching the Big Migration Row debate on Channel Five, definite they'll have an opinion of who I am... a loser, scrounger, you know... 'cos most people don't know asylum seekers are not allowed to work, and most people think that they are on the benefits. Actually it's not benefits, it's called support, you know?

Tahlil, M, 29, Somalia

What is clear from Tahliil's account above is that he came to believe that he would be judged negatively by others because of the way that asylum seekers were depicted in the media, in particular because of programmes such as the *The Big British Immigration Row: Live*, a controversial Chanel 5 programme that aired on February 19th 2014. His particular reference to 'benefits' reflects Crawley's (2010) finding that people seeking asylum experienced racism because of a perception that they had come to the UK to access the UK benefit system. Olu (M, 40, Eritrea) had noted similar perceptions to those mentioned by Tahliil among school children. He had delivered several educational sessions in schools, providing an alternative view of asylum and asylum seekers to that found in dominant media depictions. He noted that many of the children had been surprised by his account of life as a refused asylum seeker:

The reaction has been staggering... Some have not believed that asylum seekers are living in this situation... destitute, have nowhere to go, living on the streets, no homes, no houses.

Olu, M, 40, Eritrea

In this way, what Olu observed among the school children is reminiscent of Slater's (2012) idea that the dominance of certain narratives within the media creates 'ignorance' of other possible narratives. Olu himself firmly believed that the media was able to influence perceptions of asylum seekers among the children:

...because the media's got propaganda of stereotyping immigrants... of taking away our jobs, they're marrying our women, they don't want our culture... So it's a cultural war... it's a... so many things... and these childrens, after listening and seeing a one on one practical testimony, they've changed their minds.

Olu, M, 40, Eritrea

Despite his relatively low power position, Olu is able to counter some of the dominant narratives that he has seen in the media and that he believes have informed the school children's perception of refused asylum seekers. He is able to do this because he has access to 'sympathetic others' (Goffman, 1963), from a local charity who both support him and enable him to access places that without their help, he would be unable to access. This therefore allows

him to counteract, albeit to a fairly limited extent, dominant narratives about refused asylum seekers.

Olu's contention that the media is able to influence people's opinions of asylum seekers, and thus facilitate what Olu perceived to be a 'cultural war', is borne out by research which suggests that, although not ubiquitous, the predominance of negative media depictions does negatively skew public opinion about refugees and asylum seekers (Philo et al., 2013; Philo, 2004; Lynn & Lea, 2003; UNHCR, 2013). Frelick (2016), writing for Human Rights Watch, states that media and political fear mongering has led to wholly negative, hugely erroneous, stereotypes of refugees and asylum seekers. In this way, Olu's and Tahliil's sentiment that asylum seekers were being misrepresented by some media outlets, and that this influenced the wider population's opinion of asylum seekers, appears to be justified.

An important question to ask, however, is how and why such erroneous narratives come to be dominant. In seeking to answer this question, Anderson (1991) argues that the wide reach of the media is a means of creating and ensuring cohesion among large groups of people. However, this assertion is problematic, as it does not address how the media initially becomes so powerful. It is therefore worth returning to Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]), who suggest that demonising narratives, which they term 'blame gossip', arise as a result of, rather than being causative of, different levels of internal group cohesion within established and outsider groups. They suggest that established groups are far more cohesive than newcomer groups due to their greater longevity of residence in a given locale. This cohesion is suggested to enable powerful members of the established group to restrict access to key institutions, such as the media. This dominance of key institutions enables them to spread 'blame gossip' about an outsider group which cannot be countered by the outsiders due to their poorer group cohesion and lack of admittance to these institutions.

Because of their legal status, people who have been refused asylum are almost entirely excluded from media institutions. The contention that access to these institutions is highly restricted in a more general sense is supported by the fact that just three companies own seventy per cent of the news media in the UK (O'Grady, 2014), a trend reflected in other neoliberal states including America (Badikien, 2004; McChesney, 2000; Baker, 2007). The decreasing diversity of media narratives has been suggested (McChesney, 2000; Baker, 2007) to have led

to what Slater (2012) terms ‘the production of ignorance’, by which he means the deliberate propagation of particular types of knowledge and the concealment of other forms of knowledge which may offer an alternative viewpoint. Lister (2004), in reference to discourses surrounding poverty and shame, similarly asserts that negative discourses arise as part of a social *process*, instigated by people who are not themselves living with poverty and who hold positions of power. Such discourses are suggested to contribute to the shame of poverty which, ultimately, can lead those experiencing shame to retreat from social interactions (OPHI, 2010; Chase & Walker, 2012). This social retreat is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

8.3 Social Retreat by Participants

The chapter so far has tended to deal with participants’ experiences of rejection. The discussion now moves on to consider the finding that stigma and feelings of shame led some participants to retreat from others, and considers possible theoretical concepts that may facilitate understanding of this.

Restricting Relationships to Similar Others

Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia), like many asylum seekers and people refused asylum (Blanchard & Joy, 2017; McColl & Johnson, 2006), had chosen to retreat from others and limit his social circle. Like other asylum seekers (Strang & Quinn, 2014) Cabaas found that forming intimate, reciprocal relationships was highly problematic. This was primarily related to a fear that he would be rejected due to his asylum seeker status and the stigma and misconceptions that he felt were associated with this:

- I: What would you say are the biggest challenges that you have at the moment?
- P: I think the thing I actually struggle with the most is friendships. Ummmm, I don't know, because there's another theory to that statement that says it's maybe it's me fighting my own battle inside, rather than the people outside.
- I: Okay, what's the battle inside?
- P: That I won't be accepted because I'm an asylum seeker, because it's a tag that, um, most people don't understand. They just think you come in, you wanna take their jobs, you wanna do that you know, which is not the truth at all, right, this is completely not it.
- I: Yeah.

- P: So they got, because of media they've got this short sight of what asylum seekers are, or immigrants for that matter.
- I: Mmmm.
- P: So I mean, with me, I think it would, it's it's it's a very simple thing to to to not, to notice what a person's thinking, 'cos, it's either you lie of your situation, or you tell the truth and you notice an attitude change.
- I: Okay.
- P: So, that's probably how you'd notice.

In this way Cabaas had problems forming social relationships because he feared he might be rejected. What is also interesting, however, is that Cabaas feels that he is fighting an internal battle, whereby his concern that he will be rejected, rather than the actual risk of being rejected, is the thing that is stopping him from attempting to form certain relationships. Because of this fear, Cabaas had limited his social circle to people he felt would definitely not reject him:

...So I think because of that point, automatically you, you sort of like go into safe mode, where you want to stay away from people, not tell people.

Cabaas, M, 24, Somalia

The 'safe mode' sentiment expressed by Cabaas meant that his main friends were in the same situation as he was. Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia) expressed a similar tendency to limit his social circle to similar others, stating:

- P: Most asylum seekers hang around together.
- I: Okay, is it difficult to meet British people then?
- P: Very difficult yeah. It's like I told you, people don't want to be rejected. Probably the way we see them not the way they are but... unless they come to us, we wouldn't go to them.

Again, Tahliil echoes Cabaas' two main reasons for wanting to limit his social circle, a fear of rejection, but also an awareness that it may be his own fear of being rejected, rather than the actual likelihood of being rejected, that is the main reason for avoiding seeking out friendships from beyond a small group of others in a similar situation.

Like Cabaas and Tahliil, Maneem (M, 37, Iraq) had also chosen to limit his social circle. Again, this was due to a fear of being judged. Because of this, he felt that he was unable to be fully himself around others and, as such, could not form the sort of deep relationships that he wished to:

[P]eople start judging you... that is you know, don't like it, 'cos they don't know about me, they don't know what I'm dealing [with] every day. And I can't be open really. And that... it's not very nice... I don't like. Want to be away from them.

Maneem, M, 37, Iraq

This inability to be fully himself around people not experiencing his situation meant that Maneem too had restricted his social circle primarily to similar others. The strength and centrality of the friendships formed between people refused asylum was something that Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia) had chosen to explore as part of the auto-photography exercise. Whilst he was at Tahliil's house, Tahliil had taken a number of photographs of Cabaas. The photograph below depicts Cabaas preparing food, and suggests that he feels comfortable in his surroundings. Cabaas requested that his face be blurred in the photographs to protect his identity:



Figure 17: Photograph of Cabaas by Tahliil

Cabaas' sense of ease in his surroundings is further demonstrated by his explanation of why going to Tahliil's house is important to him:

Sometimes just come here when I'm stressed, or when I just wanna have fun or, so it's a bit like therapeutic for me, to be around a friend. Especially one in the same situation. And surprisingly enough we never talk about our problems, we're just having fun.

Cabaas, M, 24, Somalia

Tahliil's house therefore appeared to be a place of sanctuary for Cabaas, somewhere that he could de-stress and have fun with a friend who shared his situation, but who also wanted to spend some time not focussing on it for a while. It was somewhere that he felt unselfconscious and able to be himself, because he was with someone in the same situation as he was, and he thus did not have to worry about being rejected.

Goffman (1963) suggests that due to a fear of rejection, arising from encounters where they have been socially shunned, stigmatised individuals often arrange their lives so as to avoid contact with 'normal' members of the population as they '*can never be sure what the attitude of a new acquaintance will be*' (Goffman, 1963, p25), and this seems to echo the participants' sentiments above. Goffman argues that stigmatized individuals might restrict their social circles to similarly stigmatized 'sympathetic others' due to this fear of rejection by 'normal' members of the population. These 'sympathetic others' are suggested to be able to offer support in dealing with the consequences of stigma and a sense of acceptance.

This is an observation that has been echoed more recently by academics such as Wacquant (2004, 2008, 2009) who found that individuals belonging to stigmatized, 'ghettoized', groups in France and America have a tendency to retreat into the private sphere of the family. Powell (2013) too notes similar social distancing among gypsy-travellers in the UK, another highly stigmatized group. In addition, research with people experiencing poverty, as well as homeless drug and alcohol users, found that they too limited their social circles and had small social networks primarily consisting of others in a similar situation to themselves (Chase & Walker, 2012; Neal & Brown, 2016).

However, although these relationships did, on the whole, offer participants vital social support, Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia) stated that his relationship with Tahliil was not without its difficulties. At times, despite his earlier assertion to the contrary, they would discuss their problems. However, this seemed futile. Because of this the two friends sometimes avoided each other:

[T]he friends you start getting right are in the same situation as you, which is a problem... [M]y closest friends are two... both of them are in my situation, so actually most of the time, sometimes we'll avoid each other 'cos you know, well, just can't talk about the problems you're going through, that wouldn't help. We'll talk about it over a bottle of wine or something, alcohol, which makes it worse 'cos we'll be condemning the system instead of looking for solutions, which are very little.

Cabaas, M, 24, Somalia

In this way, although his friendship with Tahliil offered some relief from the difficulties he faced, those difficulties impacted on their friendship, particularly because Cabaas felt that there was very little that they could do to improve their situation. Goffman (1963) suggests that relationships with similarly stigmatized individuals might mean that an individual '*must resign himself to a half-world*' (Goffman, 1963, p32) where the benefits of acceptance and support are tempered by the general low mood that sometimes ensues from spending time with similarly afflicted people dwelling on problems.

It is perhaps for this reason, as well as the desire to meet and befriend others who, although not sharing their specific situation, could be considered similar to them in other ways, that participants sometimes sought out friendships beyond the asylum seeker 'group'. This seemingly contradicts the finding that some participants radically reduced their social circles and may point to the need to consider the idea of social identity in order to better understand participants' friendships.

Friendship Beyond the Asylum Seeker 'Group'

Up to this point, participants have largely been described as belonging to the 'asylum seeker group'. Whilst this is a useful grouping mechanism, and whilst participants were very aware that they had been 'grouped' as such, this group belonging had been assigned to them by the state, and was not self-selected. When Cabaas talked about reducing his circle to other asylum seekers, it was not because he positively identified with this group or felt that it represented his 'social identity', but because he was afraid that he might be rejected by the people he might otherwise want to befriend. Where participants sought out friendships beyond the asylum

seeker 'group' these were often based on feelings of similarity based on the participant's self-ascribed identity.

The ability to talk fluently, because of shared language and shared country or area of origin was stated as a key reason why participants formed friendships with certain people but not others. Ameer (M, 36, Iran), for example, had primarily formed friendships with people who shared his cultural background:

I got friends in this country they are asylum seeker, I got friend they are from Iran but they are British citizen. I got friend been born in this country but the background, the parent they been from Iran, from Iraq, from different backgrounds.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

The same was true for Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) who had many British-Iraqi friends:

I meet them here because there's in the Iraqi culture we all stay together. We joking, we playing... everyone come to the peace garden. One day I come to there I see three guys, they speaking together and then I say 'Oh, they are Iraqi'. I say 'Let go speak with them'.

Hassan, M, 22, Iraqi

For these participants, the friendships that they formed centred on commonalities of language and cultural background, and their social identity seems to be primarily rooted in their cultural identity. A preference for intra-ethnic friendship formation among migrants is a finding echoed by the wider migration literature (Titzmann, Silbereisen & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2007; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985).

Rahad (M, 40, Pakistan) and Anzan (M, 46, India) had also made friends with people who were culturally similar to them. However, interestingly, both had chosen not to disclose their immigration status to these friends:

P: I know mainly Pakistani, I don't know the status is British or refugee or have indefinite [leave to remain], I don't know. But what I know they just they speak

my language, from the same area. They speak the same language, so we can talk sometimes... but we don't know the status.

I: Is it something that you wouldn't mention, status? Would you tell people?

P: No... err... we cannot talk about this and their situations. We can talk you know, common things, when you see the footballs. So we don't know their status. But after all, I know originally most of them not from British, they're immigrants.

Anzan (M, 46, India) expressed a similar sentiment:

P: [He was] Indian, that's why it's easy to mix Indian people.

I: And he knew about your situation?

P: No, just he know I am Indian, he don't know which situation I am in, what status.

I: Did you not tell him?

P: No no, just a friend, no personal talking. And he never ask what my status in this country. If he ask, I avoid, ignore those things, and I not tell my personal details to him. Sometimes he come to my house, we eat together, and sometimes I been to his house, eat together, but never discuss personal. He is a student of Hallam University, I am asylum seeker. I never tell him asylum seeker.

I: Why did you not tell him?

P: Because I am still now afraid. If I saw any Indian – 'Hi, hello, okay' - ...one day, two day, one year, two year, then can exchange personal details.

This suggests that even when participants widen their social circles, some of them restrict the amount of information that they reveal about themselves to friends. This might again be understood as an attempt to mitigate the possibility that they will be socially rejected based on their stigmatised 'identity', as the concealment of the stigmatised identity as a means of stigma management (Goffman, 1963). While Anzan (M, 46, India) and Rahad (M, 40, Pakistan) positively identified as Indian and Pakistani respectively, and seemed to feel that this reflected their true 'social identity', they chose to hide what might be understood as their 'imposed' asylum seeker 'identity'. However, it is this very identity of 'refused asylum seeker' that enabled some participants, such as Tahlil (M, 29, Somalia) and Cabaas (M, 24, Somalia), to make their closest social connections. Perhaps, because they are with other stigmatised

individuals, they do not have to hide their stigmatised identity, whereas when participants are around others whom they feel embody their self-selected social identity, they do not want to jeopardise these relationships by revealing their alternative, stigmatised identity of ‘asylum seeker’, and thus risk rejection by those with whom they feel they have most in common.

However, there was some evidence that this withholding of information might also be due to fear. It is possible that because of the ‘refused’ status of the participants in this study they wanted to limit the amount of information they shared in order to avoid any possibility that someone they believed to be their friend might share this information with someone in authority, and this seems to be what Anzan (M, 46, India) is suggesting in the interview excerpt above. As discussed in the previous chapter, participants, like many asylum seekers (Crawley 2011), were afraid and highly aware that they could be detained or deported at any time, indeed it was their greatest fear. The withholding of information about their immigration status might also, therefore, be understood as a way of reducing the potential for someone in authority to be alerted to their status as a refused asylum seeker. In this way, the power of the state to deport participants can again be seen to be impacting on participants’ social relationships. They feel unable to be fully themselves around even those with whom they most identify because of this fear, thus arguably reducing the quality of those relationships as they cannot talk freely with these friends. Once again, this might be understood as an extension of the prison metaphor, whereby participants’ social lives are curtailed by their fears of deportation.

Not all participants chose to conceal their refused asylum seeker identity however. Ameer (Male, 36, Iran) had chosen to be open about being an asylum seeker:

- I: When you meet new people, do you tell them about your situation?
- P: Yeah, I am not lying. If anyone they been ask me I tell them clearly, ‘I am asylum seeker’. I am not scared to hide my background. Maybe I am scared of police when I see on the street, when I hear a voice of the car shouting, but I am not hide my personality, I am not lying to anyone. Anyone they been ask me I say ‘I am asylum seeker’.
- I: And how do people react when you tell them that?
- P: Sometime people they don’t respect that word, asylum seekers, sometime people they don’t care. Sometimes people ‘Oh, are you?’, they been say that.

While those participants who chose to conceal their refused asylum seeker identity often seemed to struggle with the identity of 'refused asylum seeker', Ameer seemed far less burdened by it. He accepted it as a part of who he was at the present time, more as a definition of his situation than as an integral part of who he was, and he was not ashamed of it. While he disliked its implications in terms of the material aspects of his life and a potential threat from the police or harassment from others, he did not feel that it was something that he should be ashamed of. This contrasted with Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia):

I: Would [getting status] change how you felt about yourself?

P: It would actually... the shame will go, you won't be embarrassed anymore, you know?

For Tahliil, being a refused asylum seeker is not simply a definition of his legal status, but of his social status. He feels deeply embarrassed and ashamed by it, because of how he believes he might be perceived by others. In this way, the extent to which participants were able to disentangle their social identity from the fact that they were a refused asylum seeker seemed to have implications for their wellbeing, and adds another dimension to understanding participants' mental health, as discussed in the previous chapter.

8.4 Stigmatising of Other Asylum Seekers and Marginalised 'Groups'

Despite feeling that they had been stigmatised because of their refused asylum seeker identity, some participants also appeared to hold some fairly stigmatized, arguably racist, perceptions about other asylum seekers, refugees, as well as immigrants and people from marginalised UK groups. In this way, although participants generally tended to form friendships with other asylum seekers or people from similar cultural backgrounds, there were exceptions which seemingly contradict the findings presented earlier in this chapter. One participant who had particularly strong stigmatized views about a specific sub-group of immigrants was Wahid (M, 64, Syria), who stated:

Some asylum seeker coming [and are quickly] give visa. Example... there are Sudan people coming, get visa, going Job Centre... get money Job Centre. I think [if] I get visa, no going Job Centre, I going working... Every people Sudan people not

working... you can go Job Centre, every people [are] Sudan people there... They're not looking job, going for give money.

Wahid, M, 64, Syria

Wahid seemed to hold very specific stigmatized views about a particular racial sub-group of refugees, Sudanese refugees. His perception of this group is consistent with some of the more damning press representations of asylum seekers that depict them as wanting to come to the UK to take advantage of its social welfare system (Lynn & Lea, 2003).

In addition to stigmatized perceptions of other asylum seekers or refugees, some participants held stigmatized perceptions of members of other groups that might be considered marginalized. Hamid (M, 33, Syria), for example, held the opinion that a significant number of UK born people did not like to work. He stated:

Not asylum refused people, sometime their country people not going for work... um... like 20 people going work out of hundred people... Because they don't like to hard work... Because if you go and see supermarket, Asian people and other country people doing hard job.

Hamid, M, 33, Syria

When I took a job in English garden – garden farm – they grow potatoes, vegetables. And some English also work there. But one day they work two, three hours, then they go. Another day they not come. But foreigners, consistently they do hard work. English people not interested to do that work, but asylum seeker or foreign worker they do.

Anzan, M, 46, India

These findings are similar to Blanchard and Joy's (2017) finding that some destitute refused asylum seekers did not like to befriend other homeless people as they may be 'bad'. The view that Hamid and Anzan espouse, that immigrants are much more hardworking than native British people, is a view that appears frequently in segments of the tabloid press such as the Daily Mail (e.g., Hastings, 2013) and which thus might be considered 'blame gossip'. This is not the full story though, as although their sentiments do reflect such media depictions, they are also based on their own experiences of working and of seeing others working. This may

perhaps reflect the high rates of ethnic minority employment in the food services and retail sectors of the economy (DWP, 2016) and the bias towards low-waged work among ethnic minorities including Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and migrant workers (Hudson et al., 2013).

Ideas relating to poor work ethic were not limited to UK citizens however, but extended to people who, like asylum seekers, could be considered to belong to a marginalized section of UK society, EU migrants. In a similar way to how Wahid (M, 64, Syria) characterised Sudanese refugees, Ameer (M, 36, Iran) appeared to hold some stereotyped views about EU citizens living in the UK:

In my experience, I been living in this country about six years, I think people they came from some country... they are from the European Union, they are allowed to do everything, but they don't came to be like good character, they don't come to be like working, paying tax or... They have a right to come inside [the UK] because the law is like that, but they are not want to help that society and the government. Just maybe they go onto benefit.

Ameer, M, 36, Iran

One way of understanding the experiences outlined above is to consider them as instances of inter-minority racism. Experiences of prejudice from other marginalised groups is a finding that has been repeated in other studies that examined levels of 'racism' in UK Cities (Craig & Wilkinson, 2005; Lemos, 2005). Similarly, inter-minority racism has been noted between African Americans and South Asians, and African Americans and Mexicans in America (Kim, 2006). These relationships are suggested to be a facet of the increasing diversity of contemporary society, particularly in urban environments, combined with competition for scarce resources between arguably low status groups (Kim, 2006).

Competition for scarce resources is a key element of Elias' (2000) concept of the civilizing process, which suggests that competition between groups of similar status for social and economic resources is one of the key drivers of the civilizing process. He terms this form of competition the 'monopoly mechanism', whereby similar groups compete for monopoly of finite resources. To date, the monopoly mechanism has primarily been employed in analyses of intergroup relations at the inter-state level and in processes of state formation (Elias, 2000;

Mennell, 2007). However, Maguire (2005) argues that such a model can usefully be applied to other instances of social stratification including race, gender and class. Competition, as a facet of a civilizing process, is an analytical approach drawn on by Dunning (2004) to understand the social relationships between black and white Americans in the decades following the abolition of slavery in America. He notes that racism towards black Americans occurred most frequently among:

Poor whites in racially mixed rural communities and the poorest sections of the urban-industrial working class in 'multiethnic' areas.

Dunning, 2004, in Loyal & Quilley, 2004, p77

That is, racism toward black Americans was at its most prevalent among those white Americans who were at the bottom of the 'white American' social hierarchy and who experienced the greatest socio-economic difficulties. Whilst the American context is clearly different, and in many ways more extreme, than the UK context, this phenomenon is echoed by Lawrence's (2011) finding that socio-economic disadvantage, leading to 'competition for scarce resources', was the single most important factor determining interracial relations in the UK today. As such, participants' negative perceptions of members of marginalised groups, might usefully be understood as a form of competition between similarly marginalised groups for arguably scarce social and economic resources, a finding echoed in both the poverty and immigration literature (See Iceland, 2006).

However, while such an analytical approach aids understanding of the sometimes difficult relationships between some participants and members of different racial groups to their own, prejudiced views about other asylum seekers were not limited to those of different racial origin to the participant. Unlike Wahid, Zaheer (M, 26, Pakistan) and Rashida (F, 35, Pakistan) expressed stereotyped views of other asylum seekers who originated from the same part of the world as they did. They felt that they had been unsuccessful in their application for asylum because of other Asian asylum seekers' fraudulent behaviour which had influenced the way that asylum seekers in general were perceived by the Home Office:

Zaheer It's mostly Asian people create fraud in here, that's why they thinking we create fraud as well.

Rashida [L]ike so many people making fraud here. So because of this like a Home Office are thinking because of money, and because of good life here, that they want to live here. But this is not our choice.

Zaheer and Rashida appear to be stereotyping Asian asylum seekers in much the same way that the tabloid press has been suggested to stereotype asylum seekers in general (Lynn & Lea, 2003; Philo et al., 2013; Frelick, 2016), as fraudulent, as economic migrants masquerading as asylum seekers. However, they see themselves as having no 'choice', as the legitimate asylum seekers in a sea of fraudulent applications.

It could be argued that the sentiments expressed by Zaheer and Rashida are also attributable to competition for scarce resources. However, their comments may instead suggest that there is a more fundamental process at work here. An alternative theoretical lens through which to consider Zaheer's and Rashida's sentiments, and indeed perhaps all of the above examples, might therefore be Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, and more specifically the concept of blame gossip. Blame gossip is suggested to form the opinions not only of members of the established group, but also of outsider groups. This, suggest Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]), leads to a sense of mutual suspicion between members of the outsider group who believe that although they themselves do not possess the negative characteristics ascribed to the outsider group by the more established group, other members of the group do. That this may be the case is supported by Tahliil (M, 29, Somalia), who suggested that there is a sense of mutual suspicion, fed in part by media narratives and in part by the asylum system, between asylum seekers:

The asylum system um... feeds you a lack of trust... they don't trust the witness. And you know, everything you say, if it's the truth they say it's a lie. So sometimes you

enrain that in your mind, you think everyone is like that...'cos you have all met here in the UK you think everyone is like... mistrustful.

Tahliil, M, 24, Somalia

This seems to lend support to the idea that blame gossip processes might be taking place and serving to create an atmosphere of mutual mistrust among asylum seekers. A sense of mistrust among refugees and asylum seekers is a finding noted in the wider migration literature (Hynes, 2003; Ni Raghallaigh, 2014; Daniel & Knudsen, 1995), with Ni Raghallaigh (2014), in her study of trust among unaccompanied asylum seeking minors in Ireland, asserting that mistrust arose due to participants not knowing other asylum seekers well and being mistrusted by others. This echoes both Tahliil's sentiments above and Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) argument that suspicion between outsider group members is attributable in part to the essential heterogeneity of the newcomer 'group', which means that they are largely unknown to one another, and to the fact that praise and blame gossip penetrate both established and outsider groups. What is more, this lack of trust has also been cited by Wacquant (2008) as a key feature of the social relationships of marginalised populations within the modern post-industrial city, and one that is closely bound up with stigma. In this way, as Powell and Lever (2017) suggest, Wacquant and Elias are useful counterparts in understanding both the modern city and the more fundamental social processes that inform how social relationships are played out within this context.

A further idea worth considering here, however, is that of 'stigma management' (Goffman, 1963). By seeking to discredit other marginalised groups, or indeed their own group as in the case of Zaheer (M, 26, Pakistan) and Rashida (F, 35, Pakistan), in line with dominant stigmatising/blame gossip narratives, participants may be deliberately attempting to distance themselves from these narratives to preserve a positive sense of self. Again, a similar finding is noted in Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) work, where they note that individuals belonging to an outsider group tend to characterise themselves in opposition to the demonising narratives used to describe the other members of the group to which they belong, seeing themselves as the exception to the ascribed negative traits of the group. This behaviour is suggested to perpetuate segregation within the outsider group and consequently maintain the power imbalance between established and outsider groups. Whether this behaviour is a deliberate form of stigma management or attributable to mistrust arising from blame gossip narratives is not entirely clear, and may, of course, be a combination of both.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the material deprivations and social exclusions experienced by people who have been refused asylum, particularly those that impacted on participants' interactions with others, led to them gradually becoming aware that they belonged to a stigmatised 'group'.

Initially when they had arrived in the UK participants had not been aware that seeking asylum or being an 'asylum seeker' was a stigmatised activity or identity. However, over time, they became aware of the fact that some people appeared to judge them negatively because of their asylum seeker status. One of the main ways that participants became aware of this was through their interactions with others, for example, both Tahliil and Alia had humiliating experiences in the supermarket upon revelation of their refused asylum seeker status. For Tahliil, his ARC card, which identified him as a refused asylum seeker, was a significant cause of embarrassment to him as he believed it gave rise to stigmatised assumptions about him. As such, this item was suggested to be a 'stigma symbol' in Goffman's (1963) terms, denoting his difference and marking him out as 'other'. Alia and Cabaas felt that this othering took the form of an assumption of criminality, and this certainly seems to concur with the way they were treated and with the broader literature which suggests that narratives which repeatedly conflate asylum seeking with criminality do influence public opinion (e.g., Maughn, 2010). Experiences such as these formed the basis of participants' moral careers (Goffman, 1963), whereby they came to learn that the way that they perceive themselves is very different from the way they are perceived by members of the new community in which they find themselves. It was suggested that these experiences might be understood as part of a carceral archipelago (Foucault, 1975) whereby technologies such as the Azure Card enable the state to infiltrate and monitor even the most supposedly unremarkable aspects of participants' lives, such as a trip to the supermarket.

Whilst Azure cards often led to participants being identified as people who had been refused asylum, this identity was not always immediately obvious to others. They were, in Goffman's (1963) terms, *discreditable* rather than *discredited*. Another aspect of participants' moral careers then, was when they revealed their asylum seeker identity to others and reportedly noted an attitude change. This impacted on participants' relationships in terms of friendships and also romantic relationships. Drawing on Goffman (1956), it is argued that perceptions of rank may

play a role in the social distancing that participants felt had occurred upon revelation of their asylum seeker status, but that this perception of rank needs to be rooted in the current socio-historical context (Kuzmics, 1991; Gleeson, 1999), and also in group dynamics, as described by Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]) whereby individuals belonging to a more powerful group do not want to jeopardise their standing within that group by associating with a member of a derided outsider group.

In addition to interpersonal encounters, participants learned of their stigmatised ‘identity’ via the media, where they saw depictions of asylum seeking that were completely at odds with their own experiences of and motivations for seeking asylum. What is more, they believed that it was these depictions that influenced how they were perceived by others, a contention borne out by literature suggesting that media depictions do indeed influence people’s perceptions of asylum seekers and refugees (e.g., Philo et al., 2013). The chapter suggests that media narratives that demonise asylum seekers might usefully be understood as a form of blame gossip (Elias & Scotson, 1994 [1965]) whereby a more cohesive, and thus more powerful, social group uses its dominance of social institutions to propagate demonising narratives which cannot effectively be countered by the less powerful, less well cohered, outsider group. These discourses are argued to lead to a sense of shame amongst members of stigmatised groups (Lister, 2004).

Because of these feelings of shame, and the sense that they might be rejected by others, a number of participants had severely limited their social circles to others experiencing similar social situations to themselves. However, these friendships were not unproblematic as there was a tendency to dwell on seemingly intractable problems. Perhaps in part because of this difficulty, other participants had formed friendships more rooted in their personal sense of identity as distinct from their externally imposed ‘asylum seeker’ grouping. For example, Hassan (M, 22, Iraq) had sought out friends that shared his Iraqi heritage. However, participants did not always reveal their asylum seeker status to these friends, perhaps fearing rejection or, perhaps, worrying that by disclosing this ‘identity’ they would risk being reported to authorities and potentially being detained or deported. It was suggested that by potentially limiting the depth and openness of their friendships this might be understood as yet another way that the state was insinuating itself into the lives of participants.

Despite feeling stigmatised themselves, many participants espoused stigmatised perceptions of others belonging to groups that might be considered marginalised, including, interestingly, their 'own' group in one instance. These stigmatised perceptions tended to echo dominant negative media or political narratives about the groups. Whilst competition for scarce resources was suggested as a possible way of conceptualising these findings, it was argued that by turning to Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) concept of blame gossip, which is suggested to penetrate both established and outsider groups, the stigmatised perceptions that some participants held about people from other marginalised groups, but also, crucially, from their own group, might be better understood. It was argued that it is this blame gossip that leads to a sense of mutual suspicion between outsider group members which ultimately serves to reinforce the poor cohesion of the group.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The poverty of our century is unlike that of any other. It is not, as poverty was before, the result of natural scarcity, but of a set of priorities imposed upon the rest of the world by the rich. Consequently, the modern poor are not pitied, but written off as trash.

Berger, 1991, p207

The aim of this thesis is to understand the day-to-day lives of people who have been refused asylum, and to explain these experiences through engagement with social theory. The Berger quotation above perfectly articulates the overall conclusion of the research. Namely, that the experiences of people refused asylum are characterised by extreme material and social marginalisation, and that these experiences are wrought not by any absolute lack of resources, but by policy imposed by those who hold the balance of power.

Whilst there are examples throughout the UK's history of the marginalisation and exclusion of immigrants, the most recent iteration of this emerged when immigration levels started to rise significantly in the mid-1990s, and the atmosphere into which migrants arrived, particularly those seeking asylum, became increasingly hostile. For people refused asylum this meant that:

For those not prioritised for removal, they should be denied the benefits and privileges of life in the UK and experience an increasingly uncomfortable environment so that they elect to leave.

Home Office, 2007a, p17

Many people refused asylum do not 'elect to leave' because they believe their life would be at risk were they to return to their country of origin, and that the decision on their application for asylum is incorrect, a belief not without merit given the extensive criticism of the asylum application decision making process and high rates of success on appeal (e.g. Freedom From Torture, 2019). NGOs, including Oxfam and Amnesty International, argue that this policy deliberately seeks to impoverish refused asylum seekers in order to incentivise them to leave

the country. They suggest that not only does the policy fail in its aims, but creates levels of destitution that flout both UK and international human rights legislation (McKenna, 2019; Chakrabati, 2005; Amnesty International, 2006; Refugee Action, 2006; Crawley et al., 2011). Studies have shown, for example, that inadequate access to basic necessities such as food and shelter have hugely detrimental effects on health and wellbeing, and lead people refused asylum to rely on friends, family and charity to survive (e.g. McKenna, 2019).

To date, what is known about these experiences has tended to come from a limited number of relatively small-scale qualitative studies conducted by voluntary sector organisations such as the British Red Cross (Bloom, 2015). There has been some interest from academia in the situations faced by those refused asylum, but this literature is limited and theoretical engagement is lacking (Healey, 2006). This thesis addresses this gap by exposing the highly marginalised day-to-day lived experiences of people refused asylum and using social theory to understand how this marginalisation is engendered, perpetuated and experienced.

In order to do this, an analytical framework of concepts from social theory was developed. Given the highly marginalised position of people refused asylum, concepts addressing marginalisation were selected. At the inter-group level, Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations was selected. This examines how group characteristics relate to the distribution of power between interdependent groups, and how this can lead to the marginalisation of 'outsider' groups. Whilst useful at the intergroup level, this concept is not grounded in the current socio-political or economic context of the research, and for this reason other concepts and theories, such as Wacquant's (2008) concept of advanced marginality, grounded in the post-industrial city, are also employed. The treatment of people refused asylum can then begin to be understood both as a facet of overarching intergroup processes, and also as specific to the current socio-political climate. Critically, this approach enables the research to avoid what Elias (1987) terms a 'retreat into the present', whereby research findings are seen as specific to the present moment, rather than as a facet of more enduring social processes that underpin human intergroup relations.

The analytical framework also draws on concepts including citizenship, most notably Agamben's (1998; 2000) concepts of the homo sacer and bare life, and Goffman's (1963) work

on stigma. This enables the analysis to gain purchase on often seemingly disparate aspects of participants' lives, and to build an holistic understanding of their experiences.

At the end of Chapter Three, two research questions are delineated that enable the research to meet the overall aim of the thesis. These are:

- 1 What are refused asylum seekers' experiences of deprivation, destitution and marginalisation, and how might they be explained?
- 2 What are the social and psychological impacts of material exclusion and being refused asylum, and how might they be explained?

The chapter now moves on to discuss key findings and original contributions to knowledge that emerge from the research.

9.2 Key Findings and Original Contributions to Knowledge

The primary ways in which this thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge are:

1. Fills an empirical gap in the literature, most of which is about asylum seekers rather than refused asylum seekers, who have been largely ignored. The research thus provides rich qualitative understanding of the lives of this largely hidden population which are materially distinct from the lives of asylum seekers.
2. Theorises this body of research and brings important scholarship to this under-theorised area. Crucially, by developing an analytical framework of theoretical concepts, the research is able to understand and conceptualise the lives of people refused asylum in a multifaced, holistic way.
3. Develops an analytical framework that draws on theories specifically relating to marginalisation that can be used together to gain deeper, broader, more multifaceted and holistic understanding of how the marginalisation of particular groups is engendered, perpetuated and experienced.

The following sections provide more in-depth discussion of these key contributions as they relate to the research questions.

What are Refused Asylum Seekers' Experiences of Deprivation, Destitution and Marginalisation, and How Might They be Explained?

This thesis has demonstrated, in line with previous research, that participant experiences of deprivation are extreme. The extent of this deprivation and marginalisation contrasts markedly with participants' prior expectations that the UK would be a place where their human rights would be respected and they could build a life for themselves. Participants stated that they had formed a positive impression of the UK prior to their arrival here, and as such these high expectations can be understood in terms of the way that the UK wields soft power around the globe. Soft power, in turn, can be conceptualised as a form of 'praise gossip', spread by a more powerful group (the UK) among less powerful groups (conflict affected regions) in line with Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations. By utilising social theory in this novel way, the role of interdependent group dynamics, and ensuing power relations, in the expectations of participants becomes evident. This is a novel insight exposing the link between much broader social processes and the day-to-day lives of refused asylum seekers, allowing these experiences to be situated within the broader global context.

Once in the UK, participants learned that the situation was more nuanced than this, and that it was their citizenship status within the UK that determined their rights, rather than the country in which they were residing. Agamben's (1998; 2000) work on citizenship provides a useful theoretical concept, therefore, for engaging with the data, enabling novel theoretical insights into the treatment of people refused asylum within the UK to be generated.

In line with previous research, this thesis has shown that participants experience extreme financial hardship and reliance on friends, family and charity to meet their most basic needs for food, shelter and clothing. Whilst Loopstra and Doireann (2017) suggest that asylum seekers are over represented at foodbanks, the present study demonstrates that people refused asylum are also heavily reliant on this resource, shedding new light on the needs of this more hidden population. This finding can again be understood as a result of participants' citizenship status, and in line with Agamben's (1998; 2000) concept of the 'homo sacer' who experiences 'bare life'. Participants' experiences of being both a part of the city whilst simultaneously being

excluded from many aspects of the life of the city, can be understood as instances of Agamben's concept of 'inclusive exclusion', whereby homo sacer is indeed included in the life of the city, but only by their exclusion from the aspects of life that make it worth living. By theorising participant experiences in this way, the role of the state in the extreme deprivation and social exclusion of people refused asylum is made clear.

However, as discussed in Chapter Four (see Gündoğdu, 2012; Shinkel & van den Berg, 2011), Agamben's (1998; 2000) concept is too 'pure' to fully comprehend participants' experiences of life in the modern city, as it does not engage with the specific conditions in which participants find themselves. Because of this, Wacquant's (2008) concept of urban marginality in advanced societies, which links issues specific to the modern neoliberal city, such as the retrenchment of state support for the most vulnerable, to the increasing deprivation of some segments of the city, is a useful compliment to Agamben's concept of citizenship. Indeed, as Lambie-Mumford (2015) and Zetter and Peal (2000) argue, it is the gradual retrenchment of state support for vulnerable groups, including asylum seekers, that has led to the proliferation of charities providing basic necessities to these groups.

By utilising these theories in tandem, it becomes evident that Wacquant's (2008) concept of urban marginality, resulting from state retrenchment, creates the conditions in which a modern-day homo has come to exist. This research expands on Wacquant's work by showing that due to their lack of citizenship, people refused asylum experience the greatest impact of the retreat of the supportive welfare state. Whilst state support has retreated for all members of UK society, for those who do not have legal citizenship, it has all but disappeared. As such, participants can be conceptualised as members of the precariat:

[A] potential new class of people composed of the former 'working class' and of denizens, including migrants and asylum seekers who, while resident in a particular country, do not enjoy the full rights of citizens.

Standing, 2014, p32

Whilst these concepts provide novel ways of understanding why participants are subject to such extreme levels of deprivation, their experience of these circumstance, what it *feels like* to live in this way, is not adequately captured by the above concepts. As fieldwork and data

analysis progressed, participants increasingly expressed that their circumstances felt like a form of imprisonment. This novel conceptual approach to understanding the lived experiences of participants is developed further in the following section.

What are the social and psychological impacts of material exclusion and being refused asylum, and how might they be explained?

Another key finding from the research is that the ramifications of material impoverishment are far reaching in terms of participants' social and psychological lives. Being unable to work leads to problems within, and the breakdown of, romantic relationships and friendships, and to participants being unable to parent their children as they wish to due to financial deprivation. Whilst the British Red Cross has argued that an inability to work, and therefore earn a living, means that asylum seekers cannot '*afford the day-to-day activities which allow most of us to keep up friendships and feel socially involved*' (British Red Cross, 2017), the situation for people refused asylum is far worse, given the length of time they may remain in that situation, and the greater level of deprivation among this group. What is evident here is that the material restrictions faced by participants affect their lives in ways other than material deprivation. These material exclusions are a consequence of their citizenship status. However, the social ramifications of this material exclusion also need to be understood as a facet of their citizenship status. The inability to work legally and earn a living ultimately leads to an inability to do things such as buy a coffee for a friend, and thus maintain friendships, or provide materially for their children. This novel application of theory allows these experiences to be understood as a facet of participants' legal citizenship status.

However, whilst the concept of citizenship is useful in understanding the differing rights of UK citizens and people refused asylum, this left unanswered the question of why some groups come to be seen as entitled to particular rights, whilst others are not. This question needs to be addressed in order to understand the experiences of participants more fully. Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) concept of established-outsider relations is helpful in addressing this point. What emerges is an understanding rooted in the power disparity that exists between the 'established' UK population and the 'newcomer' refused asylum seekers who are constructed as 'outsiders'. The established population have greater internal group cohesion due to their greater longevity of residence in the UK than the more recently arrived refused asylum seekers. This enables the established group to band together and, through restricting access to institutions such as

government, make laws that exclude the newcomers from rights including the right to work. This monopoly over law and public policy enables the established group to exclude people refused asylum both materially and socially, effectively casting them in the role of *homo sacer*. This application reveals the potential for established-outsider theory to serve as a useful analytical compliment to the concept of the *homo sacer*, providing a theoretical framework for understanding how *homo sacer* might come to be, by focussing on intergroup processes.

The effect, however, of the ability of the state to exclude participants materially and socially from many aspects of life in the UK, is experienced by participants as a lack of control over their lives or a feeling that the state is trying to exert control over their lives. This finding is novel in itself, however, the benefit of using a framework of concepts rooted in social theory to explore participant experiences is particularly evident here, as it enables a multifaceted exploration of what it is to exist as a person who has been refused asylum in the UK, encompassing both causative analysis as well as experiential understanding, and enabling a more holistic understanding to be achieved than with the application of a singular theoretical lens.

The two main ways that participants feel that they are being controlled are through their inability to work and control over where they live via dispersal policy. These factors in turn impact on their social and psychological lives, disrupting access to education, healthcare, friends and family. One of the main findings is that participants feel that they have no choice in whether they move to dispersal accommodation or not and, crucially, fear the consequences of not moving, such as detention and deportation. Participants' right to choose where they live can again be understood as a facet of their citizenship status.

Previous research suggests that asylum seekers are frequently housed in areas already experiencing significant socio-economic deprivation, with poor access to amenities, largely due to low cost housing availability sought by private companies contracted by government to house asylum seekers (Lyons & Duncan, 2017; Darling, 2016; Garvey, 2001; McKenna, 2019). This finding is echoed in the current study. The housing of people refused asylum in deprived areas with poor access to amenities can be understood as another facet of Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, whereby an established group is able to relegate, both spatially and socially, a more recently arrived group due to their relatively high

power position arising from greater longevity of residence and ensuing greater internal group cohesion. By elucidating the social processes that underlie this exclusion, the application of established-outsider theory enables this exclusion to be understood as embedded in the structure of society and social processes; it is woven into the fabric of the power dynamic between refused asylum seekers and the established UK population.

However, the way in which participants describe being relocated by government against their will means that it is also useful to turn to Foucault's (1975) concepts of biopolitics and governmentality to further understand these experiences. Foucault's concepts focus explicitly of the actions of the state, which Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory does not. Indeed, previous research has conceptualised the dispersal of asylum seekers using Foucault's concepts (Darling, 2011; Conlon, 2010). The control about which participants speak pervades almost every aspect of their lives, including not only where they can live, but also their right to work, where they can shop, and their ability to engage in education. This leads participants to feel that they are imprisoned by the circumstances of their lives, and thus Foucault's (1975) concept of the carceral archipelago, a form of governmentality whereby those not in a physical prison building are, nonetheless, monitored and controlled by the state, and thus 'imprisoned' in this sense, is utilised to further explore participant experiences. Interestingly, Wacquant (2004) links the notion of the carceral archipelago to the lives of the precariat, a group which it is argued in this thesis is a modern-day incarnation of Agamben's (1998) *homo sacer*. Wacquant suggests that the function of the carceral archipelago is to '*regulate[s] and incapacitate[s] the precariat*' (Wacquant, 2004, p145). This regulation has social and psychological consequences for participants including social isolation and the breakdown of relationships.

One of the central features of participants' lives is the continual fear that they might be detained and deported. This fear, in addition to the restrictions in their day-to-day lives, made participants feel imprisoned. This fear was not limited to immigration officials, but extended to many groups that can be understood as comprising authority figures, such as the police. Participants feel that there is a two-tier system, whereby citizens can access and expect protection from the police, but people refused asylum cannot. This is reminiscent of the way that participants feel unable to complain, or at least to complain effectively, about poor housing conditions for fear of punitive treatment from housing providers, and as such is again considered in terms of Agamben's (1998) concept of the *homo sacer*. However, participants'

specific fear of immigration authorities, with several fearing a knock at the door, or becoming highly anxious when they hear a van going past their house in case it is the immigration authorities coming to detain them, means that the experiences benefit from being considered in terms of surveillance and control. Using Bentham's concept of the panopticon, Foucault (1975) argues that surveillance by an unseen observer, such as the constant threat of a knock at the door, is one of the most potent ways in which those in power are able to discipline and control people within the carceral archipelago. Conceptualising participants' fears in this way enables a novel appreciation of just how far the state has managed to reach into their lives. Even when they have no contact with immigration authorities, there is the ever-present threat that they may be called upon, detained and deported, and it is this invisible threat that serves most to make participants feel imprisoned. The fear engendered by this constant threat leads to high levels of anxiety, and thus takes a huge toll on participants' psychological wellbeing.

However, this is not the only way in which participants' mental wellbeing is affected. In addition to the fear of deportation, participants' lack of control over their future, their current destitute circumstances, experiences in the past, and concern about family and friends in other parts of the world, all impact on mental wellbeing, leading to experiences of anxiety, depression, anger, and sometimes thoughts of suicide. Whilst poor mental health among people refused asylum is reported in other studies (e.g., McKenna, 2019; Blanchard & Joy, 2017), the contribution to knowledge here stems from understanding participants' poor mental health as linked to low levels of control over their lives due to their low power status. The reason for this low level of control can be understood again as a facet of the power differential between the established UK population and the outsider refused asylum seekers, in line with Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations. Participants' low power status and exclusion mean they are effectively barred from making important decisions about their own lives.

What are the social and psychological impacts of material exclusion and being refused asylum, and how might these be explained? - Stigma

Chapter Eight addresses the finding that stigma plays a central role in the way that participants experience their day-to-day lives. Participants learned through their interactions with others, as well as from media and political narratives, that they are perceived by some members of the UK population as 'less than' and belong to a stigmatised group. Stigma symbols (Goffman,

1963), such as Azure cards which are used to buy food, are crucial in alerting participants to their difference and low social status. In addition, the use of such cards seems to lead others to make assumptions about participants' 'moral status' (Goffman, 1963), and in particular to assumptions about criminality that are in line with the more pernicious media and political narratives. These experiences lead participants to experience feelings of shame, reflecting previous research on this topic (McKenna, 2019; Reynolds, 2010). Whilst previous research has demonstrated the way in which people refused asylum are stigmatised (e.g., Maughn, 2010; Somerville, 2007), the novel application of Goffman's (1963) work on stigma to understanding these experiences enables them to be understood in greater depth.

The central contribution to knowledge here, however, is not simply that participants learn that they are stigmatised along the lines that Goffman's (1963) work suggests, but that this stigma can be understood as a part of a social process that serves to other and exclude certain groups within society. The tendency of members of an established group to homogenise and demonise members of an outsider group via systems of blame gossip (Elias & Scotson, 1994 [1965]) is suggested to underpin why people refused asylum experience stigma. Indeed, writing about discourses related to poverty and shame, Lister (2004) states that negative discourses are initiated by people in positions of power about people experiencing poverty, leading the experience of poverty to be intrinsically shameful. As such, experiences of stigma can be understood not only at the interpersonal level, but as part of broader social processes. Again, this serves to demonstrate the utility of using a range of theoretical concepts to engage with the data, as it enables participant experiences to be understood from a variety of perspectives and at different levels, in this case the micro-level analysis that emerges from the application of Goffman's work on stigma compliments the intergroup level understanding of the origin of stigma facilitated by the application of established-outsider theory.

These experiences can also be conceptualised as yet another way in which participants exist within a carceral archipelago. For example, whilst an Azure card can be interpreted as a stigma symbol in Goffman's (1963) terms, it can also be seen as a way that technologies of control enable the state to reach further into participants' lives. Stigma symbols such as these can thus be seen as central to the way that the state demarcates individuals who are somehow different from the rest of the population. The Azure card is not a benign means with which to purchase food, akin, say, to a bank debit card, but a means by which the state marks out as different

certain members of the population. The ramifications of this are that participants feel stigmatised and demonised. This has an effect on their social and psychological wellbeing and demonstrates the way that stigma and material exclusion work in tandem to form the essence of what it is to be a person refused asylum.

A further finding related to the experience of exclusion is that because of experiences of social rejection, or fear of social rejection, some participants choose to limit their social circles to similar others. These relationships offer acceptance and support, but can also be difficult at times, due to a tendency to discuss the seemingly unsolvable problems of their situation. Both Goffman (1963) and Wacquant (2008) note this phenomenon among members of stigmatised groups, although it has not previously been demonstrated among people refused asylum.

This kind of social retreat is not ubiquitous however, with many participants forming friendships beyond the refused asylum seeker 'group'. Key to understanding this apparently contradictory finding is to consider that the asylum seeker, or refused asylum seeker, grouping is imposed upon participants by government, and denotes their legal status, rather than being a self-selected identity. Friendships beyond the refused asylum seeker group tend to be formed on the basis of shared linguistic or cultural background, a finding echoed in the wider migration literature (Titzmann et al., 2007; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985). Of note, however, is that participants do not always choose to reveal their refused asylum seeker status to these friends. Whilst this is suggested to be, potentially, a means of mitigating the chance of social rejection, other reasons, such as the fear that their identity might be exposed and lead to detention or deportation, are also noted, suggesting complex reasons why participants might choose to conceal this part of their identity.

One of the most interesting findings to emerge from the research is that participants frequently stigmatise members of other 'outsider' groups. In addition, and perhaps more surprising, is that some participants stigmatise other asylum seekers, tending to utilise dominant stigmatising narratives such as the idea that asylum seekers come to the UK principally to access state benefits, or that they are fraudulent asylum applicants. The concept of inter-minority racism (Craig & Wilkinson, 2005; Lemos, 2005) was initially utilised to engage with this finding. Inter-minority racism has been suggested to be attributable, in part, to competition for scarce resources between similarly low status groups (Kim, 2006; Dunning, 2004). This approach to

understanding the stigmatising of members of participants' own group is problematic however, especially when participants are stigmatising asylum seekers who originate from the same part of the world as themselves. As such, another conceptual lens is needed to fully engage with these findings. It is argued that this phenomenon can be better conceptualised in terms of more fundamental social processes as articulated by Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory of established-outsider relations, and particularly the concept of blame gossip. Blame gossip is created by a more powerful established group but, due to their greater internal group cohesion and access to positions of power, infiltrates both established and outsider groups. This leads to a sense of suspicion among outsider group members who, due to their relative newness and arrival from multiple locations, are largely unknown to one another. While members of the outsider group believe that they themselves do not possess the negative characteristics ascribed to them, they believe that other members of the group do, and it is this that is suggested to lead members of an outsider group to stigmatise one another. The data suggest that such a process is occurring here.

In order to situate these social processes in the current context, the analysis also engages with Wacquant's work on urban marginality. Like Elias and Scotson, Wacquant (2008) notes a lack of trust between members of marginalised populations in the post-industrial city and proposes that this is closely bound up with stigma. As such, Wacquant's findings can be seen as the empirical manifestation, in the modern city, of Elias and Scotson's theory (based on their own empirical observations in the small town of 'Winston Parva'). In this way, as Powell and Lever (2017) suggest, Wacquant and Elias usefully complement one another.

This is, necessarily, an oversimplification of the undoubtedly nuanced reasons for the stigmatising of those in a similar position to themselves noted among participants, and certainly not all participants hold these views. Nevertheless, this finding, and its novel interpretation as a facet of intergroup dynamics, is important. By exploring how group dynamics and systems of blame gossip can act to distance members of an outsider group from one another, we can begin to grasp how established-outsider relations are perpetuated in the current context. Being suspicious of one another means that members of outsider groups can have difficulty coming together to form the kind of internal group cohesion necessary to fight back against the discriminatory structural factors imposed by a more powerful group that determine their rights. This, in turn, perpetuates the state of inequality between the two groups.

9.3 Reflections on Methodology and Method

Due to the position of people refused asylum as members of a highly marginalised group (McKenna, 2019; Bloom, 2015) whose voices seldom feature in narratives about asylum, the methods used in this research sought to capture alternative narratives as voiced by people refused asylum themselves. Beginning from an ontological stance which acknowledges the situated nature of ‘truth’ and that multiple truths exist within the social world, a critical realist stance was adopted. Given the emancipatory stance of critical theory and critical realist approaches to social research (Harvey, 1990), the methods employed in fieldwork sought to gather alternative, seldom heard, accounts of life for people refused asylum in the UK, and qualitative, participatory methods were selected.

These methods came with both benefits and limitations. By conducting in-depth interviews with participants, spanning not only their current circumstances but their lives prior to seeking asylum and their journeys to the UK, I was able to situate participant experiences within the contexts of their lives. The majority of this background data has not been used in the final research output, but nonetheless helped to ground the findings in a broader understanding of participants’ experiences, and is a method I would use again for this reason.

Using auto-photography and photo-elicitation also enabled novel visual data to be gathered about participants’ current situations. Participant generated images captured aspects of their everyday lives that I might not have thought to ask about or which were inaccessible to me, as suggested by Brusle (2010). The fact that participants were creating the images themselves, and these were directing the course of discussion during subsequent photo-elicitation interviews, was central to redressing, if only a little, the unequal power dynamic between researcher and participant (Harper, 2012). More than this though, participants’ photographs provided visual depictions of their lives that add greatly to the research findings and provide a useful compliment to the interview material. Tahliil’s (M, 29, Somalia) photographs in particular captured the contrast between the life he would like to be living and his current life, providing an impactful depiction of what Agamben (1998; 2000) describes as the difference between the ‘bare life’ of the homo sacer, and the ‘qualified life’ of the citizen. These depictions of life as a (refused) asylum seeker differ markedly from dominant media images and, as such, enable the research to challenge dominant representations of asylum seekers, as suggested by Lombard (2012). A selection of these photographs were displayed as part of an exhibition, thus

exposing the realities of life for people refused asylum to an audience beyond the academic arena. Photo-elicitation also facilitated discussions that might otherwise not have occurred using a traditional interview format.

However, not all participants wanted to engage in the auto-photography exercise, contradicting, to an extent, the literature that suggests that auto-photography represents a useful way of engaging hard to reach participants (Lombard, 2012; Emmel et al., 2007). Although it certainly proved useful in engaging some participants, other were discouraged by this aspect of the research method, either because they were too busy to dedicate enough time to it, or because they worried about doing it 'wrong'. As such, I would be more cautious about its use in the future.

The main limitations of the methodology, as discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5, were in some instances related to the limitations of PhD research. A greater number of participants would have enabled a broader spectrum of experiences to be captured. In particular, more accounts from women and from people refused asylum who are not engaging with services would have benefitted the study. Given the utility of the auto-photography and photo-elicitation aspects of the research method, greater engagement with visual methodologies would, without doubt, have enable more nuanced and novel understandings of life for people refused asylum to be gathered in a novel medium. To do such a project justice, more time would have to be spent with each participant, which would require far greater time commitments from both researcher and participant. However, it would provide more scope for participants to focus on aspects of their experience that were of interest to them, rather than me as the researcher determining the general areas on which the research focused.

Another limitation of the research is that because I do not speak any languages other than English, and because participants did not wish to use interpreters, the detail that could be obtained during some interviews is not as nuanced as hoped. I had anticipated that participants would want to use an interpreter, and had not considered that this might be problematic for them. Nonetheless, the data gathered from participants whose spoken English was not fluent still added greatly to the research findings, and to have not included these participants would have been to miss vital insights into their lived experience of being a refused asylum seeker in the UK today.

9.4 Going forward

This thesis has revealed the value of engaging with social theory in order to better understand the hidden and neglected experiences of people refused asylum. It has ventured beyond the tendency towards description within the existing evidence base to expose and explore the socio-political mechanisms through which these experiences are engendered, perpetuated and experienced. The key lesson to emerge is that by developing an analytical framework and applying a range of concepts from social theory to engage with the data, new insights and understandings can be generated.

Future research would benefit from engaging further with social theory in this multifaceted way to develop a truly holistic understanding of the extreme marginalisation of people refused asylum. In addition, research would benefit particularly from seeking to engage with harder to reach groups of people refused asylum, including women, who attend refugee services less than men, and individuals who do not engage with services. It would also be of interest to conduct more comparative analysis of the experiences of people refused asylum alongside asylum seekers and other migrant groups to establish differences and similarities, and the possible implications of these for policy.

Another avenue that merits consideration for future research is to look to theories from psychological literature to understand the data. For example, the present study has revealed that participants felt they had very little control over their current lives or indeed over their futures. As discussed in Chapter Seven, in some cases this led to participants feeling that they had been imprisoned by circumstance, which impacted on their mental wellbeing. The importance of a feeling of control and autonomy over one's circumstances to health and wellbeing has been noted within the psychological literature (Maslow, 1970; Ryff, 1995; Rotter, 1966). Within the migration literature specifically, an individual's perceived level of control has been shown to impact wellbeing (e.g. Xia and Ma, 2020). By removing many of the options for people refused asylum to make choices about their lives, to determine for themselves how they wish to live, current government policy not only materially impoverishes them, but also impacts their mental wellbeing. A more in-depth exploration of this, with recourse to the psychological literature, would thus benefit future work in this area.

This study has also demonstrated how participants learned that they were members of a stigmatised group. However, this knowledge affected participants to differing extents, with some experiencing higher levels of associated shame than others. Relative levels of shame appeared to make some participants more resilient than others. As such, future research would benefit from again turning to the psychological literature that links membership of a stigmatized group to feelings of shame, and degree of shame to level of psychological resilience and a sense of agency. The way in which shame impacts psychological wellbeing, for example in terms of levels of depression, is noted within the psychological literature (Andrews, Quin and Valentine, 2002; Müller, M.J., Zink, S. & Koch, 2018). Murthy, Stapleton and McHugh (2021) have explored this issue among people experiencing homelessness, finding that higher levels of shame were associated with poorer mental wellbeing. As such, future research might seek to look at the complex interconnectivity between belonging to a stigmatised group, sense of shame, levels of resilience, and mental wellbeing amongst people refused asylum.

First and foremost, however, research must continue to gather alternative accounts of asylum seeking, to challenge dominant narratives and to give voice to alternative ‘truths’ so that they are brought into our awareness. After all, as Kundera (2000 [1979]) writes in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*:

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.

Kundera, 2000 [1979], p4

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Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Assisted return: ‘An assisted return (AR) is a specific type of **voluntary return** designed to assist those who require more help to return home (for example, families, or those with complex needs or vulnerabilities). This includes supporting resettlement in the country of return by providing financial or ‘in kind’ support from an overseas provider to sustain their return.’ (Home Office, 2019, p5)

Asylum: When someone is granted ‘asylum’ they are given permission to remain in the UK because of a risk of persecution (Consonant, 2020)

Exceptional leave to remain: Exceptional leave to remain was ‘[a] discretionary status now scrapped and replaced by **humanitarian protection** and discretionary leave. It was granted for various reasons to unsuccessful asylum seekers, mostly on compassionate or humanitarian grounds.’ (BBC, 2003)

Exit checks: Data collected on passengers leaving the UK from 2015 onward (Gov.UK, 2015)

Forced return: ‘[A] migratory movement which, although the drivers can be diverse, involves force, compulsion, or coercion.’ (IOM, 2019)

Humanitarian protection: A person will be granted humanitarian protection in the United Kingdom if the Secretary of State is satisfied that:

- (i) they are in the United Kingdom or have arrived at a port of entry in the United Kingdom;
- (ii) they do not qualify as a refugee as defined in regulation 2 of The Refugee or Person in Need of International Protection (Qualification) Regulations 2006;
- (iii) substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to the country of return, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm and is unable, or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country; and
- (iv) they are not excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection. (Home Office, 2020)

Recognition rate: The asylum recognition rate is ‘the share of positive decisions in the total number of asylum decisions for each stage of the asylum procedure’ (i.e. first instance and final on appeal). The total number of decisions consists of the sum of positive and negative decisions’ (Eurostat, 2020)

Safe third country: A country is a safe third country for a particular applicant if:

(i) the applicant’s life and liberty will not be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion in that country;

(ii) the principle of non-refoulement will be respected in that country in accordance with the Refugee Convention;

(iii) the prohibition of removal, in violation of the right to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment as laid down in international law, is respected in that country;

(iv) the possibility exists to request refugee status and, if found to be a refugee, to receive protection in accordance with the Refugee Convention in that country;

(v) there is a sufficient degree of connection between the person seeking asylum and that country on the basis of which it would be reasonable for them to go there; and

(vi) the applicant will be admitted to that country. (Home Office, 2020)

Voluntary return: ‘Voluntary return (VR) is an umbrella term referring to any non-enforced departure of an immigration offender (or their family members) from the UK to the country of return.’ (Home Office, 2019, p5)

Appendix Two: Ethics Proforma

CRESR ETHICS APPROVAL: Proforma for Post-Graduate Student Projects

While it is not possible to provide definitive guidelines, scrutiny of these questions will help you decide whether your research proposal requires full ethical review by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC).

This review should be completed by the student or the supervisor. In all cases it should be countersigned by the supervisor and kept as a record that ethical scrutiny has occurred and that a full ethics application is deemed unnecessary by the supervisor. The final responsibility for ensuring that ethical research practices are followed rests with the supervisor for student research.

Research Context

This study will examine the lived realities and experiences of destitute failed asylum seekers living in the UK. It will also seek to re-humanise this group by exploring their motivations and aspirations, their reasons for migration and aspects of their journeys.

Research Objective

The central aim of uncovering these experiences is to counter dominant narratives of failed asylum seekers as ‘bogus’ or ‘criminal’ and explore the realities of life in the UK as a destitute failed asylum seeker. It will also seek to explore individuals' motivations for remaining in the UK after receiving a negative asylum decision, their reasons for leaving the country of origin, their experiences during the migratory journey and their aspirations for the future.

Methodology

The study will utilise participatory auto-photography and documentary photography as well as in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore how destitute failed asylum seekers experience their day-to-day lives in the UK as well as aspects of their migration. Participants will be provided with a disposable camera, allowing them to select the aspects of their existence that they feel merit attention, thus attempting to redistribute some of the power inherent within the participant-researcher relationship to a certain extent. The photographs will be used as the starting point for discussion in a follow-up interview (known as photo-elicitation), with participants describing the significance of the photograph and why they chose to create that particular image. Photo-elicitation methods such as this are thought to lead to a more collaborative nuanced interview, potentially highlighting key issues that the researcher was not mindful of when considering the research questions/agenda, and which may therefore allow new understandings of the experiences of this group to be developed.

<i>Name of Student</i>	Lucy Taylor
<i>Title of Research Proposal</i>	The Dehumanising of Failed Asylum Seekers: Challenging prevailing narratives and restrictive policies
<i>Name of Supervisor</i>	Professor David Robinson, Dr Kesia Reeve

	<i>Yes/No</i>	<i>Plans to deal with the ethical issues raised</i>
<i>Does the research involve the NHS or Social Care? If yes, separate procedures must be followed.</i>	<i>No</i>	N/A
<i>Does the study involve the discussion of sensitive topics likely to cause embarrassment?</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<p>The research aims to explore the realities of life as a destitute failed asylum seeker living in the UK as well as historico-biographical elements of participants' reasons for and experiences of migration/seeking asylum. The research therefore involves the discussion of potentially sensitive topics. Specifically, discussions around current living conditions/homelessness/destitution, reasons for leaving country of origin, and the migratory process may be difficult for participants to discuss.</p> <p>The research will therefore use a participant-led collaborative participatory auto-photography methodology which can facilitate discussion around issues that are of particular concern to the participant, rather than the focus being solely on the researchers pre-formulated agenda. The auto-photography element of the research will take place in the absence of the researcher, in the participant's own time over a period of approximately one week. By conducting this process in the absence of the researcher it is hoped that participants will feel less self-conscious/scrutinised/under pressure. It is hoped that by using a participant-led component there will be some amelioration of the researcher-interviewee power dynamic as the participant will be able to choose some of the areas of discussion.</p>

		<p>The participant's interpretation of the images will form the starting point for a follow-up semi-structured in-depth interview. Documentary photographs will also be predominantly participant-led, and it is anticipated that the subjects of these photographs will include places and spaces (accommodation etc...) and key artefacts identified by the participant (i.e. immigration documents, personal belongings etc...) as well as images that I feel are pertinent to the general focus of my research (i.e. the documenting of living conditions) but which may not have been identified by participants during the auto-photography exercise. All documentary photography will be done in conjunction with participants and with their consent. Any items, places or spaces that are deemed too sensitive, private or personal will not form any part of the photographic process. This will be made explicit through the participant information sheet, during conversations with potential and actual participants, and repeatedly throughout the auto-photographic and documentary photography processes.</p> <p>This approach should serve to mitigate any potential embarrassment that might arise from the interviewer asking questions that the interviewee finds too sensitive or embarrassing, serving to redress some of the power imbalances inherent in the researcher-interviewee relationship. It is not possible to fully redress power imbalances as the researcher is ultimately responsible for the conduction of the research and the way in which it is written up/disseminated. Nonetheless, by involving the participant more proactively in the research process it is hoped that there will be more of a sense of ownership/agency. An additional benefit of this approach is that there is a time-lag between the initial and follow-up meeting between researcher and interviewee during which the interviewee can take photographs and reflect on both the process and the meanings that the images hold for them. By including a prolonged period of reflection (as opposed to a one-off interview with the researcher asking</p>
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		<p>a set of pre-formulated questions) it is hoped that the participant will have the opportunity to consider what information they wish to share with the researcher and what they would prefer to withhold.</p> <p>The use of images in the research process raises additional ethical concerns. Informed consent needs to be sought in order that the researcher can use the images in the thesis as well as other possible formats such as an exhibition. Details of potential uses will be stated in the participant information sheet, consent form, and debrief form. After the auto-photography stage is concluded two sets of prints will be developed, one for the researcher and one for the participant. During the interview stage participants will be asked if there are any photographs that they do not wish to be included in the photo-led interview process and/or in any future publications. Any excluded photos will form no further part of the research. A clear record will be made of which photos the participant has consented to having included in the research and which they have not. I will also have some input into this process and if there are any photographs that, although the participant does not mind including, I feel could cause potential present/future embarrassment to anyone these will also be excluded. Any decisions of this nature will be discussed fully with my supervisors.</p> <p>Because of the potentially sensitive nature of some of the experiences of destitute failed asylum seekers, discussing, and thus reliving them may cause distress and potentially embarrassment. To minimise potential embarrassment interviews will predominantly be conducted on a one-to-one basis, minimising the unease that could arise in group discussions/interviews. There are a number of exceptions to this however; firstly, if an interviewee would feel more comfortable being interviewed in the presence of a friend or relative every effort will be made to accommodate this wish. Secondly, in some instances an interpreter may be required in order to enable myself</p>
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		<p>and the interviewee to communicate effectively. There are a number of challenges that arise when working with interpreters. Firstly, as my research budget does not allow me to employ professional interpreters I will be relying on non-certificated interpreters drawn largely from the asylum seeker/refugee community. Some participants may not wish to share information with someone from their own community; others may not want to share information with someone who is not from their own community. I will make every effort to ensure that I have matched the interviewee with an interpreter with whom they feel comfortable. Another concern is that interpreters may not interpret the participant's speech verbatim or may misrepresent the participant's views. In order to minimise the likelihood of these situations arising the interpreter will be required to sign up to and adhere to the same principles of confidentiality as the researcher. In addition, interpreters will be drawn from a pool of interpreters that have been selected by the charity Asylum Seeker Support Initiative Short Term (ASSIST) as suitable to (reliably, accurately, confidentially) interpret complex sensitive information for the organisation's clients. Interpreters will be compensated for their time at the same rate as interviewees (a one-off payment of £10).</p> <p>In addition to the aforementioned measures I will endeavour to fully explain the nature of the research during the participant recruitment stage. I will produce a participant information sheet comprising my name, institution and contact details, as well as those of my supervisors. It will also briefly contextualise and explain the aims of the research and the intended outcomes (in terms of publications etc...). The participant information form, consent form, and discussions prior to gaining informed consent and as appropriate throughout the interview process will emphasise that participation is entirely voluntary, that interviewees can share as little or as much information as they feel comfortable with, that they can choose not to answer any questions that they do not feel</p>
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		<p>comfortable answering and can terminate the answer and/or interview at any point if they so wish and without jeopardising their payment. It will also be clearly stated on the participant information sheet, consent form, and debrief form that the participant may withdraw (by telephone, email or by contacting the gatekeeper at the charity) from the study at any point during the interview process and for a period of up to two weeks after the interview has been conducted. Any participants that withdraw during the study or within the two week period following the study will have their data destroyed and will not form any part of the analysis or report. This is to ensure that the participant is given a period of time in which they can reflect on their involvement with the project and withdraw if they feel the need to. After the two week deadline data will be fully anonymised where necessary and available for analysis. Once it forms part of the analysis it will be much harder to remove and it is for this reason that a deadline for withdrawal is imposed.</p> <p>It is hoped that these measures will mitigate any potential embarrassment that the discussion of sensitive topics may cause participants. However, it is worth reiterating the presence of an inherent power differential between the researcher and the participant. I hope that my previous experience both as an interviewer and of working with destitute failed asylum seekers will enable me to pick up on any signals that an interviewee is uncomfortable and proactively seek consent to continue discussing the topic in a sensitive way, rather than continuing with a discussion that is potentially distressing the interviewee. I hope that by spending time discussing the project with potential participants prior to obtaining informed consent I will be able to develop good rapport and establish an atmosphere of trust and safety in which they will feel able to voice any concerns openly.</p>
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<p><i>Does the study involve vulnerable participants who are unable to give informed consent?</i></p>	<p><i>No</i></p>	<p>Failed destitute asylum seekers constitute a varied mix of people from numerous countries of origin with diverse backgrounds and personal histories. The nature of their previous and/or current life experiences mean that this group have a higher than average incidence of mental and/or physical health issues, and drug/alcohol dependence issues. It is therefore likely that some potential participants will be more vulnerable than others. However, this does not necessarily mean that they will be unable to give informed consent. I have covered a number of issues relating to working with vulnerable clients in the first section of this form and the following points should be considered in combination with these.</p> <p>In order that my research does not (as far as reasonably possible) act to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities or elicit consent from those who are unable to give it my current intention is to recruit participants from ASSIST, a charity that works with destitute failed asylum seekers and for whom I currently volunteer in the capacity of advice worker. There are a number of ethical concerns surrounding the recruitment of participants from within</p>

		<p>a charity for whom I currently volunteer. These include the potential blurring of boundaries between the role that I undertake as a volunteer and my role as a researcher. This may lead to expectations that I am able to do more for clients in terms of the resolution of their case or the help which the organisation can offer them than is in fact the case. In order to distinguish my roles I will make this distinction clear to interviewees before gaining informed consent and again at the start of the interview process. If they ask for advice during the interview I will state that I am not currently working in my capacity as an advice worker but am happy to meet with them during the specified drop-in hours to discuss any issues in this other capacity. However, this drawback must be considered alongside the benefits of working with clients from within this organisation. The benefits of this are twofold. Firstly, by developing a relationship with gatekeepers I hope to be able to use their input as to which individuals might be suitable for the study and able to give informed consent. Secondly, by becoming a familiar face within these organisations I will be able to develop rapport with potential participants and discuss my research project informally prior to beginning formal recruitment.</p> <p>Another potential drawback that I will need to remain cognisant of is that my role as an advice worker means that I will be privy to clients' information. Although this will be beneficial in terms of my general understanding of the lives and experiences of failed asylum seekers I will not use this vicariously obtained information as a constituent part of my research. In order to formalise the acquisition of this contextualising information I will conduct focus groups with staff members in order to gather their understandings of the general challenges and experiences of the failed asylum seekers with whom they work.</p> <p>I will also only include participants who are over the age of eighteen who have read the participant information sheet, consent form and discussed the project and their involvement in it with me, so that I am satisfied that they</p>
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		<p>have sufficient knowledge to be able to give informed consent. I will be undergoing an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check prior to undertaking fieldwork which I will present to gatekeepers prior to my involvement with their organisation, alongside information about the research and its aims.</p> <p>Participants will also be given the option to give a false name in order to retain their anonymity if they so wish.</p> <p>An additional concern is that there may be a language barrier that could prevent people from fully comprehending the finer points of the participant information sheet and consent form. For this reason I will produce these documents in a number of languages dominant in the failed asylum seeker community. I will also involve interpreters in the discussion of the project prior to gaining informed consent so that potential participants can voice any concerns and ask questions, and so that I feel that the participant has a sufficient level of understanding of the project to allow them to give informed consent. In addition, the participant information sheet will be written as clearly as possible, without the use of jargon and in sufficient detail to give a reasonable understanding of the research and its aims. I will go through each point of the participant information sheet with participants prior to them giving informed consent to confirm that they have understood it. I will therefore not be making assumptions about individuals' literacy, either in English or the language of their country of origin. If it becomes clear after discussing the nature of the research with a potential participant that they are not able to give informed consent they will not be included in the study. However, as certain vulnerabilities may not become evident until the interview process has begun, for example mental ill-health, I will need to remain aware of the need to protect vulnerable individuals throughout the research process and act in the best way to protect participants from harm. One way in which this will be achieved will be to adhere to the guidelines stipulated in the Mental Capacity Act</p>
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		(2005) which seeks to safeguard those who are unable to make decisions for themselves. If it became apparent during any stage of the research that an interviewee lacked the capacity to make informed decisions I would bring the interview to a close and thank the interviewee for their time. Any data collected would then be destroyed.
<i>Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for access to research participants?</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<p>Because destitute failed asylum seekers exist on the margins of mainstream UK society (owing to their 'failed' status) the best way to access research participants will be through charitable organisations that work with/provide services to this group. I will therefore need the cooperation of a gatekeeper. At present I am planning to work with a charity for which I currently volunteer as an advice worker. I am therefore familiar with a number of individuals who may be suitable gatekeepers and negotiating access should therefore not be unduly problematic. In addition to enabling access to participants the gatekeeper will be a key individual in the process of identifying potentially willing participants and ensuring that unsuitable participants (on account of vulnerabilities), who are unable to give informed consent are not included in the sample. In addition, potential participants may be more familiar with the gatekeeper than with myself and thus the gatekeeper's endorsement of the research may engender trust in the project in potential participants.</p> <p>In order to reassure gatekeepers of my credentials as a researcher I will be preparing an information pack detailing the nature and purpose of my research, as well as details of my previous experience and training, and my enhanced CRB check and university ethical approval. After giving gatekeepers time to reflect on this</p>

		<p>information I will then meet with them to discuss the project, any questions or concerns, and whether they feel that they would be willing for their organisation to facilitate the research by allowing access to clients.</p> <p>As mentioned in the previous section, I plan to work in a voluntary capacity within the organisations from which I hope to recruit participants. It is hoped that by getting to know the structure and operation of the organisations, its staff and its client group I will gain credibility within the sector, gain insight into the client group, develop good working relationships with gatekeepers and build contacts within the sector that may lead to the identification of other organisations/participants that may be suitable for involvement in the study.</p> <p>Although the consent of the gatekeeper will be necessary to gain access to participants, participants themselves will still need to give informed consent in order to participate in the research. If the consent of the gatekeeper is granted, I will then take on primary responsibility for participant recruitment, to an extent distancing myself from the organisations through which participants are recruited. This is not to negate the usefulness that suggestions made by gatekeepers as to who may or may not be a suitable participant will be, but rather to ensure that potential participants are aware that the research is not connected to the organisation or its interests. The reason for this is that there exists the potential for participants to view the continued receipt of services from the organisation as contingent upon their participation in the study, which is definitively not the case. It will be made clear to participants in the information sheet, consent form and in discussions prior to gaining informed consent that the study is not linked to the organisation and that it will have no impact on their relationship with the organisation or the services they receive. It will also be made clear that information disclosed in the research process will not be shared with the organisation other than in the form of the final research report. It will also be</p>
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		<p>made clear that the research has no connection with the Home Office or any other department of the UK government. Many failed asylum seekers will be nervous of disclosing any information to any individual connected to, or perceived to be connected to, the government owing to their refused asylum status. It will also be made clear that the information that they provide is for research purposes only and will not have any impact their asylum case, either positive or negative (as far as it is reasonably possible to make this assurance). I will prepare a list of resources/organisations that can help with issues that may arise in relation to these issues so that I can signpost interviewees if appropriate.</p> <p>It is possible that one family or social group member may also act as a form of gatekeeper for other individuals who could potentially become study participants. One problem with this is that if one member of a family/group consents to the research other members may feel obliged to also participate. This may relate to power dynamics or spheres of influence within these groups. For this reason it will be made clear that consent must be given on an individual basis and that, where possible, interviews will take place on a one-to-one basis to mitigate the potential for coercion.</p> <p>There are additional concerns relating to gatekeepers and the use of auto and documentary photography. Individual research participants will effectively be acting as gatekeepers to images of other individuals, potentially contested places and spaces, and personal possessions. Every effort will be made to gain informed consent from any individuals that appear in photographs. Where this is not possible facial features will be blurred on any images that form part of the final research report or other published material.</p>
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<p><i>If the project includes fieldwork, are there procedures for obtaining informed consent and protecting the interests of respondents?</i></p>	<p><i>Yes</i></p>	<p>The central tenets of 'informed consent' are that participants should understand the nature of the research, their expected role within the research, the way in which the research will be used, and that they not be deceived or coerced into taking part. I have outlined much of how I plan to meet these requirements in the previous sections. Briefly however, these comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using insights from gatekeepers to identify individuals who can give informed consent • Only including individuals aged 18 years or over • Producing clearly written participant information sheet, consent form, and debrief sheet (including translations where appropriate) • Discussing the research with potential participants prior to gaining informed consent, enabling questions and concerns to be raised and rapport/trust to be developed (including using a translator where appropriate) • Confirming consent at key points in the interview (for example after discussion of particularly sensitive topics) • Ensuring that participants know that they can withdraw from the research at any point up to two weeks after the interview. If participants withdraw during this period their data will be destroyed and form no part of the analysis or report. • Getting informed consent from individuals appearing in photographs if possible, and blurring identifying features where not • Specifying potential future uses of data, including photography
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		<p>Consent must also be given for interviews to be recorded in order to allow later transcription. If consent is not given I will take notes of the interview. As interviewees may potentially forget that they are being recorded it seems appropriate to highlight this throughout the interview as participants may become less guarded if they forget that they are being recorded and may therefore say more than they would wish the interviewer to transcribe. This may be particularly true when good rapport has been established and a trusting relationship developed. It is important that the interviewee does not perceive the interviewer as a friend, with whom they may be more candid, but as a researcher. To this end, I will check the recording equipment at intervals throughout the interview process in order to subtly draw attention to it without the need for overtly stating that the interviewee is being recorded. This should remind the interviewee that they are being recorded without disrupting the flow of the interview too much.</p> <p>Consent must also be obtained for the copyright of images to be transferred from the participant (with whom it normally lies under UK law) to the researcher. This will be detailed on both the participant information sheet and the consent form. Although copyright will be transferred to me the photographer will still be credited as the creator of the image. An additional concern relates to the creation of photographs that depict illegal activity. This is a particular concern in my study dealing as it does with a group of people who effectively exist 'outside of the law'. As the existence of this excluded group is the central focus of the research each image will be considered with both the participant and my supervisors before definitively including it in the project. However, general guidance on not producing images depicting illegal activity will be given on the participant information sheet, consent form, in verbal discussions prior to gaining informed consent and again prior to giving the camera to the</p>
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		<p>participant. It should be noted that images depicting sexual violence, terrorism or child abuse will be reported to the relevant authorities and that any agreement of confidentiality is invalidated by such image content. This is in the best interests of the researcher and vulnerable individuals.</p> <p>In order to protect the interests of the participants it is important to ensure that the research methodology supports the research aims. This will ensure that the time and information given by participants is put to good use. I will therefore conduct a small-scale pilot study prior to commencing the majority of my interviews, and amend any aspects of the methodology as necessary. I will discuss the pilot research with my supervisors in order to gain some feedback about the appropriateness and efficacy of my methods. In addition, I will also present my proposed methodology at the CRESR PhD forum in April 2013, prior to commencing my pilot study, in order to garner insights from my peers about my methodology. As my interviews progress I will remain in regular contact with my supervisors, sharing findings in order to ensure that I am acting in both the best interests of my participants and of the project.</p> <p>As discussed above, the nature of the research means that interviews are likely to touch on sensitive topics which have the potential to cause distress. In order to protect the interests of participants, the potentially sensitive nature of interview topics will be made clear at the recruitment stage, prior to gaining informed consent and at appropriate times during the interview. Furthermore, it will be made very clear that interviewees do not have to discuss any topics which they find particularly distressing and are free to terminate the interview, and indeed their involvement in the project, at any point. I am very aware of the potential power dynamic inherent in the interviewer/interviewee relationship and will make every effort to convey to participants that if they choose to</p>
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		<p>end the interview there will be no repercussions and I will fully understand their decision. I will reiterate this sentiment at appropriate intervals during the interview. I will also provide my own and my supervisors' contact details on the participant information sheet and the debrief sheet so that should any participants wish to discuss any elements of the research further, withdraw from the study, or make a complaint they are able to do so. I will also be developing a list of organisations that work with failed asylum seekers on a range of issues so that I can signpost participants to specialist services if necessary.</p> <p>The interview structure will be predicated on the photo-elicitation format. As discussed in the first section of this proforma, the process will be participant-led and collaborative, allowing participants to highlight areas for discussion that they feel are important. It is hoped that this will pave the way for an in-depth biographical/phenomenological/experiential approach that will elicit discussion of key experiences (such as day-to-day life as a destitute failed asylum seeker, living conditions, aspects of migration, the asylum process etc...). The research is therefore interested not only in 'what' happened but in what it feels or felt like to experience various events and circumstances. The research is also interested in understanding the motivations and aspirations associated with leaving the country of origin, the migratory process, and remaining in the UK after a negative asylum decision. The construction of such narratives may well include references to key people and places, and thus raises ethical concerns about anonymity. Because biographical research traces a person's journey, both metaphorically and literally, there may be instances where the unique narrative of a given individual makes them identifiable to close friends and family even when the participant is anonymised and place names and key dates are altered/omitted. It is therefore not possible to fully guarantee anonymity to</p>
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		<p>research participants and this will be made clear in the participant information form and prior to gaining informed consent.</p> <p>It is worth noting however that anonymity is a somewhat contentious issue within social science research and while generally the granting of anonymity to research participants is standard practice, there are instances, particularly in relation to marginalised groups who may feel ‘voiceless’ that anonymity is felt to act to further compound this ‘voicelessness’. I have recently attended an auto-photography training workshops during which the issue of anonymising photographs was discussed. As auto-photography within the social sciences is still relatively novel there are currently not established models of good practice although debate within the literature is beginning to emerge. These debates largely concern the conflict between the participant's right to be identified if they so wish and the general practice of anonymising participants in social research. The question of whether participants wish to be anonymised will therefore be decided on a case-by-case basis after discussion with participants and supervisors. One caveat to this is where the anonymity of others is compromised by the naming of a particular participant. This will be carefully considered in each case, and in consultation with my supervisors, in order to ensure that the interests of not only the research participant but of other actors are protected.</p> <p>Destitute failed asylum seekers are highly reliant on social networks to survive. Survival can include access to accommodation, food, social life and other resources. While exploring people's experiences of destitution, and indeed their migration more generally, other actors will necessarily form a part of narratives and the way in which events are experienced by participants. There may be protagonists that have been hugely influential in a participant’s experience (for example people smugglers, people with access to resources) that should not be</p>
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		<p>identified in order to protect the participant from potential repercussions. There may also be comments made about other individuals which could cause offence, damage reputation, endanger or be used against either the participant or the person who is the focus of the comment, were the participant to be identified. In this instance it may be necessary to anonymise the participant to avoid causing offence or endangering anyone. This is a highly complex ethical conundrum which will need to be negotiated with participants and discussed with my supervisors.</p> <p>A further issue relating to anonymity and the best interests of research participants relates to the use of photography in the research process. Careful consideration will be given to which pictures are appropriate for publication and which, while useful for informing the interview discussions, are not. An example of a picture that could be deemed inappropriate for publication may be a photograph of a place of illegal lodging where the location can be identified by surrounding landmarks. In this instance the publication of the photograph could potentially affect the research participant's living circumstances. This is not in the best interests of the participant and is certainly not the objective of the research. In light of this, discussions around the use of photography will take place with all participants prior to the issuing of a camera. While I recognise that the auto-photography process should be participant-led, key pointers that primarily serve to protect research participants will be given. These will be considered further as I develop my methodology more fully and will be discussed with my supervisors.</p>
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<p><i>Will systems be in place to safeguard the researcher undertaking fieldwork?</i></p>	<p><i>Yes</i></p>	<p>Interviews will be conducted in a room at the premises of the volunteer organisation wherever possible. This should constitute a safe, neutral space for both me and the participant. Other potential interview locations could include local cafes or the participant's accommodation. These locations carrying varying degrees of risk, the highest of which would be working in a participants home of which I have no prior knowledge. The nature of PhD research means that I will be working alone rather than as part of a research team. I will therefore take steps to ensure that my whereabouts, time of arrival and anticipated time of departure from interview locations is known by at least one colleague. I will call when I meet the participant to let my colleague know that I have arrived and to let them know the anticipated end-time of the interview. This will also make the participant aware that a colleague knows of my whereabouts. I will then call my colleague again once the interview is over. If the interview looks like it will over-run I will inform my colleague of this fact by telephone and provide a new anticipated end time. If I fail to make the second call the colleague would then initiate a response to ascertain my safety. I will also have a code phrase or word that will let the colleague know if I feel myself to be in danger. This process will be less important for interviews conducted in volunteer centres or public locations such as cafés where the presence of other people significantly reduces the risk profile. Regardless of location the potential risks will be assessed in accordance with the University Lone Working Policy.</p> <p>I will also ensure that health and safety requirements are met during my fieldwork. In order to do this I will consult the University Health and Safety Manual. I will also discuss potential risks, hazards and safe working practices with my supervisors who have extensive experience of working with vulnerable groups. This, along with reference to the University Lone Working Policy will form the basis of a Project Safety Plan which I will develop prior to commencing fieldwork. This will detail the measures I will take to mitigate health and safety</p>
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		<p>concerns, and maintain safe working practice. These will be subject to review as the project progresses. I will also seek guidance from the Faculty of Development and Society Health and Safety Coordinator to ensure that my Plan meets the department's guidelines.</p> <p>I am planning to compensate people for participation in the study. This will be in the form of a £10 cash payment given at the start of the first interview. I do not anticipate conducting more than two interviews per day and as such the amount of cash on my person should not constitute a significant risk.</p> <p>The health and safety of participants also needs to be considered, particularly in relation to the use of auto-photography. There is the potential for participants to endanger themselves or others in the photo-taking process. Issues concerning power dynamics in the photographer-subject relationship will be discussed as well as the ethical issues surrounding this dynamic. In addition, participants will need to remain aware of their surroundings when taking photographs and not place themselves in unnecessary danger. Safeguarding issues will therefore be discussed prior to issuing cameras.</p> <p>Participants will be strongly advised not to take photographs of people that they believe will be unlikely to consent to having their photo taken or in situations where the taking of a photograph could potentially lead to conflict. Photography is usually permitted in public spaces (e.g. the city centre) and of the exterior of private building from public spaces; however in private spaces the photographer/I may need to negotiate permission with the relevant person. If the photo could harm or endanger the participant, researcher, other individuals or the community in general it should not be taken. In general, photographs of children are discouraged as the child is</p>
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		<p>not legally able to give informed consent. However, a parent/guardian can give consent on their behalf and so there will be some flexibility on the photographing of the participant's own children.</p> <p>Participants will also be given consent forms that will need to be signed by any individual appearing in a photograph. These forms can be issued after the photograph has been taken in order to maintain the spontaneity of some photos. I am aware that this constitutes a further demand on participants and I will not present this as an onerous or even mandatory task. For individuals who have not signed a consent form any identifying features will be blurred in images that form part of the research output. In addition, I realise that gaining consent from people who appear in photographs taken in public spaces (such as the city centre) is not possible or realistic. However, this is not deemed problematic as usual practice within documentary photography of a similar nature is not to seek informed consent. This is an ethical area that I will continue to review as I make more detailed plans for practical work.</p> <p>Some of the participants may be in the process of pursuing appeals or fresh asylum claims through the courts. This would obviously represent a significant aspect of their current life-experience. However, photography is illegal in UK courts of law and this will be made clear to participants.</p> <p>One further consideration is the photographing of artefacts. This will be encouraged on the whole as items such as keepsakes from country of origin, personal documents, old photographs etc...may be significant to participants in terms of exploring their experiences of migration and destitution. However, there are some restrictions. Photographs of copyrighted material (e.g. works of art, bank notes) is illegal. This will not be</p>
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		<p>discussed with participants prior to beginning auto-photography as the number of images that could potentially infringe copyright laws is predicted to be relatively small. No images of this nature will be included in any materials developed as a result of this project; however they may prove useful in the photo-elicitation aspect of the interview. In addition, I do not wish to impose further restrictions on participants which may inhibit the spontaneity/scope of the auto-photography exercise.</p> <p>Concise written guidelines, which nonetheless contain an appropriate level of detail, relating to all the issues discussed here will be given to and discussed with participants and I will ensure that participants have understood both the safety and legal aspects of the auto-photography project. However, I do not want participants to feel that they are being weighed down by numerous 'do's and don'ts' as I feel that this may deter people from getting involved and cause worry. I will therefore aim to establish a balance between ensuring people realise the limitations of auto-photography while also presenting it as a creative process.</p>
<i>Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent having been given?</i>	<i>No</i>	
<i>Are systems in place which store data and guarantee its protection?</i>	<i>Yes</i>	The Data protection Act 1998 stipulates that participants must be informed about what data will be stored and who will have access to that data. These details will be fully outlined on the participant information sheet and

		<p>consent form so that participants are aware of the systems in place to protect confidentiality and securely store data. Participant consent forms will be kept in a secure place in the CRESR office.</p> <p>Interviews will be recorded. In order to protect this data it will be transferred to the University's secure server as soon as possible following the interview, and deleted from the recording device. These files will be coded/anonymised so that the interviewee cannot be identified if for any reason the file is accessed. This coding/anonymisation is separate to issues concerning eventual anonymity in the report/exhibition which is a decision that will be taken by the participant in consultation with me and with input from my supervisors. Anonymisation during data storage is for the purpose of data security. In order that I am able to link data files to participants I will create a separate document that links the participant code to the participant name. This document will be encoded to ensure security. Subsequent to project completion the data will be stored in the University's secure archive for a period of seven years. The date when materials should be destroyed will be cited on the archive sheet in order to ensure that all materials are destroyed at the end of the seven year period.</p> <p>Photographic data will be stored in a secure place within the CRESR office. In addition, photographs will be scanned onto the computer and held on the University's secure server and on an encrypted USB stick. A number of difficulties relating to the anonymising of photographic data have been discussed in previous sections. For participants and photographic subjects who have given informed consent for their images to remain identifiable (i.e. no facial blurring) images will be stored in this format. In order that I can feel confident that any participants who do consent to their image being identifiable understand the potential ramifications of this I will make sure that I raise a number of considerations with them before gaining informed consent (i.e. if their circumstances changed in the future would they still wish their image to be associated with this project?)</p>
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<p><i>Is there a risk that the study could result in psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?</i></p>	<p><i>Yes</i></p>	<p>Destitute failed asylum seekers live lives on the margins of UK society without access to the majority of mainstream services such as housing or state financial support. Many live a hand-to-mouth existence without stable accommodation, food, or clothing. In addition, they lack the ability to build a life in the UK or plan for the future. They have often come from countries of origin in which they have experienced conflict or persecution and some will have undertaken journeys to the UK during which they experienced challenging or distressing circumstances. Cumulatively, these experiences make failed asylum seekers particularly vulnerable to stress, anxiety and depression. These are the psychological realities of their every-day existence and affect different people to varying degrees. It is therefore important to understand that what constitutes ‘normal’ for this group may differ from that which may generally be considered ‘normal’ for the UK population as a whole. I have covered a number of issues relating to working with vulnerable clients in the first section of this form and the following points should be considered in combination with these.</p> <p>Nonetheless, it is important that during the interview process I make every effort not to cause additional stress or anxiety to participants. One way to do this will be to emphasise at appropriate intervals that the participant does not need to continue discussing any issue that is causing them distress. In addition, I will develop a list of resources to which I can signpost interviewees if they feel the need to discuss them further following the interview process. I will also make contact with a member of each organisation with which I work who is able to act as a 'go-to' person that the interviewee can express any concerns that they don't feel able to discuss with me.</p>
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		<p>Another way in which in which I can attempt to mitigate any additional stress is to be cognisant of the power dynamic inherent in the interviewer-interviewee relationship. A full discussion of this issue as well as strategies for limiting the power imbalance occurs elsewhere in this document and should be referred to for further details.</p> <p>Interviewees may worry that something they have told the interviewer will be passed on – to other members of their community, to charitable organisations with whom they have contact, or to the Home Office (a source of fear for many failed asylum seekers). Anxieties about information sharing may therefore represent a potential cause of psychological stress or anxiety. It will be made clear in the participant information sheet, prior to gaining informed consent, prior to commencing the interview and again during the debrief that information given will not be shared, that any other individuals mentioned during the narrative will be anonymised, as will significant places and dates, and that the participant can be anonymised if they so wish. During the debrief I will ask participants if they have any concerns about any aspects of the interview or research process and address these concerns in order to reassure them and assuage any anxieties. Nonetheless, researchers who have previously used this method have found that it goes some way to redress power imbalances by allowing the participant to choose those subjects that are important to them and omit aspects of their experience that may be too distressing for them to discuss, engendering a more collaborative working relationship. By using photo-elicitation as the starting point of the interview it is hope that this kind of collaborative relationship can be developed.</p> <p>However, it is important that the interviewer/interviewee relationship is not perceived as therapeutic by either party. It would be inappropriate for me to undertake a therapeutic role due to a lack of training in this area. If I feel that the interviewee is viewing me in this way I will make the point that I am not equip to act in a therapeutic</p>
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		<p>or advisory capacity. However, prior to commencing interviews I will develop an information sheet detailing possible sources of support for a range of issues including accommodation, food, and mental and physical health. I will also consult my supervisors about ways of dealing with difficult situations that might arise during the interview process as both have experience of working with vulnerable groups. I also plan to carry out a small-scale pilot study with a colleague/friend/undergraduate student prior to commencing field-work. This should allow me to gain a better understanding of how my methodology will work in practice and tackle any problems that arise from this methodology before engaging with my study participants. I will also have undertaken Philosophies of Social Research 1&2 and Qualitative Research 1 which will provide me with theoretical and practical knowledge which underpins the research process.</p> <p>In general, researchers have found that participants have embraced the auto-photography process. This seems to be particularly true of marginalised groups who viewed the activity as a means to counter negative stereotypes of their group. In my research the goal of the auto-photography exercise is to enable participants to reflect on aspects of their experiences of destitution, asylum and migration. While the lives of destitute failed asylum seekers are not composed solely of difficult or upsetting events and experiences (for example, the celebration of a child's birthday or the forming of friendships may represent significant experiences that are generally positive in nature) many may well be difficult or upsetting and this raises the possibility that the exercise could cause stress and anxiety both because of the nature of the experiences that participants are using auto-photography to document and because of the pressure of carrying out the task in and of itself. If any issues such as these arise, either as comments from the participant or because I perceive this to be the case I will attempt to reassure them and also make it clear that the auto-photography component is not mandatory, and that the choice of photographic</p>
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		subject is their choice. Should any participant wish to only undertake the interview aspect then I will adapt my format to suit their wishes.
<i>Are financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) offered to participants?</i>	<i>No</i>	<p>The time commitment for each participant will be approximately two hours for the interviews (initial, and then follow-up after the photography stage) plus around two hours for auto and documentary photography activities spread over the duration of approximately one week. The amount of time however will vary between participants depending on their desired level of involvement with the project. Reimbursement will be £10 in cash given at the end of the interview process (or at the point when a participant withdraws if this occurs). This is a relatively small amount to incentivise participation rather than payment per se. However, due to the destitute status of interviewees this amount may represent a significant sum to some. Because of this some individuals may feel that they need to participate in the research in order to improve their financial wellbeing, rather than because they intrinsically wish to participate in the research. This may therefore represent a form of coercion, with individuals feeling obliged to participate and reveal information that they may otherwise not have consented to. In order to best mitigate this possibility it will be made explicit that participation is voluntary, that participants can withdraw at any stage in the interview process (and up to two weeks afterwards) without jeopardising their payment, and that they should not discuss anything that they find too distressing or which they feel uncomfortable revealing.</p> <p>A cash sum of £10 will be given to participants. This will enable the participant to choose what they wish to spend the money on, thus avoiding reinforcing the researcher-interviewee power dynamic by stipulating where</p>

		<p>or on what compensation must be spent. It is also in-line with the opinion among some social researchers and charitable organisations that giving vouchers to failed asylum seekers who receive Section 4 support represents a form of exclusion that serves to dehumanise these individuals. There is a small chance that the money could be used to purchase drugs or alcohol due to the wide range of potential vulnerabilities in my participant group. Due to pre-recruitment discussions with gatekeepers, those with significant drug or alcohol abuse problems should not form part of the participant sample and thus it is not anticipated that the money could lead to the harming of participants by enabling access to damaging substances.</p> <p>Participants will also be given copy of photographs. As participants will have taken the photographs this is not considered to constitute an inducement other than reasonable compensation for time and effort.</p>
<p><i>Are there any conflicts of interest in undertaking the research? (E.g. already undertaking a consultancy role in the organisation being researched)</i></p>	No	

Signed by student *Date: 16.01.13*

Signed by supervisor *Date: 16.01.13*

Approved by CRESR Ethics procedure *Date: 16.01.13*

Approved by CRESR Director/Deputy *Date: 16.01.13*

Appendix Three: Information for Organisations

Asylum Experiences: Information for Organisations

About the research

I am conducting PhD research into the way in which exclusionary social policy impacts upon experiences of destitution among refused asylum seekers. I have chosen to conduct research in this area as there is currently a lack of academic literature relating to this topic, particularly literature that attempts to link lived experiences of destitution with social policy, and then to situate this within a sociological theoretical framework. In the first instance I am hoping to carry out a small pilot study in order to fine tune my methodology.

My research questions are:

- How do restrictive social policies impact upon the lived experiences of refused asylum seekers?
- How do dominant narratives, which serve to dehumanise asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers, contribute to the normalisation of restrictive social policies?
- How can an understanding of the lived experiences of refused asylum seekers seek to counter these dominant narratives, ‘re-humanise’ refused asylum seekers and highlight flaws in restrictive policies?

My methodological approach involves using photography as a means for participants to document their lives and experiences. The participant will be issued with a disposable camera and asked to take pictures of the objects, people and places that are important to them or which reveal something about their life. It will be made clear to participants that they should not put themselves in places or situations where their safety or wellbeing may be at risk during this exercise. The aims of this approach are threefold. Firstly, it is hoped that by encouraging the participant to select the aspects of their life that are important to them (rather than to the researcher) some of the inherent power imbalances of the researcher-participant relationship

can be redressed by allowing the participant to determine what images are captured. In addition, this method raises the possibility that new, previously unknown aspects of the experiences of refused asylum seekers may be highlighted that fall outside of the researcher's knowledge and which consequently may not have been addressed within a traditional interview format. Thirdly, this methodology enables experiences to be documented and understood in a more holistic, sensory way than spoken word alone. This has implications for the way in which research data is both interpreted and disseminated.

After a week I will collect the camera from the participant and get the photographs developed – one copy for myself and one for the participant. These pictures will form the basis of a semi-structured follow-up interview during which the nature and significance of the images will be discussed. It is also anticipated that the images will provide a route into discussing other, broader areas that are of interest to my research. Key topics that the interview will cover include:

- Background information including experiences in country of origin, reason for seeking asylum etc...
- Current circumstances including housing/homelessness, social relationships, access to food and other necessities
- Financial support including experiences of statutory support or other means of acquiring income
- Health experiences, physical and emotional
- The future, including expectations, hopes and aspirations

I have worked as an ASSIST Helpdesk volunteer since November 2011 and have a good understanding of the experiences and challenges facing refused asylum seekers in the UK. In addition, I am cognisant of the many and varied reasons why people apply for asylum and that many will have had difficult and distressing experiences in their country of origin. As my research is interested in the lived experiences of refused asylum seekers it necessarily deals with sensitive topics such as homelessness. While research conducted with other marginalised groups suggests that many interviewees welcome the opportunity to 'tell their story' I am conscious that for some of ASSIST's clients participation in the research may not be appropriate. For this reason a central component of my recruitment process will involve liaising

with appropriate gatekeepers prior to making contact with potential participants. I have completed a full ethics pro-forma which has been approved by the Sheffield Hallam University Ethics Committee as appropriate for this research project. I am happy to discuss this with you further if you feel it would be helpful.

When I speak to potential participants I will explain that:

- Participation is entirely voluntary
- Participation is unrelated to their relationship with ASSIST and any support they currently receive or will receive in the future
- Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any point during the research and up to two weeks after the research has been conducted
- Participants can decide not to answer any questions they find too sensitive with no consequences
- Participants can terminate the interview at any point and with no consequences
- All interview material is completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone at ASSIST including staff, volunteers or other clients

This information along with other relevant details can be found on the 'Participant Information Sheet' and 'Participant Consent Form', copies of which I have attached.

I would not anticipate conducting the interview with any client with whom I have previously worked and would make a point of not working with them in my volunteer capacity in the future. This is to avoid the blurring of boundaries between my role as a researcher and my role as a Helpdesk volunteer.

My background

I have an academic background in Psychology and social research. Between March 2007 and October 2012 I worked as a Researcher within the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing at Sheffield Hallam University undertaking research on diverse projects including health behaviour change and children and young people's health.

In October 2012 I began a three-year funded PhD position at Sheffield Hallam University within the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research. The department is a highly regarded policy research centre, carrying out studies of housing and homelessness, community cohesion, migration, and vulnerable groups amongst other key social issues.

In addition to my academic experience I have worked with ASSIST as a Helpdesk volunteer since November 2011. I am also involved in teaching on the Asylum the Basics course.

If you would like any further details about the research or about my own background I am happy to meet and discuss these with you further.

Appendix Four: Participant Consent Form

Asylum Experiences

Participant Consent Form

- I agree to be interviewed for the above named research project.
- I have been given the project information leaflet and understand the purpose of the research.
- I am aware that I will be guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity.
- I am also aware that I can withdraw my consent at any time during the research.
- I give my consent for the interview to be recorded and transcribed.
- I give my consent for my interview to be used (anonymously) in the outputs of the research.

Name (initials).....

Signature.....

Date.....

Appendix Five: Participant Information Leaflet

Asylum Experiences

Information for participants

What is this research about?

People who are refused asylum lose all government support 21 days after this decision is made. At this point many become homeless. My research is interested in what it is like to be a refused asylum seeker. This might include where you live, what money you have (if any), where you are able to get food from, and how you feel about your life at the moment.

Who is conducting the research?

My name is Lucy Taylor. I am a student at Sheffield Hallam University studying for a PhD in Sociology. This research is a pilot study for my PhD.

What will the research involve?

You will be given a disposable camera to take pictures of anything in your life that is important to you or relates to your status as a refused asylum seeker. This might include objects, people or places although it is entirely up to you what you want to photograph. It is important that you do not put yourself at risk when taking photographs and avoid places where you may be in danger. It is also important not to take pictures of people who are unlikely to consent to having their photograph taken. After a week I will collect the camera from you and get the pictures developed, one copy for you and one for me. I will then meet with you for an informal interview to discuss the photographs and your experience of being a refused asylum seeker. This will last about an hour. All the things we discuss will be treated confidentially. If you change your mind you are free to withdraw from the study at any point and without any consequences. You can also choose to remain anonymous.

The research may later form part of my PhD project. It may therefore form part of papers, publications or exhibitions that result from my PhD. Photographs of people will be anonymised by facial blurring, unless permission is given for faces to appear.

Will I get paid?

Yes. You will be paid £10 for participating in this project.

Will taking part in this research affect my ASSIST support?

No. This research is completely unrelated to your relationship with ASSIST.

What if I need to get in contact?

If you need to contact me after the research you can do so by emailing me at: lucy.taylor5@student.shu.ac.uk.

Appendix Six: Interview Topic Guide

- Background

Opening question: Tell me a bit about where you come from and your reasons for seeking asylum here.

- Where from?
- Single/family/family back home?
- Why come to UK?
- How come to UK?
- How long in UK?
- Why not granted asylum?
- Attitude to returning to country of origin

- Becoming destitute

Opening question: Where are you living at the moment?

- How long have you been living there?
- How long can you stay living there?
- What is the place where you live like? (condition, dirty/clean/disrepair, number of rooms, hot/cold, area, other people live with, safety)
- What is it like to live in the place where you live/have lived?
- What does living there/moving around make you feel?
- Where were you living before that?
- Have you had to move often?
- Sofa surfing

- If so, what were your reasons for moving?
 - What are the difficulties of finding accommodation?
 - Have you ever had to sleep on the street?
 - What happened after your application was refused? (Why destitute)
 - How long destitute - to be established in other questions.
- Support

Opening question: Do you have any kind of financial support at all?

- Section 4?
 - Money?
 - Work?
 - Begging?
 - Quantify how much people are living on per week if poss
 - Would they like to work?
 - What did they do in COO?
 - Illegal work - done? Attitudes to? Do others do it? How obtain?
 - Impact of not working/illegal working
 - Why chose not to work illegally/work illegally?
 - Rate of pay, type of work, who is employer, terms of employment, conditions, how work obtained...family, false doc? Hours of work - long, infrequent? Injuries? Coercion? Violence?
 - Transactional relationships - childcare, cooking etc...sex for place to stay etc...forming relationships with local people
- Food

Opening question: How do you get food to eat?

- Where from?
 - Type of food?
 - How often from diff places?
 - How long does food last?
 - Is it sufficient?
 - Difficulties of access
 - Difficulties of appropriate food - i.e. nutritionally good, culturally appropriate
 - Consequences of insufficient or poor quality food (i.e. Concentration, cold etc...)
- Health

Opening question: Do you have any health problem? (If so, pre-existing, exacerbated, caused by destitution?)

- Any health problems? mental, physical
 - If so, type
 - Experiences of healthcare
 - Barriers to accessing healthcare
 - What is it like to live with an illness as a destitute refused asylum seeker?
 - Do you think your living conditions/circumstances cause/exacerbate your condition?
 - What would make u better - i.e. better MH if better accom etc...
 - Drug use
 - Self-medicating
- The future

Opening question: How do you see the future?

- What would you like to happen in the future?
 - What do you think will happen in the future?
 - Aspirations
- Social relationships

Opening question: Do you have any family or friends in the UK/locally?

- Who are they?
 - How know them?
 - Importance of

- Crime 1

Opening question: Have you had any experiences of crime while in the UK?

- Type?
 - Where?
 - Why?
 - Did you report it?
 - How it affected them

- Crime 2

Opening question: Have you committed any crimes while in the UK?

- Type?
 - Why?
 - Caught?
-
- Travel and public transport

Opening question: Do you use public/private transport?

- If so, how pay for?
 - If not, what impact?
-
- Gender specific coping skills for dealing with destitution

Opening question: Are there any ways in which being a woman/man makes your experience of being a refused asylum seeker different to women's/men's?

- Lone woman etc...
- Cultural norms
- Access to work
- Access to friends
- Childcare